

Dover PTO
Minutes of an Executive Board Meeting

January 18, 2008

Attendees: Dana White, Laura Rinaldi, Sue Dangel, Julie Cook, Gina Saltonstall, Annemarie Thompson, Christine Colbert, Shelly Windle, Jennifer Friesen, and Dawn Fattore.

An Executive Board Meeting of the Dover PTO was held at Chickering Elementary School, commencing at 9:15 a.m. on Friday, January 18, 2008. Ms. White, the President, chaired the Meeting and Ms. Rinaldi, the Secretary, recorded the minutes.

VOTE:

To approve the December 14th, 2007 Dover PTO Executive Board meeting minutes.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, this request was unanimously approved.

President's Report

Ms. White started the meeting by updating the Board on the Dover PTO website. The website developer is continuing to develop the first draft and hopes to have it available for general testing and web page content development soon. Ms. White is soliciting pictures of Chickering students for the website.

An engineering firm has been hired to address the building's heating and cooling issues. The Energy Task Force will communicate with teachers about the reasons for the existing rules around the system – i.e. reasons why windows should not be open.

Chickering and its recycling efforts will appear in April's issue of PTO Today. Becky Gladstone, the Recycling Committee Liaison, will be interviewed for this article. Communications is hoping to publish a copy of this article in our local paper.

Ms. White requested that we go through and update/revise our PTO bylaws this year. Some Board members will work with parent volunteers that have legal experience to do this. The goal is to have these updates/revisions completed and approved at the June meeting.

The nominating process for next year's Executive Board is beginning. Ms. Thompson will choose two other volunteers to form a nominating committee, and they will start soliciting people for next year's open positions in March.

Vice President's Report

Ms. White updated the Board on the Vice President's report as Ms. Darragh could not attend.

The Books from the Heart program is starting up, headed by Rebecca Kovrlija. Last year, 275 books were ordered by parents for this program, so we are looking for this year to be another big success.

The next Family Fun Night is scheduled for Friday, February 29th at 6:30pm. A "save-the-date" email will be sent out to parents soon. This night will not have a General Board meeting, as one was just held today, January 18th. However, lots of fun things will be planned for that night, including a "yard sale" of Chickering paraphernalia left over from previous events. This should be a good opportunity to restock on some old favorites.

The Bus Driver Appreciation Breakfast is scheduled for the morning of February 29th, as well. This is a unique opportunity for the parents to show their appreciation of our tremendous bus drivers by providing breakfast for them. Students will write their bus drivers individual cards to show their appreciation.

The Teacher Appreciation Lunch is scheduled for May 21st. This lunch will have a "hoedown" theme. Michelle Mandel continues to work with the teachers to get feedback on existing teacher appreciation items like the yoga classes.

Outdoor Classroom

Ms. Fattore, PTO Advisor, updated the Board on the progress of the Outdoor Classroom. Phase I – which includes hardscape items such as steps, containers, shed, and pipes for irrigation system – has been completed. Now, the task force is working on communicating with the students and teachers about the project. This communication is 2-way and seeks to not only educate students and teachers about the Outdoor Classroom and its potential uses, but also to solicit ideas on how each group envisions learning in this new environment. Upcoming "chats with the principal" will include time for Dr. Deb Reinemann to talk with the students about this new environment.

As the plant beds are designed, the task force is also coordinating with the Fundraising Committee on plant and other donations from both landscaping companies and members of our parent community. There will also be an opportunity for students and parents to become involved in the Outdoor Classroom by coming to help plant over a predetermined weekend in April. After this planting and Phase II is complete, there will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony at our annual meeting on June 4th. This will be a great opportunity for everyone to see the finished product!

Volunteers

Playground Task Force

Ms. Dangel stated that Ms. Ginny Keniry, assistant principal, is working with the teacher aides on the matrix presented last month. Ms. Dangel is hoping to present this matrix to Mr. Kirk Downing, school principal, as soon as next Friday.

Preparations for the school yearbook are underway. A contest for the yearbook “slogan” started today and should be complete by March 1st.

Ms. Dangel stated that she would like to recruit a vice-chair to work with her this year and continue into next year as the chair for volunteers. Also, recruiting for volunteers should start at the end of this school year as opposed to fall, because Dover Days has been rescheduled to the fall and may interfere with the pool of potential volunteers.

Some suggestions have been made on areas where we may be able to combine forces with Pine Hill School...can we share volunteers for our fundraising auctions so that we are not working at our own school's auction? Can we share community speakers? Ms. Thompson, Fundraising chair, and Ms. Colbert, Community Outreach chair, will follow up in these areas.

Community Outreach

Ms. Colbert confirmed that the spring speaker, Dr. Nicolas Oreskovic, is scheduled for April 12th. Some suggestions were made that may include a slight shift in focus for the presentation to include children. This may also dictate an earlier presentation time. Dr. Oreskovic is a practicing internist and pediatrician, and a fellow in the Harvard Pediatric Health Services Research Fellowship Program. Dr. Oreskovic's research focuses on how the built environment can affect people's health, particularly how it can affect chronic diseases in children.

For the second half of the year, Ms. Colbert will be:

- Finalizing a time for the Haiti shoe drive. Ms. Colbert will also solicit suitcase donations to transport the shoes to Haiti.
- Sponsor a drive for snack bags donated to A Place to Turn Food Pantry. Ms. Colbert is targeting February or March for this.
- Follow up with Mrs. Grady on feedback from the “Gifts for Kids” program.

Fundraising

Check-Writing Campaign

Ms. Thompson stated that over \$28,000 has been raised in the check-writing campaign! This is a tremendous success. The breakdown of this money can be seen on the attachment. While fewer families used the check-writing campaign to donate this year, more money was raised. Ms. Thompson believes that the “money spent per child” was a good guideline for families as they chose the amount to donate. As we move forward with this campaign, board members suggest that lower donation amounts are on the letter, as well as larger amounts. We are reminded that the goal of the PTO’s fundraising efforts is to get 100% participation from families. We would like to give every family an opportunity to participate in the method and amount they choose.

Casual Couple’s Spring Event

The Casual Couple’s Spring Event planning is well underway, with every committee having met already. A “save-the-date” will go out by February 1st, and invites will go out after the February break. Some discussion was had around email invites versus paper invites. Ms. Thompson will discuss this with the Fundraising committees.

Donation items are being solicited, and anyone with tickets to sporting events or connections to vendors are asked to contact a Fundraising committee member. Teachers continue to identify things that could be donated from each grade level. Several ideas are being analyzed within the Fundraising committees on how to auction off these items. At this point, they have identified two venues for this: a live auction and a raffle.

Boxtops

Some boxtops have started coming in, and Ms. Thompson stated that fun sheets will continue to be distributed so that kids can tape their boxtops directly to the sheet. Also, there will be a contest between classes with a trophy passed from winner to winner as an incentive.

Easy Money

The “Easy Money” campaign for Chickering continues to bring in money.

Communications

Ms. White solicited input for Ms. Ryan for the February issue of the PTO Newsletter.

Ms. White also stated that we have reached a compromise with Comcast on the spam issue. Comcast will not identify Chickering “email blasts” as spam, provided that we consolidate non-emergency emails to once-a-week publications. Things like a table of contents and targeted distribution may help this bulkier email. Emergencies such as early release on a snow day or lice cases will be emailed separately as needed.

Treasury

Ms. Friesen, PTO treasurer, gave an update on the 2007-2008 Budget. To date, we have raised almost \$39,000 through various fundraising venues, including our Tupperware sales, check-writing campaign, directory sales, excuse pad sales, and “easy money”. This leaves us with at least \$23,000 more to raise in order to be at a positive cash flow for the year. Future fundraising opportunities include the casual couple’s spring event, scheduled for April 5th. For details on each area, please see attached spreadsheet.

Ms. Friesen also stated that we are continuing to make progress investing in curriculum and teacher support. We have spent about \$14,000 to date on Curriculum Enrichment programs, and that number will grow to \$37,000 by the end of the year. About half of the teachers have spent their allocated \$250 for discretionary classroom expenses and \$100 for classroom libraries, and about half of the teacher grants have been reimbursed. Ms. Darragh, PTO Vice President, will follow up with the teachers on this to make sure they are using these resources. For more detail on these and other expenses, please see the attached spreadsheet.

Ms. Friesen noted that an audit committee has been set up to ensure that PTO funds are managed in a businesslike manner, and to ensure that the PTO’s assets are appropriately safeguarded. Members are picked from the community at large, with one being a PTO Board member. The Curriculum Enrichment chair has been nominated by the Executive Board, because she offers a sound cross-check for the treasurer, being involved in a lot of the check requests but not having check-writing authority at any time.

Ms. Friesen also mentioned that the tax return is underway and will be completed by the end of the month.

Curriculum Enrichment

Ms. Cook stated that they are meeting with teachers at the beginning of March to solicit feedback on existing Curriculum Enrichment and identify areas where improvements can be made and new enrichment can be identified for next year.

It was suggested that we research a final all-school event around sports/games for kids at the playground.

Wrap-up

Ms. White thanked all those present for attending. As there was no further business to come before the Meeting, upon motion duly made and seconded, the Meeting was adjourned.

Laura Rinaldi