

MINUTES TCGIS PTO Meeting
December 7, 2009

Attendees: Ursula Hargens, Lisa Friedman, Leslie Watson, Rebecca Johnson, Heidi Zimmermann, Britta Walker, Linda Michel, Nicole Grenz, Molly McBeath, Gina Vader, Kari Swedberg, Kim Kompel, Sue Burke Westacott. **Guest:** Neely Crane-Smith

Location: TCGIS

The meeting was called to order by PTO president Leslie Watson at 6:35 p.m.

The meeting started with a presentation by Ms. Neely Crane-Smith from the Center for Energy and the Environment (CEE), a nonprofit organization that promotes the responsible use of natural and economic resources. She is the community challenge organizer of "Minnesota Energy Challenge" (www.mnenergychallenge.org), a website-based outreach program that encourages households and the larger community (e.g. cities, neighborhoods, schools, congregations) to reduce CO₂ emissions and to save energy and money, with an element of competition. The program also tries to convey to the public that energy efficiency and conservation does not have to be about sacrifice, but to come to the realization that most energy is wasted and that simple and creative solutions can be implemented to stop or reduce waste.

Neely Crane-Smith provided many tips to help save energy, e.g. installing gasket seals behind outlets and switch plates; using a programmable thermostat; using compact fluorescent light bulbs that last 7-10 times longer and use 75% less energy than incandescent bulbs; establishing thermal boundaries, i.e. insulation, between heated and unheated spaces; signing up for energy audits; installing faucet aerators; setting water heaters at 120°F. She discussed phantom loads, i.e. electricity that is used by appliances with a clock or a remote, in stand-by mode and even if switched off. These appliances should be unplugged or switched off by a power-strip. Power strips should be placed in a convenient location so that they are actually used.

Though individual households may not save much on an individual basis, collectively, energy savings add up. For example, a sobering \$1 billion worth of energy is wasted in the U.S. per year just to keep video games on stand-by. Neely Crane-Smith also recommended to replace appliances, especially fridges, clothes washer, dishwashers, and heating systems "if they are old enough to vote", as much more efficient models are available on the market now. She also brought up the federal tax credit (\$1,500) that is offered in the 2009/2010 tax years for energy-efficient upgrades and the recently implemented 35% rebate (up to \$10,000) that is available (for many) from a program by the Minnesota Housing Authority, <http://www.mnhousing.gov/consumers/home-owners/HomeImprovementLoans/index.aspx>, for specific home improvement projects aimed at reducing energy consumption.

A Q&A period followed. Neely Crane Smith offered to set up a TCGIS team for the "Minnesota Energy Challenge" and said that she is available to give talks about energy conservation to any interested group.

School Board Update. The Parent Liaison of the TCGIS School Board, Kim Kompel, provided a summary of the November board meeting that took place 11/24/09. TCGIS's annual financial audit was formally reported to the TCGIS board at that time. All financial statements were in order with only three minor findings: debit card usage policy needed to be reviewed, improvements on time sheets were requested, and re-imbusement of cell phone usage (if it is a benefit) had to go through payroll. In future, it will be clarified that cell phone usage is not a benefit.

The revised budget was also discussed. In April 2009, the budget for the 2009/2010 school year was approved, but estimates were used to generate the budget. The revised budget that included actual numbers had only two major differences: Based on a request of director Annika Fjelstad for an additional administrative position, the revised budget now includes consulting fees that can be used to hire administrative help when needed. An administrative needs analysis is also underway to pinpoint concrete needs of TCGIS. An unemployment claim also was included in the revised budget. Kim Kompel explained that

TCGIS has never paid unemployment insurance as many employees were on a visa from Germany and therefore not eligible for unemployment benefits. In the revised budget, that specific unemployment claim was included. Also from now on, TCGIS will set aside money every month to pay for future unemployment claims. The Board approved the revised budget.

Graduate students from the Carlson Business School of Management, University of Minnesota, will conduct a strategic planning process for TCGIS *pro bono*. The process will start in January and will last seven weeks. Mission and vision will be re-visited and re-defined during that process. The results will serve as a building block for a more detailed and longer process. Another group is available, who could do the subsequent phase. Leslie Watson asked whether various stakeholders would be involved. Kim Kompel replied that not many details are available yet, but that an Ownership Committee has been formed with Andrew Oxenham, Mary Zellmehr-Bruhn and Annika Fjelstad to come up with bulleted objectives. The lead-up to the strategic planning would consider these kinds of issues, but Ms. Kompel believed that all stakeholder groups would be involved, as the role of the consultants is only to provide the framework for TCGIS.

A short discussion ensued about the specific responsibilities and decisionmaking of the Board vs. the Director, especially regarding the fifth grade and English instruction, and about timely information from the Board, especially regarding posting the agenda, and providing summaries of Board meetings and Committee updates. Kim Kompel replied to the latter issue that the agendas are being posted, but not distributed electronically, but could be included in the Elternbrief. She also stated that "it is in the works" that committee reports, both from Board Committees and other School Committees will be published once a month in the Elternbrief. Nevertheless, Kim Kompel acknowledged that status of communication between different entities is "haphazard" and expressed her appreciation for the committee portrayal that Gina Vader had put together and published in a recent Elternbrief.

Maskenball. Rebecca Johnson said that this years' Silent Auction Committee intended to back away from "stuff," although specific items will still be available. To that effect, the committee is working to solicit donations for "gatherings," e.g., a camping weekend or a summer barbeque. These events will have specific dates and a set ticket price. Families hosting events will bear the costs for the event, so that all money from ticket sales will go to the PTO. Linda Michel recounted how this type of fundraising had started and evolved at her son's school. Gathering ideas discussed were a camping weekend, a summer party, a type of "Newlywed Game," a murder mystery party, a dinner with locally grown food, a pool-party for kids with popsicles, princess fairy party, a prom night, a twilight party, a keg party for the guys, cooking classes and others. For most events there will be no bidding; tickets will just be sold online for a specific price. Only if tickets for a specific event are still left will they be offered at Maskenball, in addition to some key events that will be available for bidding only during the live-auction part of the Maskenball.

Maskenball will also feature a wall of wine raffle and a teachers' getaway raffle, whereby individuals can buy raffle tickets for any teacher for a weekend getaway package. Coffee mugs with the school logo will be sold that will contain a prize inside. The possibility of playing games as fundraisers during Maskenball was discussed also. The committee is still looking for the two MCs and requested suggestions.

Approval of November Minutes. Ursula Hargens moved to accept the November minutes; the motion was duly seconded, and passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Molly McBeath stated that PTO finances are in good shape, due to the earnings from various fall fundraisers. The clothing sale brought in about \$250, the plant sale made over \$600, the Latin dance class \$245, the craft sale \$1,100, and Sue Burke Westacott estimated that the Strudel sale made over \$600.

Leslie Watson moved to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.

Submitted by Liane Gale, Secretary