

General Meeting, February , 2009

The minutes from the January general meeting were approved. Francesca Di Mauro announced that the administration would not be attending the meeting.

Ms. Di Mauro opened a discussion about the wish list. She gave a brief description of the wish list, emphasizing that it constitutes the “icing on the cake,” in other words, things that are not covered by the school's budget such as enrichment activities and field trips. She reported that the Executive Board has received the teachers' list of wishes and that the PA can fulfill all of the wishes. Some questions will be asked of the teachers with regard to certain items requested – such as funding for trips to see the WNBA and the circus. The total amount for the wish list comes to \$16,000 which we can fulfill. Francesca Di Mauro distributed copies of the wish list.

A motion was made to approve the wish list, was seconded and passed with two votes against and one abstention. A subsequent motion was made to amend the vote such that approval for the entire list would be extended contingent upon receiving satisfactory answers to questions about the WNBA and circus trips. It was ultimately concluded that the previous vote could not be revoked so it was left as standing. Ms. Di Mauro promised that she would report at the next meeting on the substance of the outstanding questions parents have about the wish list funded trips. An additional motion was made, seconded and passed (with 3 abstentions) to allocate 20 minutes of discussion time at the next two PA general meetings to the wish list and the larger question of what the PA wants to raise funds for. Some more discussion followed in which parents expressed a range of opinions about the wish including the views that: the wish list represents what teachers and not parents want, that the wish list does not categorically reflect what parents don't want, and finally, that perhaps there isn't anything terribly wrong with the wish list if it contains what the school is not able to provide. A parent with a long span of experience on the PA explained that the wish list evolved the way it did because it was an easier way to distribute the funds particularly since in past not as much money is raised.

Ms. Di Mauro shifted the discussion to upcoming events. She announced that Mr. Leoni will be taping the Intermediate School talent show and will sell CDs of the event. She also indicated that there will be a bake sale at the talent show and that contributions are needed. Ms. Di Mauro announced that volunteers are needed for Movie Night and that donations of drinks will be gratefully accepted. She also stated that parents could also make a significant contribution by sponsoring or covering the cost of renting the popcorn machine for Movie Night.

The \$375 budget for Movie Night was reviewed and it was indicated to parents that the Executive Board was recommending that the proceeds from Movie Night be allocated to the wish list as a buffer. The Movie Night budget of \$375 was approved as was the Board's recommendation to allocate the funds to the wish list (the later vote with 2 abstentions).

Ms. Di Mauro reminded parents to prepare food for the upcoming Staff Appreciation Dinner and then Schoolapalooza was discussed. Ariel Knachmann announced that \$1,600 in ads has already been sold and that they were on track to possibly double last year's ad sales. The target for this year is \$2,400 and a new feature will be one-line (positive only) “shout outs” where parents or anyone else can express support for performers. Mr. Knachmann stressed that help is needed to sell ads. None of the businesses on 181st Street have yet been approached. Denise Rosa is approaching the businesses on 187th Street. At present the majority of ads have been purchased by realtors, doctors and other health care professionals. Ariel Knachmann urged parents who are interested in helping to contact the ad sales coordinator (who is not a school parent) to avoid duplication of efforts.

Stacey Linden and Luisa Diorio are coordinating Food-o-rama (which will take place between 4:00pm when the doors open and 6:30pm when the show begins) which will include a bake sale table. Parents may be asked to provide food contributions such as hot dog packs, prepared chili or corn bread. Parent help may also be needed to sell tickets at the door, to sell t-shirts and raffle tickets (if the raffle happens which is unlikely at this point).

Committee reports followed. The Environmental Committee reported that they produced 144 tote bags and have sold enough of them to cover costs. They will continue selling them at school events. Reports from the parent working groups followed. An announcement was made that the OASIS parent working group will have a meeting with Kinya Trotman on DATE at 4:30pm. There was no report for the Intermediate School Student Council parent support group, but Ruth Lilienstein-Gatton indicated that she could take contact information from Intermediate School parents for the Class Parent Representative list. Francesca Di Mauro reported on behalf of Navi Stoller for the Arts group. Of the seven people who volunteered, none of them except one have gone to meetings, observed classrooms or otherwise helped out. Parents were asked to the program. Studio in a School is waiting for a sign from the administration to go forward – at this point nothing is scheduled. The plan is to implement the program in kindergarten and first grade. There is discussion underway to better understand why some teachers are resistant to the program and its voluntary professional development component (oriented toward helping teachers integrate arts into the curriculum).

In the next report from the parent working group for technology, it was announced that there had been a seminar for teachers on E-chalk and that teachers had been asked to consider allocating some of the wish list funds toward the cost of subscribing for the service. Teachers apparently liked the program and liked the software but did not want to dedicate any of the wish list monies toward obtaining this service. A discussion ensued about the possibility of offering E-chalk to teachers as a school wide investment if there are sufficient PA funds left over after covering the remaining commitments.

Parents were reminded of the upcoming CEC elections and it was clarified that the Parent Coordinator does have a cell phone that is paid for by the Board of Education and not the school. However, at the moment it is broken. Tory Frye encouraged parents to attend the upcoming Education 101 seminar that will provide parents with information on education finance in New York City and how budgeting takes place. She stressed that this information can help parents develop more effective advocacy strategies. The next Education 101 session will focus either on the school curriculum or on parent involvement and ones after that on testing, tracking and school safety and discipline.

Jeanine McAdam announced that she, Kathy Brito, Ruth Lilienstein-Gatton and Judith Michael are working to bring back the candy bar sale. She stressed that in the past 8th graders have raised up to \$1,500 through their own fundraising efforts. Mr. Miller is willing to coordinate the sale and the PA would only have to purchase the candy bars. At this time Ms. Chory is consulting with the legal department of the Department of Education to clarify what is and is not allowable since it isn't clear that rules were violated when the activity was halted in the first place. Kathy Brito has received a donation of a cotton candy making machine which is proposed giving to the Intermediate School to do a fundraiser of their own at Schoolapalooza.