

ACCESS Academy PTA

[See correction
at bottom of
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Minutes of General Membership Meeting

Tuesday, May 23, 2017, at 7 p.m. in the library, Rose City Park School, 2334 NE 57th Avenue, Portland, Oregon

Attendance: 14 people signed the attendance list, of whom 13 were members for 2016–17. 6 members constitute a quorum for a General Membership Meeting.

Meeting called to order by President Jennifer Ellis at 7:03 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the 4/25/2017 General Membership Meeting were reviewed and accepted.

Principal's Announcements

Interim Principal Teri Geist has started working the school but was not present at this meeting. She is not expected to attend school-related events after hours.

Elections

President Jennifer Ellis reviewed the report of the Nominating Committee (identifying candidates for PTA offices for 2017-18), which was presented at the previous General Meeting. She solicited additional nominations. There were none.

The following motion (of which printed copies were available for review) was moved, second, and approved without objection:

To elect the following persons to serve as the officers of ACCESS PTA for the one-year term beginning August 1, 2017 and ending July 31, 2018:

President: Jennifer Ellis (incumbent)
Vice President: Catherine Beckett (incumbent)
Treasurer: Sally Maltman
Co-Secretary: Gil Neiger (incumbent)
Co-Secretary: Lisa Karplus (incumbent)

Attendant to election of the new Treasurer, President Jennifer Ellis then read the following motion:

To change the authorized signers on the ACCESS PTA business checking account with Bank of America as follows:

Effective on or before July 31, 2017:
Remove Colin Cunningham
Clint Chiavarini

Effective immediately:
Add Sally Maltman

This motion was moved, seconded, and approved without objection.

(Printed copies of an older version of this motion had been available for review. This previous version, which was not approved, did not include the words “on or before”.)

Old Business

President Jennifer Ellis reviewed discussion from the previous month’s meeting regarding surplus funds in the PTA budget. Two reserve funds will be maintained: (1) an operating reserve; and (2) a building reserve for moves, etc. The operating reserve would be up to \$8,000 – 10,000 and would be money that can be used quickly without fundraising for unexpected expenses. The building reserve would be up to \$10,000 and would be held for expenses related to building moves and similar events. If the PTA ends a future academic year with a surplus in excess of the amount needed to maintain the reserve funds, that excess will be used in the following academic year (e.g., to cover increased expenses or to reduce required income).

There had been a question of whether the PTA could pay for the school supplies that all families are expected to contribute. It had been determined that this would cost \$14,000 – 15,000 (pencils alone cost \$2,000 – 4,000), which is more than the PTA could provide.

Some expressed surprise at the high cost and asked about the estimated cost of each box of supplies a family could order through the contracted supplier. An exact number wasn’t available, but it was reported that it was expected that prices for the 2017-18 academic year would be as much as \$12 less than those of the boxes ordered for 2016-17. The cost of a box for a 6th-grade student (with 108 pencils) would be about \$50.

Some felt that the amount for pencils was excessive and asked whether there might be a less expensive source. It was pointed out that, even if the PTA decided to pay for all the pencils, details of cost would not be known before July.

It was suggested that two large costs are items that the vendors do not supply: calligraphy pens (for 3rd grade) and 5-subject quad notebooks from Mead. The 3rd-grade teachers could be encouraged to ask the PTA for funds for the calligraphy pens, allowing them to be removed from the lists. At \$6/pen, the overall cost might be \$360.

A parent asked whether the 3rd-grade teachers could purchase the calligraphy pens using the PTA funds allocated for their classroom expenses. It was suggested that, in the future, the costs of the pens might be reduced by working with the school secretary to purchase them in volume. President Jennifer Ellis said that that might be an option for next year; a decision would need to be made before parents purchase school supplies. She can also ask the new principal next year if, instead of purchasing school supplies, parents can give money to school, which could then purchase the supplies, getting the school’s usual volume discounts.

Budget Adjustments

Starting this year, the PTA supported events on "Pi Day" (March 14th), spending about \$550 of funds allocated for social activities. It is expected that better planning will allow this to be reduced significantly next year. There is a plan to add \$500 to the social activities budget line for the current budget.

The general membership must approve any budget changes in excess of \$100. There was a motion to increase this year's social activities budget line by \$500. The change would come from the following unspent funds: classroom expenses; garden; student equity fund; and excess fundraising. The motion was seconded and approved without objection.

The budget line for field trips is \$1,000. That much has been spent, and requests for an additional \$200 are expected. There was a motion to reallocate \$200 in funds unspent for OBOB (Oregon Battle of the Books) for field trips. The motion was moved, seconded and approved with only a single objection.

Two teachers have made requests for reimbursements in excess of the \$500 allocated, if the PTA has a surplus: \$142 for Ms. O'Hagan; and \$200 for calculators for Ms. MacKinnon (the latter depends on whether there are unspent funds for math after expenditures for the Mathazine).

President Jennifer Ellis asked whether the PTA Executive Committee could reallocate to a teacher funds that were not spent by another (up to \$500). A parent asked whether such reallocation would be done only after a deadline known to the teachers. It was asked whether limiting this to \$500 would be too restrictive, given the amounts already requested. Jennifer said that the \$500 limit would avoid encouraging overspending.

There was a motion to give the PTA Executive Committee the authority to reallocate up to \$500 of teacher funds between teachers. The motion was seconded and approved without opposition.

New Business

[SEE BELOW] Grades 1-3 use "Wordly Wise" to support language arts. The district has been paying for that through this year but will no longer do so starting next year.* It would cost about \$1,200 if the PTA elected to pick up that cost. There was some discussion about whether the PTA should do so.

Some parents felt that the resources were not being used appropriately and that the PTA should not pay for them. Others felt that the resources did provide some value and worried about losing that.

There was a suggestion that the PTA could allocate funds to the teachers, who could then make the purchase. There were discussions of how to reconcile the fact that the teachers want the resources while parents do not think that they're being put to good use. It was

* At the Oct. 18, 2017 General Membership Meeting, new principal Anh Nguyen-Johnson provided the following correction: During FY2016, the Principal's Consolidated Budget, and NOT the district, paid for Wordly Wise.

pointed out that teachers would have the option to use the PTA funds allocated to classroom expenses. Further discussion was put off to the review of next year's budget.

Review of Next Year's Budget

Treasurer-elect Sally Maltman distributed copies of a draft budget for the 2017-18 academic year. The PTA will operate under this draft budget from July 1st until a final budget is approved in September.

Sally led a discussion that focused on the changes proposed from this year:

- Music: the amount here would be reduced from \$500 to zero. It is expected that the usual piano tuning could be paid from funds raised by the Run for the Arts (RFTA). These funds are substantial and can be spent on music. Mr. Wood had committed to ensuring that music department would get \$500 (not from the PTA; perhaps from RFTA). A parent pointed out that RFTA funds are for experiences and teaching and cannot be used for instrument repair, purchase of sheet music, etc.
- Technology: the amount here would be reduced from \$800 to zero. The \$800 amount had earlier been shifted to technology from the building needs budget line to support a one-time purchase of Chromebooks. A parent asked whether the PTA should budget for replacing the computers in 3 years. There are currently no such plans.
- Science Lab Needs: the amount here would be reduced from \$500 to zero. The expectation was that funds contributed by Intel could be used to support science labs. Colin pointed out that the Intel funds are intended for robotics and similar efforts, and they should not be used to subsidize classroom or technology costs generally. We should not plan to use the Intel funds for science lab needs.
- Garden: the amount here would be reduced from \$1,000 to zero. In the past, these funds had been used to pay a group leading garden-related instruction: a half day per month, coming to \$700 per year. The group has said that, in the future, it would need to come two days per month, coming to \$2,800. This is considered too expensive. After discussions with the 3rd-grade teachers, it was agreed to eliminate the program. Note that this budget line does not apply to the school's new landscaping; the district has the responsibility to maintain that.
- Student equity fund: the amount here would be reduced from \$700 to \$500. For 2016-17, \$380 has been spent on Oregon Trail scholarships for field trips. The full amount of this budget line has usually not been spent in the past. (A parent asked whether the Helping Hands funds could be combined into this budget line. The answer was that they cannot, since Helping Hands funds are earmarked based on donations, and their use is not discretionary. Helping Hands funds are not part of the PTA budget.)
- Social activities: the amount here would be increased from \$500. Sally mentioned \$1,000, while the printed draft read \$1,200.
- Oregon Battle of the Books (OBOB): the amount here would be reduced from \$1,300 to \$1,000. This budget line was underspent for 2016-17.
- Teacher classroom expenses: the amount for the Mandarin teacher would be reduced from \$500 to zero. The Confucius Institute provides those funds.
- Special Education PTA of Portland (SEPTAP): a new budget expense line will be created with an amount of \$100. This is a district-wide PTA that is not associated with a specific school, and it asks for donations from all district PTAs.

- Playground equipment: a new budget expense line will be created with an amount of \$500. In the past, Mr. Wood had reported that there are various needs in this area (for balls, jump ropes, etc.)

There was a motion to clarify the following: (1) the social activities budget line would be \$1,000; and (2) the budget lines for music and for science lab needs would be restored to last year's amounts. The motion was seconded and approved without objection.

In summary, discussions have added about \$1,000 to what was printed. The draft budget would show a deficit of \$3,000, which is consistent with that of previous years. In the past, budgeting for such a deficit has usually resulted in a surplus.

Discussion returned to the question of calligraphy pens and 5-subject quad notebooks (see "Old Business," above). President Jennifer Ellis said that she would want to talk to the 3rd-grade teachers about the calligraphy pens before making a decision. A parent advanced the idea of using Race for the Arts funds for calligraphy pens.

There are only three teachers who ask for the 5-subject quad notebooks (Johnson, Lanners, and MacKinnon). They are not available in any of the standard supply boxes. It was not clear whether it made sense for the PTA to subsidize just a few teachers.

Discussion returned to the question of Wordly Wise (see "New Business," above). A parent suggested that the PTA give money only if teachers use the resources to differentiate appropriately. President Jennifer Ellis identified three options to consider: (1) the PTA provides no funding; (2) the PTA provides full funding; or (3) the PTA provides partial funding (e.g., \$750) and expects teachers to make up funds from those allocated for their classroom expenses.

There was an informal poll on these three options. Five (5) parents preferred no funding; one (1) parent preferred full funding; and one (1) parent preferred partial funding. Jennifer said that she would inform the teachers that the PTA has concerns and will not approve any funding before the fall (if then).

There followed another discussion of how teachers use Wordly Wise and its value. Parents wondered why the district was eliminating this funding. While the resources seem to be used only for homework in 3rd grade, a parent said that they were used three times a week in grades 1 and 2 for writing. Perhaps the PTA could consider funding the resources only for grades 1 and 2. Another parent reminded the group that teachers could use PTA funds for classroom expenses. It was pointed out that there will be a new teacher for the grade-1-2 classroom next year.

A few parents pointed out that the PTA does not typically pay for curriculum expenses. It might make more sense for the PTA to advocate for appropriate use of the resources or for the district to restore funding.

A final budget for 2017-18 will be approved at the first general meeting in the fall. A parent suggested that that meeting should be more of a social event and should not spend too much time on the budget. It was pointed out that it is essential to get the budget approved at the beginning of the year. A parent new this year reported that the first-meeting budget review had not been onerous. There was some discussion of a one-hour potluck social gathering to precede the first general meeting in the fall.

Meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Minutes compiled by Gil Neiger, Secretary



AS CORRECTED, and
approved, 10/18/2017
-Lisa Karplus, co-Secretary