

**PTO BOARD MEETING**  
**Springdale Park Elementary School**  
**7:15 PM EST**  
**Monday, January 28, 2012**

**In attendance:** Principal Brown, Morna Gailor, Heather Hallett, Moshe Haspel, Nicole Foerschler Horn, Jenny Lockwood (teacher rep), Irma Seabrook, Mary Stouffer, Doug Strohl

**Absent:** Maria Rein, Bret Williams

**Budget Update (Mary Stouffer)**

Mary presented information on the status of the year's budget. She had identified \$14,294 from the initial budget that could be returned to the general budget, such \$557 from Family Science Night, which had come in under budget. In addition, \$20k initially set aside for the Leveled Reading Room could be moved to the general budget, as it will not be necessary to do a build-out for that room. There is still some uncertainty in the budget: SPARK After Dark—the main spring fundraiser—has not taken place yet, we have not received any of the Dine-out income due to us, and the House Parties are well below the amount forecast in the original budget.

At the same time, some unexpected needs such as the PE shed (\$3500) had come up. A number of budget lines had been cut to the bone in the initial budget could now be re-examined. And some additional requests could also be entertained.

Finally, Heather Hallett and Nicole Foerschler-Horn unveiled a new “presidents’ initiative” fundraising idea involving bulb sales. They believe that this fundraiser can bring in \$10k.

*Vote: Motion to reserve \$500 of the \$14,294 Mary identified for Risograph supplies and return the remaining \$13,794 the general fund—passed unanimously.*

*Vote: Motion to spend up to \$1,500 on a school-wide subscription to BrainPop, an online educational tool—passed unanimously.*

*Vote: Motion to add \$2,000 to the Principal's Discretionary Fund—passed unanimously.*

There was some discussion about the copier situation. [Secretary's note: The initial budget had \$2000 to buy a copier for the Hirsch Building: APS provided only two copiers for the three buildings, and these two could not handle the copying load. After the Risograph was purchased, the Board agreed to monitor the copying situation and evaluate the need for a third copier. At the informal Budget pre-meeting, Heather asked Moshe to speak with teachers to gauge the need for an additional copier]. Moshe reported that teachers generally agree that the Riso purchase has helped with the copying situation: whereas both copiers had been broken much of the time in the pre-Riso period, now there always at least one copier in operation. The Riso is currently underutilized, as some teachers still are not aware of

how to use the Riso and when it should be used vs. the traditional copiers. The one real copying issue is the “tri-weeklies,” multipage grade-wide assessments that are prepared well in advance of the test date. These are a great candidate for the Riso, because teachers typically make 100 or more copies. But because the Riso does only one page at a time, one would have to manually duplex and then collate the copies, putting a large burden on the teachers. Moshe recommended that the PTO put off purchase of another copier, have the tri-weeklies printed off site, and see what happens to the copier situation. Mary expressed a concern that this printing would be too expensive, and recommended getting parent volunteers to copy the tri-weeklies. Mary felt that it was important to have a copier, though not necessarily one costing \$9k in the Hirsch building. She proposed to add \$2000 to the copier budget (bringing it to \$4000 total), which would provide for a solid mid-range machine.

*Vote: Motion to add \$2,000 to the copier budget—passed 3.5-2.5.*

*Vote: Motion to add \$2500 Teacher Grant Fund—passed unanimously.* [Secretary’s note: this is the competitive grant pool, not the automatic classroom grants]

Maria Rein had e-mailed a request that additional funds be allocated to the AR party budget, but had not specified any amount. Mary Stouffer wondered whether Maria was aware that an additional \$1,000 had been allocated to the parties by the Teacher Grant Committee, as Maria Rein had not been present at the December meeting. Moshe expressed opposition to any additional funding of AR parties. Despite repeated requests, there has been no information from the AR Party Committee regarding how the money will be spent, or any evidence that the program is successful. He reiterated concerns expressed in December that a quick literature search he performed turned up little evidence that AR works (excluding research funded by Renaissance Learning). And, even more troubling, at least one study suggests that the program as implemented at SPARK may actually be harmful. When incentivized to read, the students examined indeed read more; but when the incentives discontinued, reading dropped to levels below the initial baseline.

*Vote: Motion to add \$750 to the AR Party budget passed, 4-2.* [Secretary’s note: this brings the total AR Party budget for the year to \$3750, an increase of 39% over last year’s spending level.]

*Vote: Motion to put \$5,000 aside in a “contingency fund” passed 5-1.*

*Vote: Motion to allocate \$750 for a volunteer appreciation event passed 4-1-1.*

*Vote: Motion to allocate \$250 for a Presidents’ Discretionary fund passed 5-1.*

*Vote: Motion to allocate \$5,000 to purchase science kits or materials passed unanimously.*

*Vote: Motion to allocate \$750 for teacher appreciation gifts for specials teachers passed unanimously.*

The Debate Club budget request was subject to considerable debate [Secretary’s note: during the initial budget discussions, a number of Board members including Meghan McCloskey felt that it was unfair to favor one afterschool club via a subsidy over all of the others. The Board voted to remove what had been a line item the previous year, and recommend that the Debate Club apply for a Teacher Grant,

which the Board had funded at an enhanced level over that previous year.] Morna Gailor stated that debate was special because it enhanced CRCT scores, it was the only club where a teacher gave his/her time without compensation, and that the students would be representing SPARK. Moshe Haspel countered that other before or after school activities such as chess also enhanced student performance; that at least one other club was run by a teacher volunteer (jump rope with Ms. Pirnstill); and that it was equally conceivable that other clubs might enter in competitions representing SPARK. Moreover, he expressed concerns that the failure to apply for a teacher grant implied a lack of commitment on the part of the club's leaders and that the club served only a very small number of students (5 last year, per Morna's information).

*Vote: Motion to allocate \$1,000 for the Debate Team passed 5-1.*

Another item that met with controversy was Moshe Haspel's proposal to allocate \$7,000 for teacher training at the start of the 2013-14 school year. Next year's proposed calendar sets aside one teacher work day where the school could use at its discretion. Moshe recommended using this teacher day early in the year (either before the start of the school year or during the newly proposed fall break) for another math training like the one the PTO had funded for January 8<sup>th</sup>. Moshe noted that a number of teachers had been very complimentary of the training, but that a number of parents were unhappy about the training taking place on a school day. But we were constrained in when we could hold the training, as it could not be scheduled until the money was in place. By allocating the money now, he argued, we could have our pick of dates—and hold the class earlier in the year so as to maximize the benefits. Heather Hallett argued that the question of how to spend money next year was best left to next year's Board. Moshe countered that there was precedent for one year's Board to earmark money for expenses in the coming year (e.g. the Leveled Reading Room), and that at least part of the money could be spent this year by making a deposit now and reserving our most desired date.

*Vote: Motion to allocate \$7,000 for additional teacher training passed 3-1-2*

### **SPARK After Dark (Irma Seabrook)**

Preparations are on track, and ticket sales have been good. The only two big needs right now are more volunteers for the event and more sponsors for teacher tickets.

### **Letter to APS Regarding Bell Times (Nicole Foerschler Horn)**

Nicole presented the latest draft of the letter (previously circulated via email) for joint signature. [Secretary's note: APS is proposing to move bell times up 15 minutes, from 8:00 to 7:45 and dismissal times by an equal amount.] Members of the Board agreed that the letter was in good shape, though it might reference studies that link later bell times with increased sleep and both better student behavior and performance. Morna Gailor said that the LSC, as the body responsible for advising on student achievement matters, could add language to that effect.

*Vote: Motion to approve the draft letter and send to the LSC—approved unanimously.*

**Volunteer Appreciation Scheduling (Heather Hallett)**

Heather proposed scheduling a Volunteer Appreciation event to coincide with the end of the elections period for April 19. Moshe consulted the planning calendar and noted that this date is already reserved for the Screen on the Green.