

SPARK PTO BOARD CONFERENCE CALL

8:00 PM EDT

Tuesday, September 25, 2012

In attendance: Heather Hallett , Moshe Haspel, Nicole Foerschler Horn, Meghan McCloskey, Maria Rein, Irma Seabrook, Mary Stouffer , Bret Williams,

Absent: Principal Brown, Jenny Lockwood (teacher rep)

Postponed Votes

The Board voted on items postponed from the September 17th meeting:

Vote to approve Book Fair policy (see minutes from September 17th meeting) – approved unanimously

Vote to approve minutes from August Board Meeting and September 11 Conference Call – approved unanimously

Budget

The Board reviewed the proposed budget line by line. There was some disagreement about how to handle line items where there was no consensus. Ultimately, it was decided to take a vote on the controversial line if, after discussion, the line item was not acceptable to all Board members. Three line items required discussion, two required votes:

Book fair decorations (\$500)

Some Board members felt that this amount was excessive, given that the spending on the last two years were \$200 and \$300, respectively. Other members felt that this expense was justified, given that the decorations are good for school spirit, many of the decorations stay up in the Media Center throughout the year and others are reusable.

Vote: The line item was retained by a 4-3 vote.

Debate Club (\$1,000)

While no one on the Board disputed the value of having a Debate Club, some Board members raised concerns about the apparent preferential treatment funding this club would make. SPARK has 23 afterschool clubs, more than any of its peers, and this is the only Afterschool Club with a PTO budget line. Parents pay program fees for the majority of these clubs, why shouldn't the parents whose children participate in the club pay for the program? Supporters of this line item pointed out that the Debate Club represents the school by participating in tournaments and since the Debate Club leader is a SPARK teacher serving on a volunteer basis, this money all goes to expenses related to the tournaments. Critics

of this budget line noted that other clubs, such as Chess and Robotics, might also elect to represent the school at tournaments; the PTO might be obligated to support those as well. Because the club is led by a teacher, and the PTO has an Enrichment Grant budget line of \$5,000 (up from the \$2,000 allocated for the 2011-12 school year), a motion was made to remove the line item for the Debate Club and encourage the teacher to apply for funding through the Enrichment Grant path.

Vote: Motion was carried, 4.5 - 2.5.

Accelerated Reader Parties

It was reported that Ms. Cofield was unhappy that the AR Party budget in the current draft had been cut from the requested amount of \$5,500 to \$2,000. Board members expressed concerns about how this money was being spent (e.g. the dog tags), and doubts whether the parties were effective in their goal of encouraging kids to read more. No one on the board asked for a vote to change the budget line, however.

Some ideas have been floated to make the program more effective such as asking the SGA to come up ideas for a reading incentive program, using incentives (such as “pajama day” privileges) that would not cost any money, and giving bookstore giftcards to students who met their AR goals. The Board also discussed inviting Ms. Cofield to a meeting to present more information on the AR program, participation rates, and the role of the parties in the overall program.

Vote: These items discharged, the budget approved unanimously.

General Meeting

The Board discussed some final logistics for the General Meeting: Heather and Nicole will present an overview, including goals for the year and an Inman Task Force update; Mary will present the budget; and Bret will speak about the fundraising needed to implement this budget.

TO DO: Heather and Nicole to print promotion labels (e.g. “Take me to the Potluck”) for kids to wear home the day before the meeting

Nicole asked board members who would be in attendance to check BigTent and sign up for some items that would be needed for the potluck (paper products, juice boxes, etc.)

Moshe asked that a bylaw amendment be presented to the membership, striking the phrase “and, shall be eligible to receive a copy of the PTO directory” from section 3.1 of the PTO Bylaws. This would free each year’s Board to determine to whom the Directory would be distributed and allow this year’s Board to distribute the directory to all parents, regardless of PTO membership status.

Vote: Motion to present bylaw amendment approved unanimously

Other Business

It looks like the 5th Grade Committee does not want to sell pizza at the Book Fair as a fundraiser. The PTO may take that job on, but will consult with the Book Fair Committee about its preferences.

Jill Gossett has asked the Board to approve May 18 (the last Saturday before school lets out) for the Spring Carnival/May Day/End of Year Celebration event. TO DO: Please look at long-range calendars

Reminder to all Board members to remind all of their committee chairs that all flyers must be approved by the Communications Director (Meghan)

If purchases are to be made and there is any question about tax exemption, please speak with Mary; we don't shouldn't spend any money we don't have to.

There is potential for in-kind donation requests to trip over each other. The Board should look into creating a Donations Coordinator position, possibly under Fundraising (Bret) or possibly as an additional Board-level position. It might also be useful to elevate Volunteer Coordinator to a Board-level position. As the school grows, the workload grows with it; expanding the number of Board members may help share the load.