

## **Travis Heights Elementary School**

PTA Board minutes, Tuesday, January 10, 2017

Present: Eliza Platts-Mills, President; Julie Ulrich, Vice President; Manuel Garcia, Co-Vice-President; Dave Lamkin, Treasurer; Jill Wiggins, Secretary; Colin Clark, Advocacy; Carrie Turner, Assistant Principal; Jonna Ball, Fundraising; Gretchen Otto, visitor and president of the neighborhood association.

Eliza called the meeting to order at 4:36 p.m.

Motion to approve **the minutes from the December 6, 2016, meeting** was made, seconded and approved.

### **Principal's Report**

Tabled till next meeting.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Dave Lamkin reported that membership is up to 95, from 77 last year.

Ms. Robertson approved a mini-grant application from fifth-grade teacher Scott Carlson for 80 science review books for \$120. **Motion to approve the purchase was made, seconded and approved.**

**Motion for a \$750 pledge to Austin Interfaith was made, seconded and approved.**

There is \$2,320 left in minigrant account after purchase of additional calculators for special ed.

### **Thunderboard Report**

Julie reported that the last meeting included a discussion of how to promote the school within the district.

Discussion of the new grading system for schools: do we need to address it with parents and potential parents? Perhaps a coffee chat about testing in general.

### **Advocacy Team Report**

Colin reported that volunteers helped with the Oak Creek Christmas party.

Mold problems in Travis Park: getting help from legal aid as to what to do.

Gretchen Otto is volunteering for legislative activities. PTA Rally Day will be Feb. 27: conferences at PTA offices from 11 to noon, followed by the rally, then visits with legislators from 1-5 p.m.; RSVPs are requested. Three webinars are available on YouTube and on Texas PTA web site. Everyone who is going should register, and it's not necessary to attend for the whole day.

## **Discussion of Feedback from 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade PTA Meeting Discussion Groups**

A summary was distributed at the last meeting but there wasn't time to discuss it.

Eliza wants to start a conversation that can continue at the February retreat. We have classes for parents to learn English. she would like to see a Spanish-language class for English-speaking parents. Could we get volunteers to help—chats to allow bilingual conversation, or get a grant to pay someone to teach. Julie asked how would it be scheduled and how many people would be able to come? Eliza knows a teacher who teaches Spanish Over Coffee and she will ask her what she would charge. Carrie: this is an issue the school has struggled with for years, to be inclusive with all parents. Another challenge is the refugee community; there are trust issues. Julie: first step: include a poll in the e-folder asking about interest and availability for such a class. Jonna will talk to the PSS Daniela Lacona. We could also consider parents in the community who could teach.

Communication challenges: People need to know what's going on, what's coming up. Julie: the challenge is we don't have a culture of thinking we need to tell people things. An event comes up and there isn't a flyer for the Wednesday folder. The web site redesign will help a lot. It will have the efolder and people can sign up for reminders and notifications. There will be grade level pages. Teachers will have a blog, which they'll be asked to update at least monthly, including what's coming up—academically and events like field trips. Each grade level team should have someone responsible for it monthly. Parent can subscribe to the grade level blog. There is currently a student blog called the Thunder News. The web site will be set up to use Google Translate. It won't be perfect but it will help.

Carrie suggested looking at the budget to see if there is a stipend to use a staff person to lead communications, because whoever is communications chair needs to be embedded in the school. Carrie will look into what it would cost, up to \$1,000 per semester. Carrie and Julie will work on a job description, policies and procedures.

Also needed is a monthly school calendar like the cafeteria menu that goes out with paper flyers.

Carrie wants to wait until more parent surveys are done to make sure this is a pressure point.

## **Review of Recent PTA Events**

Welcome Back Potluck was great, but it was mostly the same people who usually attend.

Discussion of arrival and release procedures: Carrie would like everyone to research how other schools handle them.

Protocol for Communications with Parents regarding School Related Deaths : after the death of a parent in December we need a procedure for responding. The new half-time counselor and Carrie will work to

develop a crisis plan. Everyone with a role should know the protocol, and kids shouldn't be getting their information from other kids.

### **PTA Calendar Review for Upcoming Events**

Strategic Planning Retreat ,Saturday, February 4, 9 a.m.- 3 p.m. at THES Library

Science Fair – Monday, January 16 (no PTA meeting that night)

Young Writers Workshop, Tuesday, February 7 (coordinated by Erin Walters)

February PTA Fundraising Week, February 13-17: What is the goal and what help is needed?

PTA Meeting 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>-grades' music performance, Thursday, February 16

Spring Beautification Day, Saturday, February 25

Plan for next year's T-shirts: contest date and when to order need to be determined.

### **Current Volunteer Needs**

Fundraising Team Members needed: I Heart THES Fundraiser team, business sponsor team, in-kind donations team, database and other support roles. Jonna has four people who have different duties and they send her reports every Friday. They propose a grandparent fundraiser and small monthly events.

Proposed fundraiser: Have lunch with grandchild on a Wednesday or a Friday. Focus of booth will be on grandparents. They are working on sustainable donorships, whereby two or three people in each grade to donate \$100, and focusing on business partnerships. This year's goal is \$30,000. Actual school needs are greater than the PTA budget.

Colin got bids for new yard signs. We can give them away or sell them. **Motion for Colin to order 200 signs was made, seconded and carried.**

Meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

**Next PTA Board Meeting: Tuesday, February 7, 4:30 to 6pm**