

PA General Meeting, September 27, 2007

Present: Kathy Brito, Juan Carlos Brito, Francesca DiMauro, Stevie Ray Dallimore, Luisa Diorio and Marci Stringham.

Following welcoming remarks from PA President Kathy Brito, Ms. Chory gave her administration report. She announced new programs and staff positions at the school. The school now has a universal pre-kindergarten program and parents who missed the orientation were encouraged to reach out to their child's teacher. Second graders have been added to the school-run after school program that also includes 3rd and 4th graders. The program for 2nd graders is on Tuesdays and Thursdays and will concentrate on Spanish, science and arts in 6 week cycles. The goal is for the program to be fun and have a broader focus than just literacy. The program for 3rd and 4th graders is on Mondays and Wednesdays. In addition, the school now has a physical education teacher and 6th graders are now receiving Spanish language instruction. Ms. Chory announced several upcoming events (all listed in the Backpack News) and encouraged parents to fill out and return the lunch form, since the school is being evaluated for the universal meal plan in which lunch would be free of charge for all. Ms. Chory reiterated that she does not look at the forms, the information provided on them is entirely confidential. Ms. Chory also announced that right before the next general meeting on October 24th, at 6:30, there will be a workshop on the Smart Boards which have recently been introduced in the school thanks largely to funding provided by Council Members Jackson and Martinez.

Ms. Chory introduced Deborah Zlotnick from Columbia Presbyterian Health Services. Under a new five-year grant, the school will have a clinician on site on Mondays and Fridays to help students and parents with behavioral and emotional issues. A 17-item quick screen with a SASE will be sent home to parents to help clinicians identify children who may be suitable candidates for intervention.

A question and answer session followed moderated by Stevie Ray Dallimore. Questions were asked about the status of the parent coordinator position, whether the school is receiving increased funding under the new funding formula, whether the programs in kindergarten will filter down to pre-kindergarten and about the status of the Studio in the School program.

Ms. Chory indicated that Soledad Lopez Quintero would be reporting on behalf of the committee that is responsible for hiring a parent coordinator. With regard to funding, PS/IS 187 is in the hold harmless area meaning that it was "overpaid" for many years and will not be receiving any extra funds (parent were referred to the DOE web site for information on Fair School Funding by Nicky Rosen). The administration is still figuring out which programs will be applied to pre-kindergarten (e.g. Learning Leaders, etc.) but Ms. Chory stated that the pre-kindergarten program is part of the school and not a stand-alone program and that parents are thus entitled to the same rights of membership with regard to the PA. The administration decided not to bring back the Studio in the School program and Ms. Chory is looking into the possibility of hiring a part-time (1-2 days a week) art teacher to the school. Ms. Chory reiterated that the administration is listening to parents and that the new physical education, after school and language programs are in response to what parents were calling for last year.

Stevie Ray Dallimore introduced the committees, referring parents to the written description of the committees in the handout. Sign up sheets were distributed and the meeting on October 2 in which committees will meet for the first time was announced. The PA treasurer Luisa Diorio was introduced and she proceeded to discuss the budget for the upcoming year. She emphasized that the numbers are estimated and projected. Parents were informed and reminded that there will not be a Cookie Dough Sale this year though the budget line for that item was retained since the Board hopes to raise the same amount through different fundraising activities. She explained that as per the PA bylaws, parents must vote on the budget before any financial activity can take place. She also explained that most of the money that is raised is for the wish list which is the way parents give back to the school through the teachers.

A question was asked about where Xeroxing costs are reflected in the budget. The answer that was provided is that Title I funds are paying for paper and Xeroxing fees as a parent outreach component that is part of Title I funds. A question and concern was voiced about the roughly \$15,000 discrepancy between the income and expenses of last year's PA after school program. Ms. Brito indicated that she does not have the information but will look into it. Another question was asked about whether the end of year financial report was properly submitted. A motion was requested and made to approve the projected budget. Some objections and concerns were raised about whether one could vote without having a copy of the bylaws (interested parties were informed that they could contact any member of the Board to have them emailed to them) and how one should vote if one wished to enable the financial activities to proceed but objected to some of the projected fundraising activities (parents were reminded and informed that the PA membership had approved the fundraising activities at a meeting the previous Spring). The motion was seconded and a vote was taken. The motion passed.

Francesca Di Mauro then described the School Leadership Team and indicated that its most important function is to collaborate with the administration in developing the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan and the staffing and budget plan. She informed parents that PS/IS 187 is now an Empowerment Zone school and the administration is committed to working very closely with the SLT on a variety of issues. There is currently a vacancy for one of the positions allocated to parents and an election must be held to fill that seat. It is a 2-year position involving a \$300 annual stipend and monthly meetings. Judith Michael explained the process governing elections, particularly with regard to the need for and function of the nominating committee. Volunteers were solicited for the nominating committee and three parents stepped up to the plate. A motion was requested to hold an expedited election at the next general meeting on October 18th. The motion was seconded and passed.

Ms. Di Mauro then described the Class Parent Representative program and indicated that there were no volunteers for one third grade class. A parent volunteered. Ms. Di Mauro indicated that volunteers would receive notice shortly about an orientation for the program. She noted that the most important things the class parent representatives do is to draw up a parent contact list for the classroom (for homework and socialization purposes), to put out the word on class trips and activities and to help line up and coordinate chaperones as needed for classroom events and trips. The program only operates in the elementary school since intermediate school students can travel independently and the pre-kindergarten program hours are too short for outside trips.

Stevie Ray Dallimore reminded the membership that there were still other issues on the agenda and that a vote was needed to allow fundraising activities to proceed regardless of the outcome of the financial report on the previous year's after school program. A motion was raised, seconded and passed with 3 opposed and 2 abstentions.

Soledad Lopez Quintero then gave a report as a member of the committee that was formed to hire a new parent coordinator. She mentioned that the administration preferred that the position be filled by someone who is not a school parent. The job listing was posted on the DOE web site and 20 resumes have been received. There are at least six strong candidates and interviewing will begin next week. Questions were raised about the role of the PC and the qualifications for the position. It was noted that there has been very high turnover of PCs and the reasons for this were questioned. Jim Corona, who is also on the committee, expressed his impression that the PC is supposed to be an advocate for parents when they (parents) are not getting satisfaction with their teachers and/or the administration. He noted that the role of parents only extends as far as hiring. Once a PC is in place, that person is subordinate to the principal and cannot disclose or voice certain information if asked or told not to by the principal (this not being the case with the SLT). The PA has no authority with regard to the SLT. Mr. Corona expressed his own feelings of frustration and disappointment over the way in which the previous PC was terminated but noted that Ms. Chory has consistently declined to discuss the particulars. He noted that this episode has

been quite painful for a number of people and expressed his hope that there would be some sort of “healing” process.

Respectfully submitted,

Kirsten Cowal, Recording Secretary