

TCGIS PTO Meeting Minutes September 8, 2009

Attendees: Leslie Watson, Nicole Grenz, Gina Vader, Liane Gale, Britta Walker, Rebecca Johnson, Michelle Nellis, Kari Swedberg, Heidi Zimmermann, Kami Blackwell-Kinney, Lisa Antony-Thomas, Christina Wunsch, Kelly Huxmann, Rob Hennelly, Chris Hennelly, Ursula Hargens, Renee Moelders, Kirsten Fischer, Michelle Sheire, Markus Sheire, Molly McBeath, Kate Olson, Kimberly Feilmeyer, April Pearson, Jennifer Turnquist, Lisa Friedman, Jo Nelson, Kim Kompel.

Location: TCGIS

Start time: 6:33 p.m.

The meeting was called to order and opened with a welcome by PTO president Leslie Watson and introductions by all attendees. A call for New Business did not yield additions and Lisa Friedman moved for Approval of Agenda; Molly McBeath seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. As no changes were deemed necessary, Kimberly Feilmeyer motioned for Approval of June minutes, Molly McBeath seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Checking account status

Treasurer Molly McBeath announced some changes to the projected line items: PTO Coverage & Liability Insurance will be increased by \$50 (to \$414), while a Costco membership (budgeted at \$50) will not be pursued.

2009-2010 budget issues

- Possible approaches to budget shortfall prior to Maskenball

A major discussion point was the allocation in discretionary spending to each teacher. Some new positions (Science/Math teacher, gain in English teachers) were not considered in the initial budgeting for the 2009/2010 school year. This situation coincides with a period of projected tight cash flow before Maskenball (2/20/2010), which does not allow for an increase of total monies available for classroom support from the PTO. The amount of cash available is dependent on the success of the fall fundraisers. Molly McBeath mentioned that several new fundraisers will be offered this fall. Britta Walker then made a motion to re-imburse teachers' expenses up to \$100 and to hold receipts after that for re-imburement in March. Leslie Watson added to this motion that treasurer Molly McBeath be given some leeway to increase reimbursement if fall fundraisers do well. This motion was seconded by Kate Olson and approved. Molly McBeath added that it is still not clear how much total support English teachers will have.

- Revisit 5th grade teacher fund allocations

In further discussions, Michelle Nellis suggested that discretionary funds could be awarded for a specific grade rather than to a specific teacher.

- Unspent 2008-2009 teacher funds

Some teachers did not spend all the money allocated to them last school year. These funds did not rollover, as most of these teachers have since left TCGIS. A rollover of unused funds into a general teacher discretionary fund will be considered in the spring.

To help alleviate the temporary cash flow crunch, and therefore to fully fund discretionary funds for teachers, Leslie Watson advocated for an early purchase of Maskenball tickets.

Teacher Check-in

Identify possible teacher needs/questions about PTO

Michelle Nellis, the TCGIS lead teacher for the 2009/2010 school year, provided information on PTO-related teacher needs/interests. Identified interests were information on housing, buying car, furniture exchange, TCGIS information. The launch of a TCGIS list similar to Craig's list was mentioned as an idea.

Standing Committee Updates

Fundraising Committee

Fundraising Calendar. Leslie Watson requested feedback for the PTO fundraising calendar that was sent out to all parents together with the class list. The PTO website also includes this information. A short discussion ensued how this information could be distributed best. April Pearson and Liane Gale asked whether it might be possible to include the PTO fundraising calendar in the Parent Handbook that is sent out before the start of school.

501 (c) (3) Application. Submitted. Awaiting decision.

Fall Cash Flow. Item already discussed (see Treasurer's Report above).

Great Gatherings. Gina Vader reviewed the Great Gatherings events that will/may take place this fall. A Latin Dance Class led by parent Beryimar Funk is tentatively scheduled for 10/10/09, 7-9 p.m. at the GAI. Participation will be \$20 per person with a 25 people limit. [Note: Class is now scheduled for 11/15/09 at 3pm and will cost \$15/person] Later this year, April Pearson will be offering a knitting class. Other potential Great Gatherings include the making of a Black Forest Cake led by Marcy Zachmeier-Ruh, and a poker night. Ideas and initiatives for Great Gatherings are welcomed.

Auflauf Cook-Off. Will take place on 10/23/09 at 6 p.m. at the Salvation Army Center in Minneapolis and is designed for up to 150 people. The venue has a capacity of 150 people and includes a playroom. Leslie Watson, the main organizer of this event, is currently working on recruiting celebrity judges and selecting suitable awards for the various Auflauf categories. Volunteers are needed for this event, including supervisors for the playroom. In the spirit of the greening efforts that have begun to sprout at TCGIS, this will be a zero-waste event, with food leftovers being brought to a commercial composter at the Eastside Co-op and with utilization of compostable wares. Recipes will be put together in a cookbook that will be on sale at the Craft Fair.

Community Craft/Bake Sale. This new fundraiser will take place 11/21/09. Heidi Zimmermann will send out notices soon in order to request crafts and baked/canned goods contributions and volunteers that will help with the event.

Velasquez Coffee. Coffee sales will start on Friday 9/11/09 and will continue bi-weekly throughout the school year. Leslie Watson provided some background of this family business from Honduras that markets shade-grown, fair trade coffee through family members that live in the Twin Cities. This is an excellent fundraiser. Whether future bean shipments from Honduras will be influenced by current political problems is unclear.

Blue Sky Guide. Kate Olson encouraged the purchase of the Blue Sky Guide that features coupons from co-ops and other green and sustainable services and/or goods from businesses or organizations. Blue Sky Guides are \$20 with half of the proceeds going to the PTO. Coupons are valid until November 2010. This years' goal is to sell 60 guides.

Equal Exchange Chocolate, Nuts & Teas. This is a new fundraiser and is in need of a coordinator. Leslie Watson spoke of the 50% proceeds from this fundraiser and the low paper waste it generates.

Maskenball. Committee formation will take place soon. Rebecca Johnson agreed to lead the Silent Auction. Leslie Watson advocated a 2-year commitment from Maskenball volunteers (an apprentice the first, a leader the second year). Gina Vader added that people also could contribute to the Maskenball by donating/soliciting items for the Silent Auction.

Strudel. Ruhland's Strudel will be sold again in December for the Holidays. A coordinator is needed.

Rummage sale. Call for new committee members.

Silke Moeller had asked whether the PTO could take over the clothing sale (shirts, hats, bags) that feature the school logo. The clothing sale was previously handled by the school as it is considered a marketing tool. Silke Moeller volunteered to stay on as organizer after a switch. Checks would be written to the PTO and the PTO would settle the bill with the clothing distributor. As the treasurer Molly McBeath accepted this additional obligation, Gina Vader made the motion that the clothing sale should be under the umbrella of PTO. Kate Olson seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Classroom Support Committee

Classroom Parent Recruitment Update

Kami Blackwell-Kinney, Chair of the Classroom Support Committee gave an overview of the role of the committee, which recruits, trains, and supports classroom parents (CPs). Ideally, there should be two CPs per classroom and one or two CPs for the specialists. The duties of CPs are to coordinate volunteers for school-wide events and to open communication between parents and teacher. Volunteers are also needed to join the Classroom Support Committee. A general discussion ensued on how to recruit volunteers and on how to motivate people to become volunteers. The Yahoo discussion group and the Elternbrief were mentioned as avenues to recruit volunteers, the Doodle event scheduling site was mentioned as helpful to organize volunteers and the CP guide was mentioned as a good tool to help recruit CPs; the presentation to inform incoming teachers about CPs was also seen as helpful.

Educational Support Committee

Review Committee description

Lisa Friedman, chair of the Educational Support Committee, and Leslie Watson reviewed the responsibilities of the committee that includes involvement in field trips, e.g. identification of potential field trips and applications for field trip busing grants. The committee will also help with culture weeks and after school tutoring. As there is no record of the field trips taken in the past, Lisa Friedman is in the process of writing up a history. Potentially, the committee may also get involved in the Greening Initiative with an organizing role. Call for new committee members.

Parent Outreach Committee

Chair Britta Walker provided an update on committee activities. A photo directory of all staff is in progress. A map of staff's origins is also in the works. Good feedback was received from the Open House. The committee is organizing the "Meet the Board" session at the TCGIS after Curriculum Night. Other topics discussed were Kaffeeklatsch, whether we should have another Parents' Night Out, and whether we should be arranging parent education sessions with outside speakers. Kimberly Feilmeyer suggested to also post pictures of TCGIS committee chairs and of the PTO board. It was decided that it might be best to post this information online, and in the field guide for KG parents.

2009-2010 PTO Meeting Plans

Brainstorming ensued about agenda planning and possible meeting topics for the upcoming year. Leslie Watson was in favor of short meetings, while Gina Vader was in favor to have meetings offside, e.g. at the GAI. Leslie Watson mentioned that the last PTO meeting of the 2009/010 school year will take place at the GAI. Ideas for the Greening Initiative, general PTO initiatives, and parent education were discussed. Ursula Hargens suggested to invite speakers for parent education at a night separate from the PTO meetings, with suggested donations. Further brainstorming about potential topics for parent education will be an agenda item for the next PTO meeting. Britta Walker will send out an e-mail to solicit suggestions.

Kim Kompel, the Parent Liaison of the School Board gave a brief update on board activities. The number of board committees was decreased to three: Grants, Finance and Governance. The Facility and Technology committees are no longer board committees. One reason for this change was that the Minnesota Open Meeting Laws are in effect for board committees.

PTO Q & A for New Parents

Ursula Hargens noticed the bare walls in the school and volunteered to help with change. It was suggested that Amy Lenburg, the Arts teacher of the school should be involved in this project. Chris Weimholt is working on the branding of the school, that includes also visual aspects, e.g. in the respect of colors. Ursula Hargens agreed to join the Educational Support Committee.

Kim Kompel provided a progress report of the playground (Dickerman Park) used for recess. Detailed concepts were submitted to a St. Paul landscape architect for re-working. The resulting plan was reviewed by the Facilities Committee and comments were solicited during the Open Haus. The plan was also presented to Avalon with positive feedback and submitted to the St. Paul City's 5-year plan. Among the suggested park elements are a rain garden, large boulders for sitting and climbing, log stubs, arranged in circular form, hardscape for games, a pergola, a wood-chipped area for soccer, and temporary fencing for parking lot. The anticipated cost of the playground do-over is \$10,000. Previously, \$2,000 has already been approved and has been used for the detailed drawings. Therefore, we are \$8,000 short. Fundraisers to financially support the playground were discussed as an option. Britta Walker asked whether the anticipated financial outlay is worth it, considering that we may leave the site in four years. Kim Kompel mentioned that donations may be solicited from landscape suppliers, by a direct appeal to parents or a combination of the two. Kim Kompel also was looking for volunteers to take over the playground development project.

Gina Vader moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 p.m., which was seconded by Kim Kompel.

The next PTO Meeting will be Monday, October 5, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. at the TCGIS.

Submitted by Liane Gale, PTO Secretary.