



September 10, 2024

In Attendance: Approximately 20 caregivers and staff in person and 10 via Zoom

Board Members in Attendance: Chrissy Greer, Mimi Johnson, Renee Deschard, Joseph Clark, Grace Sisson, George Sisson, Lauren Harlowe (online)

## Call to Order

A meeting of the VHE PTO was called to order at 6.30PM by co-presidents Chrissy Greer and Mimi Johnson.

## Approval of Minutes

This is the first meeting of the year and no meeting minutes were presented for a vote.

## Reports

Co-presidents provided an overview of the PTO (see website) -

- All Van Hise families and staff are members, no dues are required
- The PTO meets monthly on the second Tuesday at 6:30PM in the Library Media Center at Van Hise (and via Zoom)
- The PTO shares a monthly newsletter via email (and archives it on the web), with additional email messages as needed
- The PTO launched a [feedback form](#) last year; any matters that are beyond the scope of the PTO will be routed appropriately as best as possible; people can also email the co-presidents ([prez@vanhisepto.org](mailto:prez@vanhisepto.org))

## New Business

Community Engagement

- The PTO has a [form](#) available for VHE community members to use to help identify potential empowerment/affinity groups
- The PTO is working with the district to build a safety and community group in collaboration with Hamilton Middle School (via their PTO)
- The PTO continues to explore opportunities to strengthen the community and will continue to send surveys and interest inventories (e.g., skills, interests); this may potentially be used for networking and fundraising (e.g., connections to restaurants, sporting event tickets to donate, etc.)
- Several MMSD schools have a community partner (e.g., Franklin-Randall is partnered with UW Athletics); Van Hise does not have one
  - There is interest in exploring a possible partner or partners; also interest in understanding how much/what partners provide

## Annual Budget Approval

- Grace and George Sisson are the new incoming treasurers, replacing Ian and Kate Orland
- They offered their thanks to Ian and Kate Orland for their leadership as long-time treasurers and help with the transition
- The 2024-2025 operating budget was presented for approval, with some items highlighted:
  - Staff Stipends - given to all staff for use at their discretion to support the larger community
  - Fall and Spring Grants - applications submitted to the PTO, which reviews and approves in November and March; have been used historically to provide funding for field trips, new rollerblading equipment for PE, etc.
  - Classroom Book Funds - 2023-2024 launched an inaugural book fund with local book store Mystery to Me to help staff purchase books for their classrooms; this included extra funds for new teachers to build their libraries
  - Class/Grade Community Building - 2023-2024 launched a pilot program to provide class reps with funding to host class or grade level gatherings
  - Yearbooks for All - 2023-2024 supported a free after school class to design the yearbook and free copies of the yearbook for all students and staff
  - NEW ITEM: laptop or tablet for PTO use to ensure hybrid meetings, online/card payments at events, etc.
- Chrissy and Mimi also highlighted that proposed expenses are more than the expected income
  - Opportunities for mid-year check-in to identify health of budget
  - Direct appeal happens in the fall
    - Last year only raised ~50% goal; overlapped with Kids Heart Challenge, which is not taking place this year
    - Suggested donation amounts will be helpful to families
  - Several activities - both income and expense generating - take place in the Spring
    - Example - depending on health of funds, PTO may not be able to buy Hedgestock t-shirts for all
  - Opportunities to solicit for suggested donations for free items (e.g., yearbook and t-shirt)
  - Opportunities for fundraising coordinator(s) to help
  - Some discussion happened around t-shirts - whether to give two, whether to have rainbow given in the fall vs. for Hedgestock/Field Day; Mr. Lynch has incorporated all school shirt design into 4th grade end of year curriculum
  - Some discussion happened around financial limits of what can be asked of from families (e.g., \$40 per year for field trips and other activities)
  - Some discussion around the opportunity for / historical use of “sponsors” at events
- Additional \$22,000 in the bank; would like to close out books for 2024-2025 with no less than \$8,000 in the bank as a cushion

- Playground budget of \$40,000
  - Need to form a committee to determine how to spend on playground/green spaces
  - Majority of funds raised in 2019 in anticipation of a new playground
  - MMSD funded the new playground equipment with COVID relief funds
  - The board is exploring investing some of the funding in the account, potentially in a CD
  - Garden funding (maintenance, Rooted program, etc.) is part of general operating fund and not the playground fund
- Motion was made to approve the 2024-2025 operating budget; seconded and passed with unanimous consent

#### Open PTO Board/Leadership Positions

- Chrissy and Mimi walked the meeting through current openings in PTO board and leadership roles:
  - Secretary
  - Communications
  - Fundraising (e.g., Shake Shack restaurant night, Black Belt America Parents Night Out)
  - Class Rep Coordinator (supporting class reps, teacher appreciation activities)
  - Volunteer Coordinator
  - After School Classes Support (helping kids figure out where to go, etc.)
    - Short discussion about after school classes as the biggest source of income for the PTO, more than \$1000 in scholarships provided last year, classes open to everyone/all grades and largely run Monday through Thursday; more information coming on the web and via email
  - Garden Committee Support/Coordinator
    - Elyse Ford, kinder teacher, is looking for 1-2 people to help with the garden committee
    - Meetings can take place once a month - via Zoom or on-site after school
    - Clean-up days scheduled for fall and spring + planting day in late spring

#### Specific Volunteer Activities/Needs

- Open House/Ice Cream Social (9/19) - help scooping and with set-up/clean-up
- Playground and Lunch Help (30-45 minute shifts daily over lunch and recess)

#### Hedgie Store

- Link should be updated and store open soon; vendor changed platforms

#### Open Forum

- Question from family about classes shifting for math and literacy based on skill level
  - Concern about why change was made, why it was not broadly communicated
  - Discussion about whether MMSD-driven or school-based
  - Classroom assignments were not made based on skill levels

- Question about when policy decision will be reviewed and/or could change
- Question from family about climate and opportunities for enrichment activities
  - Concern that other MMSD schools continue to find ways to do “fun” “enriching” things within the curriculum and standards
- Question from family as to whether free field trips count against field trip limit
- Questions and concerns about the school or MMSD can be sent to Principal Stein, Deb Hoffman, or Carlettra Stanford via Let’s Talk or email.

*Respectfully submitted by* Maggie Brickerman, Mimi Johnson, Chrissy Greer  
*Date* September 30, 2024

*Approved By* Van Hise Elementary PTO Board  
*Date* October 1, 2024