

Executive Board Meeting, December 1, 2008

Present: Francesca Di Mauro, Ivelisse Suarez-Levine, Susan Saar, Kirsten Cowal, Ruth Lilienstein-Gatton, Susan Rosenberg, Tory Frye, Judith Michael

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved with a suggested clarification by Ivelisse Suarez-Levine regarding the district's audit of the 2006-2007 PA finances. A clear distinction needs to be made between the financial records (bank statements, deposit slips, etc.) which are missing and the financial reports which are not.

The first point of discussion was the Fundraising Event Proposal Form which has gone through some changes since it was first drafted and presented at the last general meeting. Leonisa Ardizzone will make copies of the form and put them in an envelope on the PA bulletin board along with instructions on how to submit the form. Susan Saar will send an email to the e-group with similar information. Francesca Di Mauro expressed her opinion that the ideal process would be for forms to be submitted for discussion at the Executive Board meetings at the beginning of the month such that they could all be discussed at the same time. However, it was noted that as per the A660 parents can present fundraising ideas at any meeting and that previous communication with the Executive Board is not required, either by the A660 or the PA's own bylaws. It was also noted that the process is still being worked out and it was decided to simply put the form out there and see what happens.

A lengthy discussion followed on the wish list. Francesca Di Mauro reminded everyone that the wish list items are traditionally awarded at the staff appreciation dinner which will be held on March 19th next year. This implies that a final decision needs to be made at the January general meeting as to whether to continue the wish list in the same manner as usual. Alternatives that were raised and discussed were Donors Choose and having the Class Parent Representatives find out what teachers need and whether parents are willing to fill these needs. The issue of time lag was mentioned with regard to Donors Choose and concerns were raised about potentially unequal outcomes across classrooms based on the ability or willingness of parents to raise funds or resources for their children's classrooms.

Francesca Di Mauro reiterated that the PA Vice Principals for the elementary and intermediate schools handle the wish list in terms of interfacing with the teachers and administration. She also clarified that last year Ms. Marrero and Ms. Hozumi wanted to vet the items the teachers requested. They sent a letter to teachers asking them to make choices within a preselected realm that focused on trips and manipulatives.

Tory Frye pointed out that the PA doesn't raise enough money to realistically do anything besides the wish list so it may be premature to say that we are not going to do the wish list. She expressed concern about the fact that the PA does not have any information about what specifically the school is or is going to be lacking as a result of budget cuts, making it hard, in turn, to have a sense of proportion or priorities. Susan Rosenberg pointed out that parents may not pay dues in the future if they do not like what the funds are being used for. Tory Frye stated that the PA needs to balance equity with effectiveness. While it may be the most equitable approach to spread the funds raised equally across all grades and classrooms the ultimate impact may be weak or nonexistent compared to that of investing in a large program or in infrastructure needs. Tory Frye raised the idea of allocating percentages of the budget to wish list items and to programming.

There was discussion about how to go about identifying needs and opportunities. Ruth Lilienstein-Gatton mentioned that the former 2nd grade video project instructor, Shelley Koy, trained seven elementary school teachers on how to use Smart Boards. He would have liked to have been paid for his efforts but since Ms. Chory indicated that there was no money for it, he went ahead with the training on a pro bono basis. Ruth Lilienstein-Gatton said that it might make sense to allocate some money from the PA budget to pay Shelley Koy a stipend to expand the training to all elementary school teachers in order to take full advantage of the Smart Boards.

Earlier in the meeting, Tory Frye mentioned that she thought that there should be a summit meeting to discuss fundraising similar to the meeting that took place during the 2007-2008 school year in which the Executive Board and other members of the PA met to discuss their vision for the school. This idea was discussed at greater length later in the meeting. The idea of inviting teachers to be part of the summit was raised and received positively. Another notion that was discussed was that of having parent working

groups meet with teachers to get their input about the school's strengths and areas in need of improvement. Ruth Lilienstein-Gatton mentioned that the committee structure works well with bringing teachers in. The summit might, under this possible scenario, be a culmination rather than a starting point. Another advantage of such approach is that there would be some data on the 501c3's yield.

The discussion turned again to the wish list and the potential proposals the Executive Board might make to the membership on how to proceed. The possibility of not linking income and expenses and of having a rough working budget were raised. The current structure of the budget in which line items are dedicated for specific projects and functions was felt to be somewhat problematic and constraining. However, there was ultimate agreement that the PA needed to have a detailed budget (nothing that line items can be added during the year by vote of the membership) since an organization ostensibly cannot be run without a line item budget.

The final agenda item discussed was the agenda for the upcoming general meeting. Carlos Brito will give a budget report and there presumably will be committee reports as well as event budgets to vote on (for Movie Night and Schoolapalooza). As per Ruth Lilienstein-Gatton there will be no committee report on grantwriting. There will be a holiday party after the meeting and everyone was encouraged to bring something. Susan Rosenberg indicated that she would bring CDs to give out as door prizes.