

JANUARY 14, 2010

BOARD MEMBERS			
X	<i>CO-PRESIDENT</i>	Julie Van Gelder	X <i>TREASURER</i> Gia Morris
X	<i>CO-PRESIDENT</i>	Louise Schie	X <i>TREASURER</i> David Morris
X	<i>AUDITOR</i>	Rick Haller	X <i>CHECKS</i> Cathy Wood
X	<i>PRINCIPAL</i>	Vivian Franklin	X <i>SECRETARY</i> Aena Prakash
X	<i>HEALTH & SAFETY</i>	Meera Ramanathan	X <i>HEALTH & SAFETY</i> Eman Altayyeb
	<i>STAFF LIAISON</i>	Jana Weber	X <i>STAFF LIAISON</i> Elizabeth Allen
X	<i>VP FUND RAISING</i>	Lesley Reid	<i>VP GRANTS/WISHLISTS</i> Sangeeta Peris
X	<i>ROOM PARENT COORD</i>	Kim Ploshay	

The meeting was attended by 23 PTO members, including Board members.

7:00 pm – Louise Schie called the meeting to order, and the Board accepted the minutes from the previous meeting.

Welcome & President's Report

- Louise explained that tonight's meeting is a starting point for discussions about the upcoming budget cuts, that the goal of the PTO is to keep parents informed about budget discussions, and to generate ideas to address the cuts. At this time the full scope of the cuts is not yet known.
- The Computer Lab is set up with the newly purchased machines, and tables. Juana will be letting kids use the new equipment starting next week.
- The Directory will be electronically sent out next week; awaiting a few more okays. Next year this process will be much faster, and earlier.
- Preparations for the Science Fair are coming along well. Jana Weber is working to clear the time conflict with the 3rd grade writing program.

Room Parent Reimbursements

- Gia explained that managing room parent spending has been difficult. The policy of giving cash advances has been ineffective. Many room parents have failed to submit receipts, or have not done so in a timely manner.
- Gia stated the change in the policy from cash advance to reimbursement is supported by the room parents. This policy change may save money because spending will be done more cautiously. And the PTO Treasurers will be checking the receipts to verify correct purchases.
- Gia also mentioned the IRS requirement to have receipts as another reason for the change.

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- Kim Ploshay suggested there be one form for the room parents to submit, even if the parent is room parent for more than one classroom. Gia and David agreed.
- Kim also requested that there be no checks to disperse, and additionally requested that classroom parties not be funded by the PTO, and removed from the budget. Louise said that this will be considered when the budget is discussed in the future.

Motion: Shall the Board authorize a change in policy whereby monies used for purchases made by Room Parents for classrooms be reimbursed to the Room Parent rather than giving them a cash advance?

Passed.

Secretary's Request

- Aena requested that the minutes from tonight's meeting be approved via email by the Board, and then posted to the PTO website in one week. This will help the PTO in informing the membership of how the PTO is addressing the budget issue.
- Aena specified that voting via email is not normally done, but only in special cases.

Motion: Shall the Board vote via email to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2010 PTO General Meeting?

Passed.

Treasurer's Report

- David submitted the Quarter 2 financials; December ended with \$285,000.
- There is still money coming in from Direct Donations, and all checks are to go to Cathy Wood for deposits.
- Two additional handouts showed Room Parent Allowance (and spending), and Teacher Allowance (and spending).
- Room parents are given a cash advance for parties/activities; Grades K/4/5 are given \$75 per year, and Grades 1/2/3 are given \$55 per year; about \$240 of the total has not yet been paid out
- Teachers in Grades K/4/5 are given \$450 per year, and Grades 1/2/3 are given \$350 per year for classroom supplies/activities; about less than half of the budgeted amount has been paid out

Principal's Report of Activities

- Vivian informed the Board that Jane McClurg began teaching the second half of the 2nd grade, taking over for Ms. Abdoli.
- The Peace Patrol training has started for the 4th/5th graders.

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- The Student Council would like to help the victims of Haiti's earthquake with a fundraiser, possibly showing a movie on-site.
- Cris Vaughn and Corey Takara talked about grants for fundraising with the teachers.
- The School Site Council discussed 21st Century Learning – and will have a staff learning day with Garden Gate Elementary staff focusing on Project Based Learning and Global Communications.

Principal's Report Budget Update

- Vivian gave a detailed report on the District's proposed budget for next year which is based on the numbers released by the Governor this week.
- District-wide cuts total close to \$5 million for 2010-2011; there is a strong likelihood that an additional \$3.8 million in federal money will not be available. This is \$8.8 million that our District is losing next year.
- Question: Did CUSD get federal stimulus money this year? YES, but only for one year, about \$6 million (which is included as a loss in the budget for 2010-2011.)
- See the District website for more information at:
<http://sites.google.com/a/cusdschools.org/cusdbudget09-10/>
- The District itself has trimmed its own budget over the past few years, reducing spending by \$9.8 million in non-personnel costs.
- Vivian said some of the cuts will be:
 - ~ Students per classroom in Grades 1/2/3 will increase from 20 students to 1 teacher, to 30 students to 1 teacher
 - ~ Half the positions of the custodial night crew will be eliminated
 - ~ Both summer school and GATE programs will be eliminated, and there will be no GATE testing; Stevens Creek loses about \$3,000
 - ~ Reduction of Teacher Resource Center staffing
 - ~ Some District Office positions will be eliminated
- The District will be sending a letter informing parents of the upcoming cuts.
- The increase in class size means that Stevens Creek will lose 4 out of 27 teachers (and maybe even 5 teachers) next year.

Principal Addresses Class Size Reduction

- Vivian also addressed concerns about the increase in class size:
 - ~ Class reduction has only been in place since 1996
 - ~ No research has yet proven that 20:1 is better than 30:1
 - ~ Experienced teachers know how to work with 30 kids at a time, and newer teachers will be given training before the next school year
 - ~ Teachers will also be given support in the form of teacher's aides, and more parent volunteers

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- ~ For the 3rd graders who would be in the 30:1 classrooms and going on to the 4th grade, the transition will be easier because the kids know how to handle themselves in a larger group; they can then focus on learning what is being taught, and not be overwhelmed by their newer and bigger environment.
- Parents raised some additional questions: Why was class size originally changed from 30 to 20? Even though there was more money back then, didn't it cost a lot to implement class size reduction?

PTO Budget Cut Mitigation Discussion

- Julie prepared and presented much information about the Budget, about the District's hiring practices, and about what the PTO can do to try to manage these cuts. She also led a spirited discussion of the issues before us.
- The most pertinent information from Julie's handouts can be found on the PTO website at: <http://www.stevenscreekpto.org/index.html>
- Julie explained that the PTO will lose its non-profit status if it engages in political lobbying; we are a PTO, not a PTA which has different rules.
- Mitigating the cuts we are facing requires a look at District hiring rules, how much we can cut from our PTO budget, which extra programs like art/music/P.E. could be trimmed, how much of our reserve we can dip into, and how we can be more efficient in fund raising, to name a few items.
- We also need to identify our core values which will help in making these decisions.

District Hiring Rules

- Julie and Vivian explained the District's hiring rules, which favor employee seniority and qualifications within the District; for example, the school principal submits to the District a requisition for a teacher's aide, and the District will supply a list of its candidates that meet the qualifications; the principal cannot hire outside this list.
 - ~ The PTO pays for the position; the PTO has no say regarding the person who is hired, or in some cases reduced
 - ~ Additionally, the PTO must pay a higher salary if the most qualified person is also the most expensive, and thus, the PTO should budget for the higher salary.
- Question: Can we use our current aides differently? Can we redistribute their hours among two or more classrooms? Vivian said that currently some of our existing aides do already split their time.

Budgeting Process

- The budgeting process is as follows: In the spring, the PTO and the school sign an agreement as to how much money the PTO will contribute towards CUSD personnel the following year; the principal informs the District. In October the PTO pays 75% of its commitment, and 25% in December. The District will be informing teachers by

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mid-May if they are being reduced. The District also has to submit next year's budget by June 30, 2010.

Budget Analysis Team

- Julie and the Budget Analysis Team (BAT) have looked at/are looking at many ways to cut costs, and are asking hard questions. The BAT will be meeting regularly to continue this discussion and propose strategies.
- For a list of the BAT's questions, refer to the slide set Major Focus Areas A-H in the slide set on the PTO website.

Ideas List

- David and Gia noted all the ideas and suggestions raised at the meeting in an Ideas List; this list will be on the PTO website, and can be added to as the discussions progress outside of tonight's general meeting.
- Suggestion: Parent Survey – ask the parents what they value most to assist in determining which programs can be reduced, and which programs would garner the most parent volunteers. Vivian is already planning on conducting a survey with the staff members.
- Suggestion: Can we use student teachers as aides? Don't they need training hours? YES, and we currently have two at Stevens Creek. But the process is an agreement between the University and the District, and the student serves one semester typically; there is also a Master Teacher who must oversee the student teacher.
- Some parents at other schools have asked CEEF to manage all donations; they are hoping to raise \$1 million by mid-May to hire back teachers for 1st graders to maintain the 20:1 ratio; our school would need to raise \$50,000, to pay for one teacher
 - ~ Would the donations via CEEF be equally distributed among all the District's elementary schools?
 - ~ Can the PTO spend \$50,000 from its reserve to pay for an additional 1st grade teacher?
- Suggestion: Can we reduce teacher allowance? But don't some teachers spend from their own pockets to pay for classroom supplies? Vivian said that some teachers do not use the amount they are allocated, sometimes because they have been teaching for many years and have enough classroom supplies. She also suggested giving brand new teachers a little higher rate than what other teachers would receive as determined by the PTO.
- David suggested that we have typically budgeted for big items three or even four years ahead, but now we should only do so one year ahead.

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- Cris suggested we try to get the mini-grants paid for from outside sources that support education; this would free up \$15,000 per year.
- Suggestion: Can't qualified parents volunteer to run the Tech Lab? Vivian and Elizabeth both said that the lab should be run in a professional manner, which Juana does. One person needs to oversee the numerous things required to keep the lab operational.
- Vivian informed the PTO that Juana has indicated that she would like to hold an open house for parents to show the new lab.
- Suggestion: Parent volunteers should be given some training/mentoring.
- Suggestion: What about getting retirees to volunteer?