

DRAFT

## Polaris PTO Meeting February 2, 2015 at 6:00 pm

In attendance: Jane Hartgrove, Lisa Mortell, Megan Rozensweig, Brian Nelson  
Karin Johnson, Kristen Alix, Linda Appel Lipsius, Karen Wagner, Amber Fitzpatrick, Angela Dire, Tammy Chamberlain, Stephanie Nussbaumer, Catherine Forington, Leta Kalfas, Melanie Chenard, Kara Chitwood, Eve Cohen, Marisa Hudson Arney, Corrine Hall (DPS Financial Partner)

I. Meeting called to order at 7:02pm. Minutes from January meeting approved.

II. News from the Principal

- Zen Garden is being designed and renovated by one of the electives. Next month, kids will present a proposal for funding the garden with Little Red House funds

III. School Budget 2015-16 and Treasurer's Report

- Budget due from Polaris principal to DPS on February 5, 2015. Short turnaround is due to DPS giving short notice on Wednesday about new benefits cost.
- Right now, the gap between DPS funding and anticipated school budget expenses is \$128,618. This is for paraprofessionals – next year, the school must pay salary expenses plus benefits.
- Currently, the PTO provides the school with paraprofessional salary funds of \$100,000 to cover the shortfall between the DPS funding and cost to staff the school.
- Last year, we had 10 paras. Next year, we will have 9. In past years we have been as low as 7 or 8.
- Paras help lower ratio of adults to children. Paras also cover playground, lunch and carpool duty, freeing teachers for additional planning time.
- Treasurer's recommendation – Recommends agreeing to the \$128,000 commitment for next year. This number is likely to drop to \$115,000 through attrition. By re-allocating some PTO budget items and raising additional funds for next year, the PTO can cover it. There are also reserves (approx. \$30K) that can be tapped if absolutely necessary.
- **MOTION:** PTO will provide up to \$128,618 in costs toward para staffing costs next year. **APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- **MOTION:** PTO will hold \$5,000 from CY equipment support budget to 2015-2016 paraprofessional budget overage.  
**APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**
- See attached document for treasurer's report with current year revenue, expenses, and balance sheet.

### III. Denver Kids – Linda Appel Lipsius

- Denver Kids is housed inside DPS to keep at-risk kids in school and on track to graduate. Located at Emily Griffith.
- Provides trained professional counselors and volunteer mentors for at-risk kids. Provides support that teachers and principals wish they could.
- There are possibilities for Polaris parents to get involved with Denver Kids. It will be referred to the PTO Community Service Committee for assessment and recommendation.

### IV. Electives – Looking to Future.

- Impetus for discussion is Sherry Beardshear's imminent departure as coordinator after her son graduates in 2016.
- We need to hear from all stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, volunteers, PTO).
- Coordinator needs to be an educator (handles student behavior, parent communication, etc).
- Karin: Electives encourages love of learning. Kids love electives. It's part of being a Distinguished School.
- Faculty was asked what they think: some teachers get anxious because specials eat up a lot of instructional time. There is some concern on new content demands – is there enough time?
- **MOTION:** Form an interdepartmental Electives Steering Committee. Kara Chitwood & Eve Cohen have volunteered to represent parents (other parents wishing to volunteer should contact Jane Hartgrove). Karin Johnson will co-chair. Will start with faculty voice meeting, and will include a parent forum to discuss recommendations.  
**APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY**

### V. Communications (Melanie Chenard)

- Updates to the website are underway.
- Teacher outreach to see who needs help is now underway
- Jay Hilty has been very responsive to changes – thank you Jay!

### VII. Events

## 1. Romancing the Vine

- Friday, February 20 at Space Gallery
- Great new logo and excitement. Attendees are key.
- Art Show juried by Mr. Mey and Jeffrey Keith will feature student work.
- All funds raised will go toward STEAM (Science, Tech, Engineering, Arts) education. Visiting speakers, equipment, etc.
- Wish Wall allows you to contribute toward specific STEAM budget items.
- Proof Liquors is the new sponsor; many of the wine distributors are the same.
- Taxi vouchers are new this year.
- Corporate sponsors are way up. STEAM enrichment providers are sponsoring and coming. Children's Hospital, HIT Gym, etc.

## 2. Other Events

- For the Love of the Arts/chili cookoff (April 16).
- New Family Night (April 22)
- Gala (May 14 )
- Field Day (May 22)

## VIII. Other Business

- Room Parents – how often should we collect for teacher gifts for overnights? Which trips (longer trips for upper grades or other?) Should this happen at beginning of the year? The PTO recommends asking twice a year at holidays and end of year. Extra collections can be arranged around time of long overnight trips.
- Room parent coordinator can remind 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes. Other classes on a case-by-case basis.
- Teacher appreciation week – room parents suggest children bring flowers from their yard or make a card.