



MEETING MINUTES

Twin Cities German Immersion School PTO

Date: 2/11/14

Location: TCGIS Cafeteria

Meeting Called To Order By: Kami Blackwell Kinney, PTO President

Time: 6:34 PM

In Attendance: Gregor Adriany, Karen Arras, Kami Blackwell Kinney, Jennifer Buck, Matt Burress, Kordula Coleman, Beki Cook, Nancy Dilts, Ina Elliott, Dustin Fay, Jeff Horton, Kelly Huxmann, Kristi Johnson, Rebecca Johnson, Kim Koempel, Lisa Linnell, Matt McKinney, Cindy Miller, Charles Nielson, Shelley Parker, Laurence Reszetar, Nancy Reszetar, Karin Rice, Michelle Sheire, Karin Spencer, Trish Stinnett, Kari Swedberg, Elizabeth Tobias, Marilee Tuite, Jennifer Turnquist, Isabel Vollenweider, Alexandra Weeding, Heidi Zimmermann

SUMMARY OF MEETING

Agenda: Agenda from 2/3/14 was approved with the addition of a brief announcement from Shelley Parker.

Minutes: Minutes from December 20 meeting were approved as written.

PTO OFFICERS' REPORTS

President, Kami Blackwell Kinney

The Maskenball online auction is now open. Reminder: no spots will be added this year once the auction closes. Items up for bid include lots of Great Gatherings and Admin Adventures & Teacher Treasures, many of which are new this year.

Tickets for the Maskenball Party at the Aula are available now thru February 20 for \$25, or at the door on February 22 for \$30.

The PTO annual retreat is scheduled for Saturday, March 8 here at the school. A few of the topics slated for discussion include: the future role of the EK, the structure of the PTO, and use of classroom enrichment funds. All are welcome. If you can't make it to the retreat but have questions or ideas you'd like to share, please contact the PTO via email: tcgispto@gmail.com.

****Special Announcement (Shelley Parker)****

TCGIS is considering holding a World Cup viewing at the school, to be held on Thursday, June 26 at 11:00 am. Shelley asked for a show of hands to gauge community interest. The response was overwhelmingly positive.

Treasurer, Marilee Tuite

The Finance Committee met recently to review reports and to sign off on bank statements for December and January. These are available for public viewing tonight. The YTD profit & loss report and budget vs. actuals report are also available tonight. The bank balance for the end of January was \$12,190.71. Deposits for December/January were related to the early ticket sales for Maskenball, a few late payments for the Craft & Bake sale, and a check from the Razoo Foundation (for approx. \$500!) for a few unexpected donations to the PTO made on Give to the Max Day. There were six uncleared checks at the end of the month, totaling \$1,299.21, for expenses related to Maskenball and Amity intern appreciation. That makes the cash balance \$10,891.50 as of January 31. So far in February, ticket sales are bringing in revenue.

PTO COMMITTEE REPORTS

Maskenball (Kari Swedberg & Cindy Miller)

Please buy tickets — don't wait until the last minute! The party will feature a photo booth, courtesy of Gold sponsor Foto Box, and a DJ playing tons of music requests. The bar will be serving signature Black & White cocktails, but you must come to the party to find out what they are. At the event, you can purchase "staffle" (staff raffle) tickets for \$2. Any TCGIS staff member is eligible. The more tickets you buy, the better chance they have to win. The prize this year is a spa day at Brian Graham Salon. You can also buy staff raffle tickets after the meeting tonight or at the afternoon Kaffeeklatsch on February 21.

The Maskenball party will also feature a wine pull, where you pay \$20 for a bottle of wine, selected randomly from the lot. We are still collecting wine for the pull. Since we can't collect here on the school premises, collection times include after the meeting tonight at Como Park Grill and at the next Kaffeeklatsch, or you can email Cindy, Shelley, or Kari to arrange a dropoff.

Someone posed a question about how to get tickets for interns. We are accepting donations to help cover those tickets if you'd like to help out.

Parking during the party... Please try not to park up the neighborhood. Carpool or take a cab. Park in the school loading zones or in one of the parking lots at school, at the church across the street, or at the Historic Streetcar Station down the road. Please do not block walkways to the street.

Question: will there be a debriefing after the event? Yes. And we are still looking for volunteers to help set up on the day of and to clean up on the day after.

SCHOOL BOARD REPORT

Gregor Adriany (Newly appointed Parent Liaison)

Recent changes have affected the makeup of the board. Carley Stuber resigned when she was offered a position on a board in her own profession. Marcus Sheire is now Vice Chair, and Gregor took over as Parent Liaison. There is one space up for appointment next month, and there will be three more openings at the end of the year. Please consider running for the board or suggesting another party who may be a good fit. Someone noted that these changes were not communicated to the parent community, and as of this date, were still not listed accurately on the school website. The suggestion was made to put an announcement in the next Elternbrief.

At the last board meeting, there was some discussion of the teacher unionization. The board released a statement that it has been a positive process so far. Negotiations will take a while, and it may be up to a year before any real changes will take place. The school continues to remain solid financially. The board tabled a discussion of grievance policies, and there was a closed session review of director:

Lastly, Gregor introduced Isabel Vollenweider, the new volunteer coordinator/communications hire. Isabel fielded some questions about her position. Some of her duties include putting together the Elternbrief, handling communications between staff and the community/parents, and coordinating volunteer opportunities. Look for a new section at the bottom of each Elternbrief to learn about upcoming volunteer opportunities.

ADMIN REPORT

Jeff Horton (Assistant Director)

- The new group of interns has arrived. Jeff sat down to meet with them and is interested in helping them grow as teachers. The interns received training about American school life and special education.
- The student parliament has been somewhat reinvented. It is essentially student-driven. Jeff has sat in on meetings, and there are definite leaders emerging. Students are encouraged to go to parliament reps with any concerns. Isabel mentioned that there will also be a section of the Elternbrief dedicated to announcements from the student parliament.

- Snow removal: the school is looking at some new options, but things are a bit difficult in the short term due to construction.
- Attended a GAPP conference in NY. Learned that we are ahead of the curve in German immersion education. Most of the people there were high school teachers. He is asking high schools about opportunities in Germany in hopes of finding out what our kids might do after TCGIS.
- TCGIS has received special Title I funds to help kids prepare for the MCAs. Letters came out today to families who qualify for assistance. If you want help, you can have it. This help is often fit in during recess or during an elective class. It is not mandatory to take this extra aid. Contact Jeff with any questions. This is our first year with Title I. The idea is to pull out and supplement the learning. Tom would be the math specialist. Jeff likes to do a pre- and post-test with everyone to help determine whether the intervention was worthwhile or not. Some students have already been receiving Title I assistance since early in the year; this is an increased push to help kids specifically with the MCAs.
- What are the implications of MCA scores for individual students? Schools are still judged/rated on their test scores. A low score does not prevent a child from moving up a grade, but it can serve as an indicator of areas where help might be needed. MCA scores are just one data point in the assessment of Title I needs.
- Administration will be meeting with St. Paul police officers on the 24th. Officers will be out there during dropoff and pickup to help us fine-tune the process.
- Cold weather closings — unfortunately, there is not a hard and fast temperature threshold for school closing. The school uses the forecast from the National Weather Service to help determine whether or not to close.

Safety & the Playground

- In the past, each recess period had an average of 3 supervising adults on duty. This simply was not meeting the needs of the kids, so changes have been made. There are now four adults on duty per recess, with a person stationed at both exit areas. Kindergarten has a fifth person on duty. Interns now go out with their own classes since they know the kids well. The lead person on duty is a staff member, and there are always at least 2 staff members out there at all times (generally paras). If the lead is gone, there is a plan in place for a substitute. There is also now a safety and procedures manual for staff and interns to follow, including guidelines for heat, cold, etc. All in all, this new plan makes things consistent for the kids and helps anticipate any future difficulties.
- There is an inherent difficulty in having two buildings. The kids always need to be supervised, and there should never be a breakdown. If there is, Jeff knows exactly where to go to find the answers. He will deal with any breakdowns that occur. Doors have to stay locked.
- A parent asked about the possibility of taking a group over to the grassy area near Lake Como during recess. This may be more realistic under this new safety plan.
- Construction is set to begin March 3, and with this, new issues will arise, such as possible runoff, dirt, increased traffic, and ongoing change. TCGIS will contact the safety person at Welsh to discuss safety at the school. Under the new safety plan for recess, there should be enough staff to do small area games, etc. if necessary due to construction happening. A parent expressed concern and asked to make sure that all contractors have very clear identification on them at all times.
- Jeff will continue to lead the Playground Committee.

SPECIAL REPORTS

Construction Committee (Jennifer Buck)

- Construction is slated to resume March 3. The committee has created a robust communication web to help keep the community informed about the construction process. This web will include communications staff person Isabel Vollenweider, the Elternbrief, emails, and updates on the website. There will be a high-level schedule, as well as alerts when there are any changes to that schedule. Construction traffic in and out will be a concern — Welsh has said they will time things to avoid pickup and dropoff windows. If you have any questions, watch for a link in this week's Elternbrief.
- There have been some small changes to the original design plans. The overall footprint remains the same, but there are some changes to the outer look of the addition. There was a request from parents that the revised plans be posted somewhere for the school community and public to see.
- Construction will begin with excavation for the new parking lot. A question was raised about the environmental risks to students and staff during this process, given the soil contamination findings. Of 57 sites sampled, 7

showed arsenic levels over 20 ppm (5–20 ppm is generally considered safe). Health risks occur primarily with the ingestion of contaminated soil, and a person would have to ingest a lot of soil. Large piles of soil will be removed first. A remediation plan has been submitted, sent to a state agency. The contaminated soil will either be removed or buried deep below asphalt or concrete. The cost of remediation is \$60,000. The school has applied for grants with the county to help with the cost. Arsenic is naturally occurring, but high levels could come from pesticides or fertilizers. High exposure increases risk for cardiovascular disease and cancer.

- Q: Are there any changes the staff has come up with after being in the new space for 6 months? A: The budget is extremely tight, so there is little deviation at this point. When first discussed, the project entailed 18,000–20,000 sq. ft. — the latest plans call for 24,000. We will have the same number of classrooms, etc. that were originally envisioned.
- The contracted completion date is July 15, 2014. Penalties will accrue if construction goes late.
- Q: Just how noisy will it be? A: It will vary from day to day. The school is already working with Welsh to make sure noise levels are reasonable for MCA testing days. Jennifer will also work to put together a disruption schedule.
- Construction during the school year will be confined to the new site only. Construction will not break through to the existing buildings until after school is out for summer recess.
- Q: Have there been air quality assessments? A: Air quality testing is already scheduled and will begin very soon. Testing will continue throughout the construction to establish baseline data on air quality at different times of the day (dropoff, pickup, etc.).
- Q: What is the new flooring material and is it safe? A: The new flooring is BBT, or a bio-based tile — NOT vinyl. Some existing flooring may be linoleum.
- The Construction Committee will field all comments and complaints about the construction process, and make sure the community is aware of schedules. Watch for an email with contact information coming out soon.

Playground Committee (Matt McKinney)

At this point, playground focus is on fundraising and grant writing. The committee is developing ideas now, getting feedback, and should have a good idea of what to do by mid-April. By May, we will start ordering equipment, and soon after July 15 will begin with the construction. Landscaping is expected to take place in late September or early October, as dictated by nature.

The current budget for the playground is \$37,500, which has already been designated and raised to date. This includes the PTO's \$7500 which was matched in the Move to Excellence Campaign. We have also received money for rain gardens and permeable pavers to help with watershed as part of a grant through Capitol Region Watershed District.

Playscape Design (Trish Stinnett, landscape architect)

Finally, Trish Stinnett, landscape architect and neighbor of TCGIS parent Gina Vader, showed the group a slide show of master plan options for the school. She showed three different options — the third uses lots of ideas from Europe, which are innovative, green, and designed to fit smaller spaces. This option included a multi-purpose play field. The question was raised, could we get kids' input for playground committee? The Playground Committee will have an email address for comments, suggestions, etc., and should be sending out something in the near future.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Open invitation to all to gather at Como Park Grill after tonight's meeting.
- Next meeting: Tuesday, March 11, 2014 from 6:30 to 8:00 PM at TCGIS. Childcare will be provided.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:15 PM

Minutes Compiled By: Kelly Huxmann, PTO Secretary (2013–2014)