

General Meeting, June 19, 2008

Kathy Brito thanked the members and the Executive Board for their help in making 2007-2008 a great year. She also announced that administration was not attending this meeting because they came in early because of the rally and graduation is tomorrow and will also involve extra hours.

The minutes from the May general meeting were approved.

Francesca Di Mauro conveyed a message from administration that in all likelihood there will be one half day closing per month starting next fall to allow for teacher preparation. This is a response to budget cuts that will reduce the amount of time available to teachers for preparation. The closing will be on the same day every month. The OASIS after school program may be asked whether they can cover the closings.

Cheryl Martin announced the election results for the PA Executive Board and School Leadership Team. She thanked all of the individuals who ran for office regardless of the outcome and thanked the following individuals for their help: Rebeca Alicea at the District 6 office, Genny Alexander, Jose Arroyo, Barbara Gonzalez, Soledad Lopez-Quintero, Judith Michael, Guillermo Peñate, Grace Quiñones, Ms. Cuomo and Ms. Chory. Ms. Martin mentioned that in her conversations with Rebeca Alicea she was told that the level of participation in the elections at PS/IS 187 was high compared to some other schools. She recommended the purchase of a desktop computer and stressed the need for a larger ballot box.

Luisa Diorio gave a financial report and stressed that the document she was distributing was not the final budget since some checks still need to be written and receipts are still coming in. She noted that the PA gave back \$25,000 to the school this year. Nicky Kram Rosen asked about the status of the audit. Chris Kapetanos reported that a letter was sent by him to the district office stating that an audit could not be performed due to missing records and that the district office is going to take over and do their own investigation. The existing financial records will be sent to the district office by the end of the school year after copies have been made. Ms. Rosen asked if there will be any consequences to the PA if the monies that are still outstanding are not collected and Aryn Chapman asked if there is any risk of the PA funds being frozen. Mr. Kapetanos replied that the PA will continue to function and that he believes the funds will not be frozen. Ms. Diorio clarified that the Executive Board does not know what will happen but assumes that the process will take some time and in the meantime the PA will continue to operate as usual. Nicky Rosen mentioned that the district office is not that busy during the summer so that the audit might or could, with proper encouragement, happen sooner than expected. She also clarified that Rebeca Alicea is the District 6 Family Advocate and that the regions no longer exist – this to avoid any confusion among parents seeking information on the DOE web site.

The next order of business was discussing and voting on the proposed changes to the bylaws. Kirsten Cowal indicated that the proposals would be considered in reverse order from last to first. The first change considered was in Article VII, Section 2. The proposal was to strike the first sentence and replace it with “Elections shall be held in late May or early June and shall be scheduled in accordance with the dates specified in the A660.” In answer to a question, it was clarified that the reason for the general language was so that the bylaws would not need to be revised again every time the A660 changed the range of dates on which PA and SLT elections need to be held. The proposed change was approved with no discussion or debate and no votes against or abstentions.

The next block of proposed changes in Article VI was discussed at greater length. The need and rationale for amending the bylaws to allow for two Co-Communications Secretaries was generally agreed upon and there was discussion of when the change would go into effect. Michael LaCombe suggested that in the interest of transparency that an election be held in the fall to fill the position of co-secretary. Cheryl Martin pointed out that a team of co-secretaries would need to run together as is the case with co-presidents. It was agreed that the effects of this provision, if approved would not go into effect until the 2008-2009 PA elections and that in the meantime Susan

Saar, as Communications Secretary-elect will be assisted by parents acting in an unofficial capacity. The proposed changes to the language in Article VI, Section I were approved with no votes against or abstentions. The changes approved are: 1) the reference to the "Delegate Assembly of the United Parents' Association" will be removed and replaced with "District 6 Parents Association," and 2) in the fourth paragraph at the end of the sentence the following will be added "and in lieu of a single Communications Secretary, a team of two Co-Secretaries shall resume the duties of the Communications Secretary."

The proposal to change the title of the position of U.P.A. delegate(s) to C.E.C. delegate(s) and to revise the necessary articles and provisions in the bylaws to allow for the possibility of two Co-Communications Secretaries in the place of one were approved with no votes against or abstentions.

The final proposed change to the bylaws considered by the membership was to change the day of the week of the general meeting. A proposal was submitted to change the date to the third Monday of the month. Francesca Di Mauro explained to the membership that some concerns with that proposal had come up, including: 1) administration would rather that general meetings be held on Thursdays because attending the meeting means a late night for them since they have a commute. Late nights toward the end of the week are therefore preferable to those at the beginning of the week, 2) the CEC may be changing the date of the meeting to the second Thursday of the month and 3) a number of holidays fall on the first Monday of the month (Presidents' Day, Columbus Day, Martin Luther King Day) and that, in turn, will increase the hassle factor since additional flyers will need to be sent out to announce rescheduled meetings. Ms. Di Mauro concluded by saying that for all of those reasons the Executive Board recommended keeping the general meeting as it currently is, i.e. not making any changes.

Several parents, including Nicky Rosen and Judith Michael suggested the possibility of other days, such as the second or fourth Thursday of the month. There was some discussion as to whether the original proposal could be amended and after consulting the A660 and Roberts Rules of Order it was determined that it would be in order to revise the proposed change of meeting day from the third Monday of the month to the fourth Thursday of the month. A motion was made to amend the proposed change which was seconded and approved with no votes against and no abstentions. The subsequent vote on the proposed change to the bylaws to change the day of the meeting to the fourth Thursday of the month was passed with no votes against or abstentions.

The next report was from the 501c3 committee. Aryn Chapman announced that the bylaws and incorporation papers for "Friends of P.S./I.S. 187" have been sent to a pro bono attorney and that they hope to file the documents by the end of June or early July. The first meeting of the organization will be July 14th, location to be determined. Ms. Chapman noted that the Board of Directors will consist of 3 to 24 members and the recruitment pool will include the Executive Board, the School Leadership Team and the community at large. Leonisa Ardizzone noted that Friends of P.S./I.S. 187 will be a separate fundraising arm and that it will complement PA fundraising efforts. In fact, Ms. Ardizzone and Tory Frye will be co-chairs of the PA fundraising committee and will also be on the 501c3 executive board so they will be able to efficiently channel fundraising efforts in the most appropriate direction. Leonisa Ardizzone also noted that the main reason for setting up a separate 501c3 is that its fundraising efforts will not be subject to approval by the Board of Education and that certain kinds of events (i.e. those in which alcohol is served or sold) can be held by the 501c3 and not by the PA.

Ms. Ardizzone and Ms. Chapman were thanked effusively for their work in setting up the 501c3. Cheryl Martin noted that tax deductibility is a big issue for some parents so having a 501c3 to accept donations is a big step forward. Elise Kagan noted that the fact that a 501c3 will soon be a reality is a reflection of the change in the PA and a changed tenor. The PA, she asserted, was open minded and did not say no to any parent who wanted to pursue an idea. In addition, she mentioned that the PA was not hamstrung by the (false) notion that parents who are not able to contribute large sums of money to the school will resent or feel slighted by the fact that some parents can and do.

During the open forum, following commendations by Francesca Di Mauro for a great year, Ivelisse Suarez-Levine announced that four or five parents are going to get together to plan a new parents' orientation and that anyone interested in participating can email her. Wilma Lopez announced that a new committee, the Cultural and Community Development Committee, will bring events to the school that the committee members, as Latinos(as), feel are needed to bring in more Latino parents. Some of the activities they are hoping to sponsor are a merengue contest and a poetry contest (which will culminate in their bringing a renowned Latino(a) poet to the school such as Julia Alvarez.

Kathy Brito announced that she and Ruth Lilienstein-Gatton will be forming and implementing a Class Parent Representatives program for the upper school. Nicky Rosen asked about plans to change the 8th grade graduation, and Kathy Brito replied that the planning process is underway and that she wants to change the standing norm and have a dance for kids in the school (this produced loud applause). Ms. Brito also mentioned that she would like to organize a Father-Daughter Day.

Nicky Rosen mentioned that she recently attended a public meeting regarding the lawsuit in which the city and state have been involved and noted that public hearings are being to solicit input on how the incoming funds should be allocated. Funds must be dedicated to one or more of several areas, including class size reduction, time on task, middle and high school improvement, teacher and principal quality, and autism and special education. The money is supposed to be allocated to the neediest schools and can only be used to supplement school funding from the tax levy and cannot be used to plug holes in the budget. P.S./I.S. is only getting \$100,000 but the administration and SLT will meet early the following week to decide how these funds (Contract for Excellence) will be spent. Schools are required to include, as part of the Comprehensive Education Plan, a document specifying how the funds will be used. \$63 million has not yet been scheduled to schools because the Mayor is trying to get approval by the State to use these funds to cover budget cuts. Ms. Rosen declined to state her personal opinion on the issue of how funds should be allocated and spent but noted that parents can offer their opinions, either through the public hearings or by other means of communication, such as the DOE web site.