

## NEW NORTHEAST SCHOOL PTO BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, February 10, 2009

7:30 PM

Present: Jenn Ballentine, Jason Brewster, Aaron Danzig, Steve Fazenbaker, Lynne Kushner, Elizabeth Ross Lieberman, Clare Richie, Guido Sacchi.

Absent: none.

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 PM. The minutes from the January 28, 2009 meeting were reviewed and unanimously accepted.

Insurance: Association Insurance Management (AIM) has been chosen to insure the PTO. The quote from the Georgia Center for Nonprofits was prohibitive. Vote was unanimous to purchase insurance AIM.

By-Law Change: The PTO Board discussed changing the membership section of the Bylaws to only include parents or legal guardians that reside in the school zone. Originally, the Bylaws stated that only parent of current students could join, but was changed to allow any zoned resident to join. The change was proposed initially to allow parents / guardians of zoned children to join, whether they were current students or not. The actual change, however, did not limit membership to parents / guardians, but rather allowed any interested zoned resident to join. Advantages of allowing any resident were discussed: former teachers, local business people, people interested in property values, etc. However, the point was made that anyone can volunteer at the school; the question is whether PTO membership should be allowed. The consensus was that voting members should have a vested interest in the school (parents of children that currently attend or will attend in the future; part of school faculty / staff, etc.).

Initial List of Priorities: Clare is setting up a meeting with new principal Ms. Yolanda Brown. She suggested we present a tea basket as a gift for Ms. Brown. The PTO message to Ms. Brown will be that we represent the parents of the new school; we will share our priorities, inform her as to what we are working on, but we understand that the principal sets the agenda. We want to be supportive of Ms. Brown (which is why we're so organized!), and we have been working on a list of time-sensitive issues.

### Resources (Guido)

- Playground has been identified as a top priority by the resources committee. Question was raised concerning how much input was received from students. It is not whether the students actually want, or will use, a playground. Also, a lot of time and effort went into building the MES playground; we have limited time, and our efforts need to be spent on several projects in order to open the new school. There was discussion about what kind of playground would be most appropriate for the new school – perhaps a more natural structure, similar to Brook Run Park in Dunwoody, and not necessarily a metal structure. In any case, it seems impractical to have a playground in place by August. Physical boundaries are not known, and use of some of the property is limited by historical designation.

- Technology: there is no APS-wide technology standard; all technology is localized. However, the work done for the new school may become the APS technology standard. Our technology standard is very similar to the standard at Woodward Academy. The advantage of adopting a standard is that it decreases costs. We are clear in what we expect the new school to have; we will see what APS provides, and we will provide the rest. There is a possibility of creating a technology foundation.
- Garden: the garden in the new school will be incorporated into the curriculum.
- Cafeteria: green design is a priority. The kitchen will be full-service.

Teachers: A recent New York Times article stated that teachers are the single most important element in quality schools. How do we attract the best and brightest? MES teachers are already expressing interest in teaching at the new school. It was pointed out that teacher recruitment is probably beyond our scope, but we can develop a strategy to help Ms. Brown attract quality teachers. Our first priority is to create an environment in which teachers can be successful.

Transportation / Safety: Mary Stouffer has provided extensive notes regarding Transportation and Safety. This is a very high priority. We need to get the relationship with the church finalized (this is also true with respect to the gym).

Curriculum: Core Knowledge is used at MES and Mary Lin. There is interest in going beyond simply meeting CRCT criteria, but this is not a high priority at this time. However, parents of children in the new school expect this to be a high-performance school. Currently, there are plans for Spanish, music, and possibly an extended day.

Special Needs: Special needs concerns always seem to be last-minute / low-priority concerns. We need to make sure that special needs are dealt with appropriately throughout the process of establishing the new school.

#### Fundraising

- Need to address bricks / pavers in terms of fundraising
- If we are considering Sally Foster for the fall, work needs to begin now. Same with a Book Fair
- Three main projects suggested by Fundraising Committee
  - Spring Event – around Earth Day
  - Grand Opening Event – August
  - Bricks / Pavers
- Letter Writing Campaign: this campaign needs to be Board driven, rather than Fundraising Committee driven. We hope to raise \$100,000 with the three projects listed above; but the letter-writing campaign will only work if it is done now – we can't wait until after the school is opened. Perhaps a "founding donor" recognition display will be placed in the new school. There was a question as to whether APS would approve such a display. We are confident that that a plaque will be OK. We can mention this idea to Ms. Brown, and Kelly Fortin can mention it to the architect. We also need to make sure that APS is OK with

selling plaque space in a public school. There was a suggestion that the selling of the plaque and pavers be combined. Gifts at a certain level (TBD) will buy name on a paver; a higher level will buy name on the plaque. We need to know how many pavers we are able to sell, and we need to get input from APS and Ms. Brown. However, it is important that there be some kind of physical recognition.

- Other questions / concerns:
  - We plan to have a presence at Summerfest
  - We recognize that we are in a weak economy; 100% board participation is essential

Upcoming meetings:

- PTO Board – Tuesday, March 3, 2009 at 7:30 PM, at the home of Jenn Ballentine, 915 North Highland Road.
- PTO General Meeting – Thursday, March 12, 2009, 6:30 PM, in the MES auditorium
- PTO Board – Tuesday, March 31, 2009, 7:30 PM, at the home of Elizabeth Lieberman, 316 9<sup>th</sup> Street.

Jason Brewster announced his plan to enroll in a Masters program at Stanford University, and will be leaving in July of this year. He will decide at a later time when he will leave the PTO board.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Fazenbaker