

Van Hise PTO General Meeting Minutes December 2, 2015 meeting

Present: 9 board members; 3 parents; Peg Keeler.

Principal's update (Peg Keeler): The first wall of the new library went up today. There's a livecam on the VHE web site where people watch the construction progress. The construction people will come to a school assembly tomorrow to talk about safety and responsibility around a construction site.

Van Hise is working on forging a closer relationship with Hamilton/West, to let the kids start seeing themselves as Regents and will try to get West students in regularly (starting in January). Hopefully next year, West's freshman basketball games will be here at VHE.

Construction seems to be on schedule to finish in February. Peg said that there was some talk about holding summer school at VHE, but she pointed out there will be construction, so summer school will be at Olson instead. They try to do it at schools with a/c, but there are currently only 2 elementary schools with a/c.

The new library plan has been revised a few times, and we're still putting some furniture into it, but the district will provide some soft furniture; more books have been added back, so there won't be quite as much soft furniture (in order to have space for those books). Instead of the money for the furniture that had been set aside in the PTO budget, they're thinking of asking for a Chrome Book cart that would stay in the library. Currently there are 2 sets of Chrome Book carts, plus one Netbook cart. The current computers in library don't work great, and they're moving away from having so many outlets in the floor (moving toward wireless instead). The Chrome books charge in a cart overnight, and the charge lasts the full day. The District doesn't have specific technology expectations for the school, other than reducing the number of outlets and going toward wireless. It's up to us to either bring the old computers to the new library or buy new ones. Since the district is paying for some soft seating, and there isn't as large a space for the seating anyway, the school is asking the PTO for the Chrome Book cart instead - it would cost about half what we were going to spend on soft seating.

Afan asks about what happens after the stage in the cafeteria is removed? Peg says we had talked about a sound system - maybe we could create a real partnership with Hamilton on that? The old stage will be turned into a pull-out stage over the summer. The next Hamilton PTO meeting will be Fri., Dec. 4 at 7:00pm (it's on the calendar for then, at least).

The school's wifi has been upgraded, and it will support all the machines.

One Chrome Book cart is enough for one classroom. Promethean Boards will be coming into the classroom - Ms. Mileham, Ms. Gunderson and Mrs. Keeler wrote a grant for Wisconsin's Technology Initiative and the school has been funded for 8 boards. The focus is on students who are English Language Learners, to make things more comprehensible for them. They will be installed in Feb., and the professional development for teachers who are using the boards starts in Dec. Some people feel the Promethean boards are out of date; others say they're excellent, especially for elementary school students. They are very interactive and are also white boards. Peg notes that we needed some technology in the classrooms, since the District Technology Plan is in limbo; there is buy-in from the teachers.

Question: If the PTO gets Chrome Books for the library, what about iPads for the younger kids?

Answer: With Promethean boards, the classrooms that gets them might not need as many iPads, so those would be freed up to migrate down to the younger kids. There will be an inventory after the boards are installed, and there will be another grant to cover any gaps. The kindergartens want three more iPads. A couple of teachers going through Donors Choose to get a grant to pay for those.

Question: Where does Chrome book cart fit into the PTO grant process? Answer: The grant process is separate. The money for the chrome books comes from money for furniture that was set aside in the PTO budget (approved at the November 2015 meeting) for the new library because it looked like the district wasn't going to provide anything but basic tables, chairs, and shelves. Since the district will be providing some additional furniture, the question here is whether we can use some of the money the PTO had planned to spend on furniture for the Chrome books instead. Is there some sort of formal process for this kind of change? Shelby describes the evolution of the current process: before Shelby was president, there was no real official process for approving expenditures, or providing grants to teachers. The budget at the time was also much smaller. Since Shelby started as president a few years ago, she and the board put in place a process for teachers to apply for grants to be used for materials for their classrooms, as well as a more formal process for presenting a approving an overall budget for each school year. The process for funding extras for the library started with a group of people interested in the referendum and people from the district talking about what the PTO could do to help improve the library. The funding for the soft furniture for the new LMC was brought to a PTO meeting (November 2015) and was approved as a \$25,000 line item in that budget. Now we're discussing whether to amend the budget, to change some of the spending from furniture to Chrome Books. There is no new funding involved.

Fundraiser update (Wendy Crabb on behalf of Sherry Niede): The Barnes and Noble book fair resulted in \$600 worth of Barnes and Noble gift cards to distribute to the teachers. The SERRV and Whoops benefits will be on Sunday, Dec. 13.

Food/clothing drive (Wendy Crabb): The clothing drive was successful. We got lots of underwear and lots of boots/jackets, etc., plus approximately 109 lbs. of food.

Grant request (Wendy Crabb): The special ed. team got back to Wendy about the Hokki Stools. They want 6 per grade (their original request was for 4 per grade), so they now want a total of 36. The decision was not to get them for the one entire classroom, instead to go through the special ed team, and ask how many they would need to provide one to every student who would benefit from the stool. So this request replaces the 2 requests for Hokki stools that were submitted as part of the fall grant requests. So now we have to vote on approving 36 total Hokki stools. The cost is about \$100/ea., for a total of a little less than \$3,600. The art grant also on hold; Beth has money already, and is trying to figure out what exactly she needs. Peg suggests holding that one until spring.

VOTE: Jeff Maxted moves to approve \$3800 for Hokki chairs (including shipping). Dana McCloskey seconds. The motion passes unanimously.

Music for 4th graders was followed up and approved by email. Ms. Jenks was offered a cool opportunity to do this field trip, which is usually only every 3 years - she's a mentor, so whenever schools drop out, we get first dibs. Since each school can only ask parents for so much each year for field trips, and that limit has been reached at Van Hise already, she needed to seek outside funding.

VOTE: Dana M. moves to approve amending the PTO budget to purchase a Chrome Book cart for the library instead of furniture. The Chrome Book cart costs \$12,000, while the amount approved for furniture was \$25,000. The difference between the cost of the Chrome Books and the original approved amount will be moved to the PTO general fund. Jeff M. seconds. The motion passes unanimously. Jolynne will post the amended budget on the PTO web site.

The next grant cycle will come up at the end of February. The teachers should know by then if the iPads will be freed up by the use of the Promethean boards.

Playground (Carousel Bayrd and Kristin Ruedi-Krause): Kristin and Carousel got back to ZDA and asked what they could do for ½ the cost of the initial proposal. Carousel and Kristin have to sit down and figure out what that looks like. The representative from ZDA is willing to set up a meeting to go to the Montessori school (where ZDA designed the playground) so that Carousel and Kristin (and other interested parents) can talk with them about their experiences with ZDA. They just need to set up a time for whoever's interested. Peg suggests inviting teachers, and specifically inviting Trina, who is a parent with a special needs child at the school, who also has some expertise on accessibility and playgrounds. We don't have to choose the design at this meeting, just find out what they did, was it worth it to have them write up the plan; did they take input, etc. Carousel and Kristin wrote a letter stating that we like what they do, but the amount was too high, and asking what they can do for less money. The hope is to come back in January with a plan that the board can vote on. Dana asks if they help you find vendors for the plants and equipment. They come up with the plan, and help you with the concept/big picture, and the flow. They're a part of the process with the vendors, but don't make money from the vendors. Carousel points out that there's merit to what they're offering, it's just that we can't afford it, and are not sure we need something that in-depth/involved. Wendy says ZDA would love to do the job, providing interactive education outside, community space, social/emotional, etc. Kristin and Carousel have definitely gotten the idea that the job is important to ZDA. Someone suggests that we might want to include something in the SIP dealing with the garden/playground, then if district money ever becomes available, it's in our plan already. Right now it's just the garden-based learning in the SIP, but it can be expanded. Carousel should send info re: meeting to Peg, who will include it in a staff email. The community meeting would be more about what you want in a playground. Any way that we can involve the kids/get them excited would be great. Kristin and Carousel will pick a Saturday and set a time for a preliminary visit.

We should try to get Hamilton involved, since they do use the playground. Kristin has some ideas, but is not sure who to meet with. Peg suggested bringing in Jessica and Mike (principal and asst. principal at Hamilton) to talk about it. We should reach out to Hamilton for fundraising, too. The playground redesign could potentially include re-doing the blacktop, new basketball hoops, which might appeal more to the middle schoolers. Peg will contact the Hamilton principal/asst. principal, and will cc Carousel and Kristin on the email.

Dana mentions that we'll also need an idea of the cost of maintenance for any natural features.

Carnival (Stephanie McFarlane): Raffle stuff: Donations are rolling in, there are over 45 committed, and close to that amount in hand already; there are some in the office that Stephanie needs to note. Sherry handed out packets at the dance, and close to 30 people took a packet; it worked out really well. Each packet had a letter and a donation or sponsorship form. This was the first year for sponsorship levels - buddy level gets you your business name on the website, mentor level gets you on the website plus in the printed brochure/program with the detail of the silent auction/raffle stuff. Partner level \$250, champion at \$500. First Partner level donation is from

Oliver's Public House; \$50 level from Monroe St. shoe repair. They're still working on sponsorships. Jeff Maxted has a thought for next year, to tie the sponsorship levels to the activity fair; if people come in at a certain sponsorship level, we could give them a free table. Shelby notes that we made sure we "liked" the Facebook pages of all the organizations that donated, and invited everyone in the community to like them, too. Jeff pointed out that it can be confusing to people who could donate who are also being solicited for the activity fair. Other news: Oliver's Public House is very excited about being a sponsor, and asked Stephanie to have lunch, where she met the owner and the chef; they want to support the community. They're envisioning it as a long-term partnership. It's a smart business move, but it also seems they're very genuine. They'd like to be at the event, and would like to give free cookies and ice cream to the kids - 1 oz. free homemade, natural (no high fructose corn syrup) ice cream and free cookies for 500 people, plus t-shirts. They also want to participate in playground fundraising. The chef is willing to help plan the high-end fundraiser. They could do it at cost - they can also get vendors to donate, to help reduce cost. Someone asked if they would be interested in adopting the school formally through the adopt-a-school program? Maybe? Stephanie didn't bring it up with them because she's not sure about how it works. They'd have to talk to Mary Bartzen at the foundation for Madison Public Schools. Organizations who adopt schools provide 1 of 3 things - people power, material power, or financial power. It would be a one year commitment, after that, they can keep it going or not. Their name gets out there through the foundation web site, etc.

Stephanie asks if we can do the cookies/ice cream. In the past, we've said vendors aren't allowed to solicit their business. They can wear t-shirts with their logo, but no active solicitation. Stephanie got a stack of brochures from Taliesin. Someone noted that we have gotten them in the past, but haven't put them out. Also Harmony Valley donated, and asked about putting out their CSA info. Stephanie asked if we can just put the info out, without staffing a table or anything. Kristin Ruedi-Krause pointed out that there's not a whole lot of space to use for that kind of thing. Someone suggested we could put fliers, etc., near a big sign thanking our sponsors.

Stephanie will get back to Oliver's Public House and say yes for the ice cream/cookies. There was some discussion about where to have the raffle; it's hard to hear in the gym, but in the cafeteria, it takes the kids away from the games. Stephanie suggested spreading out the prize drawings, and posting them for a 15 minute window for people to claim their prize. Dana McCloskey points out that they have held off the raffle in the past, because people put tickets in late, so we would have to be super clear about how it works if some of the items are going to be drawn earlier than others. We have used Staples in the past for printing up the list of raffle items. Wells Digital Printing was a printer partner in the past. Staples lets you do last minute print jobs; Wells can also do last minute.

Stephanie asked if there should be a message sent to teachers about what they'd donate? Dana and Carousel said that they'd approach people who'd donated in the past, then sent out an email to everyone encouraging donations.

They are also trying to come up with ideas about things that parents can do for the raffle. For example, the head of the UW Vet school has a child who is a student at VHE; could she offer something like "spend a day at the vet school;" there's also a parent who's a true rocket scientist - are there experiences that parents or the community can offer for the raffle?

Classroom Baskets: We need to get an email out soon. Dana encourages people to donate experiences over items, since the experiences tend to sell better. Stephanie suggests offering room parents ideas, suggestions for what can go in baskets, and how to do it.

Upcoming meetings/events, other odds and ends (Wendy Crabb): Save the date: February 2, 2016, 6:30-7:30, the PTO meeting will be parent education on social/emotional development, Zones of Regulation. The next one parent education opportunity will be April 12, 2016, 6:30-7:30, about the Growth Mindset (encouraging grit in your kid).

Maggie requests help for the carnival, specifically for prizes and food. Shelby suggests sending out another email request, being specific about needs.

Constant Contact (Wendy Crabb): Wendy points out that there were a lot of emails all at once from Constant Contact recently. Should we try having a weekly deadline? Some people haven't been getting the emails; they do tend to go into the spam folder. Peg will ask teachers to include something in their newsletter about having parents check their spam folder for Van Hise info.

Email Kyle stuff for posting stuff on Facebook.

Any people offering to volunteer should be sent on to LéAndrea Vernon, who is our volunteer coordinator.

By-Laws (Wendy Crabb): We had a conversation last year about updating the by-laws, but they weren't physically updated. Someone disagreed, saying they were updated. Wendy will look into it and figure out what's wrong. We were going to change the board organization, not limiting it to 8. The by-laws on web site are not up-to-date; Dana and Shelby think that they have updated by-laws and can provide them to Jolynne for posting.

Dana heard from the accountant that there are some changes that need to be made to the by-laws.

Wendy will email ideas of changes for by-laws.

Liability (Wendy Crabb): What is our liability/insurance re: classes, if someone gets hurt, or if someone runs off with our cash? We can get insurance through PTO Today, but Peg will look into whether classes are covered through the school. The first concern is instructors/students in classes, then look at whether we want the money to be insured in some way; there is some question as to whether fraud would be covered.

Direct Appeal, Vendor Fair (Jeff Maxted): We raised \$11,000 through the fall direct appeal; the Thank You notes will be going out this week (they also serve as tax deduction letters). The letters for the Vendor Fair, are going out this week. Now we can ask people to send in registrations after the holidays. The fair is scheduled for Feb. 20, from 10:00-1:00. Are we still going to publicize to other schools? Last year, we advertised that we'd reach out to Crestwood, Shorewood, and Midvale, but then it turned out to be harder than expected to advertise our event in other schools. Jeff needs to find out how to bridge that gap; most of the other schools need the information translated, and since it's not theirs, they weren't willing to do that; we also have to go through the same procedures outside vendors follow to advertise in schools. We'll try to get it in the MMSD newsletter - we'll aim for the January and February newsletters. So far we have advertised that we'll invite students from nearby schools, without being specific. We can also put it on Facebook. The fee has been dropped from \$100 to \$50. Raising funds is part of it, but we're also providing a service. Jeff is contacting 110 organizations this week, plus there are another 40-50 he's looking up addresses for.