

The Dover PTO Executive Board Meeting Minutes Friday, September 18, 2009

Attendees: Betsy Ryan, Anne Nolen, Meg Field, Jennifer Friesen, Pam LoDato, Judy Schulz, Georgia Dakoyannis, Suzanne Nystrom, Carolyn Ringel, Michele Mandel, and Vicki Hadar

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Ryan at 10:00 am. Ms. LoDato presented the minutes for the June 17, 2009 Executive Board meeting and asked for any final revisions. Given there were no changes, it was moved that the minutes be accepted.

VOTE: To approve the June 17, 2009 Dover PTO Executive Board meeting minutes.

The motion was seconded and accepted unanimously by the board.

President's Report

Mr. Ryan opened her remarks with a review of the PTO activities to date. The PTO back to school picnic during the first week of school was a success. There was a particularly strong representation by new families. Both local papers covered the event which was great publicity for the Chickering PTO.

Dover Days was rained out. The PTO's cancellation of the kids activities due to the weather resulted in a \$1,600 loss. Some of the expenses can be recouped as the PTO has a \$200 credit from Taylor Rental and we hope to be able to recoup the \$645 paid for the petting zoo through a joint event with the Dover Mother's Association. The \$750 of purchased prizes can be stored and used for a future event. There was a lively discussion about better dates and potential joint ventures with Old Home Days and the DMA. There was also discussion of doing a Chickering Carnival or Family Fun Night using some of the credits. There was consensus that Dover Days needs to have better planning for a rain date next year.

Dads & Doughnuts is scheduled for November 20th. Meg reported that there was a lot of feedback that the event was not organized well and perhaps we should consider a more structured program. After discussion, it was recommended that there be a short program for the Dads on the PTO or school.

The birthday policy was changed this year and it appears to be well received. Students will not be allowed to bring in treats. Instead each student's name will be read during the school-wide morning announcements. Students will go to the office for a birthday pencil. Summer birthdays will be celebrated on the half birthdays and week-end birthdays will be done on Mondays. Ms. Ryan also reported that there have been over 200 orders by parents for the birthday book club. This effort is being coordinated by the Chickering library staff.

The 5th grade graduation celebration this year will be held on June 9th, 2010. The first meeting of the parent committee will be held next week. The school has asked that the celebration be scaled back this year. There has been a real growth in the size and scope of the event - particularly the yearbook.

Betsy Ryan asked that each Executive Board member take responsibility for a grade to initiate the start of the emergency tree. That board member would call the room parents for that grade. The volunteer assignments were: Kindergarten - Vicki Hadar, First Grade - Judy Schulz, Second Grade - Pam LoDato, Third Grade - Wendy Darragh, Fourth Grade - Mary Yanke and Fifth Grade - Suzanne Nystrom. The emergency information cards will be going out to the parents next week. Currently there are privacy concerns that parents need to give permission for room parents to be given student contact information. It was suggested that next year parental approval for this release of information be given out earlier so this process could be smoother.

Betsy reminded the board that the next PTO quarterly meeting was on January 15th. There would also be quarterly PTO general membership meetings on Wednesday, April 7th (change of date from April 14th) and June 11th, 2010. These meetings are mandated by the PTO bylaws.

Directory/Excuse Pad Committee Report

Ms. LoDato reported that the Directory Committee is staffed with dedicated volunteers, including chair, Amy Melican. The school gave the committee the student data earlier this year so the directory is on track to be printed two weeks ahead of last year. This would result in the directory going out to families in mid-October. Order numbers are a bit down from last year but requests are still being received.

Despite the difficult economic environment, ad revenues were \$2,900 - a \$900 increase from last year. There will be ads on both front and back inside covers. Most ads have a business owner with a Chickering connection. These include Strawberry Hill, B&E roofing, Dover Home remodeling and Pinnacle Realty. The blurb in the parent newsletter was one of our most effective source of new leads. Ad revenues will cover the cost of printing the directories and allow us to distribute the directory to the Chickering staff with no cost to the PTO.

The PTO will also be reprinting the excuse pads with a collaborative redesign by teachers and the Directory Committee. The new version will be cleaner and easier to use. Most of the key committee volunteers have agreed to continue on the committee next year.

Volunteer Services

Ms. Carolyn Ringel reported that 120 parents returned the volunteer form and more continue to reach her mailbox. Last year in total 142 forms were returned. She has been sending volunteer names to the appropriate committees. The kindergarten

parents oversubscribed the library slots. The one area there is additional need is the auction committee.

All of the room parents were assigned this week. Parents who volunteered to be room parents were personally called to tell of their selection or explain why they were not needed. Those that did not get selected this year will be given priority next year. There were a few classes where there were not any volunteers but room parents were found after some phone calls.

The room parent orientation coffee was held on Thursday. Carolyn thought that the amount of information presented was overwhelming. The biggest need is to streamline the emergency release process. Vicki Hadar recommended that an experienced room parent be paired with a new room parent when possible. Ms. Ringel agreed this was a good suggestion for next year.

Questions were raised about what to do with the parents who volunteered for the Books from the Heart (BFTH) project. This program is not being done but instead money raised for books for the school needs to be funneled as much as possible to the non-fiction book grant that was assumed by the PTO. The money teachers were given in past years (\$100 per teacher) will be given to this library non-fiction book project.

The PTO is looking for ways to raise the \$5,000 needed in this year's budget for funding books for the school. Betsy Ryan suggested the PTO consider doing a spring book fair. She has researched a company that will come in and run the book fair and give the PTO 20% of the proceeds. The outside company will staff the event and run all of the credit card and cash payments. Pine Hill has successfully used this company for years. This company represents a wide range of book publishers.

The idea of a book fair had good support but there were suggestions that the PTO consider fall dates to capture holiday shopping and get the books in the classroom sooner. Teachers would be able to give a wish list of books for their class which parents could also buy.

Metco Update

Ms. Wendy Darragh reported that she is working with Sharon Paul to link Chickering families with a Metco student. They are approximately half way through the process. Special events for the participants include an October breakfast and a December holiday party. The goal of the program is to help the Metco kids feel more part of the Chickering community.

Ms. Judy Schulz spoke about a Metco student from when she was a student at Chickering named Leon Mobley. He has gone on to be a world renowned expert on African drumming. She saw him at a recent D/S High School reunion. She thought he would be an excellent speaker/visitor for the Chickering community and it could be tied into a Metco student event. Mr. Mobley lives in California. Judy will check on his interest and availability to visit Chickering.

Vice Presidents' Report

Anne Nolen and Meg Field reported that Jen Atwood and Amy Caffrey are heading up the hospitality committee. This year the committee will do nine smaller lunches on the first early release Wednesday of each month. The committee is going to survey the teachers to find out what they like so the PTO gifts will reflect the teachers personal tastes. The first luncheon will have a tailgate theme.

Based on conversations with parents, Meg and Anne thought that the back to school night was a success. Most parents liked the new format of a meet and greet much better than last year's more formal presentations. It was easier for parents with multiple children at the school. Some members of the board preferred having a report by the teachers on the curriculum and class day. It was recommended that the school consider a combination of a short teacher presentation - concentrating on a typical day at school - along with lots of time for meeting the teacher and other parents in the class.

Michele Mandel reported that her classroom teacher asked that the parents fill out a questionnaire describing their child and what motivates them. The child would then receive a homework pass. This was a time consuming survey that precluded any real time to meet others. Ms Ryan reported that the teachers liked the new format as the presentation is a lot of work. Ms. Ryan will share this feedback with Mr. Downing.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Jennifer Friesen handed out a detailed financial report with the YTD and the full school year PTO budget. Some changes made to the 2009-10 budget since the last report in the Spring include:

- the elimination of the Dover Days profit of \$2,500;
- the Curriculum Enrichment budget has been reduced by \$925 per Michele Mandel's detailed budget;
- in the teacher grants category, there is a carry over of \$550 from last year's budget for listening centers that was spent this summer:
- \$500 was added to the teacher's support budget for coffee mugs and notepads bearing the new Chickering logo;
- Chickering community expenses were increased by \$1,300. Of this, \$500 is for the back-to-school picnic (this cost was originally budgeted in the detail, but due to an error it was not carried forward to the total expense); \$500 more was allocated to the website and \$300 for the early release key tags.

Jennifer has funded Michelle Worthy for \$1,000 of new reading enrichment materials. Again, as in prior years, each teacher and specialist has been given \$250 to spend for classroom material. This year the \$100 book grant per teacher was eliminated due to a \$9,000 grant the PTO has taken over to buy non-fiction books for the library. There will also be a grant process for a total of \$5,000 than any teacher can apply. Given the tight school budget, there seems to be a higher volume of requests than in past years.

Other budget items include \$2,000 for mulch for the outdoor classroom and \$1,000 for playground/recess equipment. Karen Baptista runs the playground program. There was concern that so many of the balls and other playground items were being lost. Often balls and other items are just left out when the kids come in from recess. It was suggested that Kirk address the issues of children taking responsibility for the playground equipment.

Jennifer will e-mail a check request form to the board members. If you spend money, fill out the form and leave it in her box at school and you will be reimbursed. Members of the board commented how quickly reimbursement requests have been handled in the past.

The budget is balanced and with a successful fundraising, the PTO may be able to spend more money on special projects. The board expressed their appreciation for Ms. Friesen's detailed and professional handling of the treasurer's job.

Over the summer the executive board approved \$300 for the early release date key fobs. Board approval is required for all expenditures not currently in the PTO budget. Approval was done via e-mail. In addition, Jennifer proposed that the board approve the additional expenditure at this meeting.

Vote: To approve the expenditure of \$300 for key fobs with the early release date.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Communications Report

Judy Schulz shared the deadlines for the different PTO communications pieces. Ms. Schulz will send the template for communications to all of the executive board members. Non-Chickering events can be mentioned in the weekly e-mail blasts as long as they are child centered. Judy also encouraged members to send Chickering photos which could be used in the local papers to get more visibility for the PTO in the community.

Fundraising Report

Georgia Dakoyannis reported that the fundraising committees are currently being formed. The Innisbrook Gift Wrap Sales information will go out to the Chickering community on September 25th. Rebecca Kovrlija is again heading up the Chickering apparel sales. So far only \$250 of items have been sold. Rebecca is not sure if that market was saturated by the sales last year or if the new items just are not attracting buyers.

Nancy Kostakos will be running the spring auction. Auction planning has already started. The event will be on April 10th at Elm Bank in the Hunnewell House. The plan is to use the main building and not get the tent. The theme will be Rock n' Roll. There will be music with a cover band and a DJ. Jennifer Freisen suggested the need for a

treasurer's liaison to help with the tax receipt and valuations. Possible candidates would be Barbara Dawley, assistant treasurer or Jennifer. There is also auction software that could help with the financial and tax aspects of the auction.

Nancy has excellent auction experience, running the DCD auction for 2 years. She is new to the Chickering community and welcomes suggestions for key volunteer spots. One idea was to have a volunteer coordinator for the day of the event volunteers (set-up and clean-up). Nancy along with Betsy Ryan will be meeting with the Pine Hill auction committee.

In October the Easy Monday campaigns will start-up including the Box Tops and the Shaw card. Other suggestions were an Amazon.com shopping link, a Target program and a Ben & Jerry Scoop night.

Curriculum Enrichment

Michele Mandel reported that the CE programs and volunteers are in place for the year. The PTO is adding a program on Kirk Downing's recommendation. It is an anti-bullying program called The Power of One. The cost is \$815. It will be presented to students and staff on October 1st. All other budgets for programs are right on track.

Community Service and Community Relations

Ms. Vicki Hadar reported on plans for the 2009-2010 speaker series. Margaret Duggan is coordinating 2 programs. The first is a movie called Two Angry Moms. It shows how grass root efforts can improve school lunches. This will be an evening program and include time for group discussion. The second suggested topic is a program with a doctor to discuss the Gardasil shots for girls. It is generally given between the ages of 10-12.

The Family Fun Night date has not been set. The plan is to tie it in with other events. It will likely take place in March, before the auction and the May town budget approval meeting. The theme will be giving back to the community. There will be different activities where the kids and adults can do community service. The goal is to change the format to make it meaningful and to increase the child and parent interaction. There was strong support from the board for the concept.

There was a lively conversation around Chickering community service ideas. Suggestions included a shoe drive for Dr. Hartman's Caribbean charity, a shoe drive for a local shelter, Heifer International, a food drive for a local pantry, Kevin Youkilis' charity Hits For Kids program for books for intercity kids. There are a number of Dover parents involved with this charity (Kathy Volpe and Michael Muldowney). This charity activity could be connected to the book fair.

Finally there was discussion over a better format for organizing the lost and found. There was also considerable conversation over how the classroom generated school supplies list was done and how the process could be improved. For the first time in

recent memory each classroom teacher made specific school supplies requests to parents. This was due to the \$20,000 cut from the town budget for school supplies. Given the potential town budget issues for 2010-2011 even more school funding cuts could be considered.

Next Meeting

The next PTO executive meeting will be held on Friday, October 16th, 2009 in the Chickering Art Room.