

PS58 PTA
General Meeting: 19 December 2018
Meeting Minutes

1. Co-President Welcome

(Adam Baruchowitz - co-president1@ps58pta.org / Linnea Olson – co-president2@ps58pta.org)

2. Principal's Update (Katie DelloStritto)

- Boiler Update
 - We have finished the installation throughout the school of new, electronic thermostats – which are now visible in all classrooms.
 - The construction team won't be back in the classrooms for some time. It is currently working in the boiler room on the removal of the old boiler before installing the new one.
 - The team will be working 24/7 over the upcoming holiday break to accelerate progress. We're experiencing some delays due to National Grid. It was supposed to arrive on Nov 15 to install the new gas line, but has postponed that installation until Feb 15.
 - The installation will be disruptive on First Place for about a week, which may impact dismissal. So, we are currently formulating a plan to minimize the impact and will communicate it to the community soon.
- SLT Report
 - At our last meeting, the SLT conducted a brainstorming session about diversity and equity – which led to consideration of partnering with other schools, performing service projects, etc.
 - On the topic of oral language, we began creating a rubric to assess per grade in a uniform manner for “speaking and listening” portion of the report card how students are expressing themselves.
 - On the topic of parent workshops, there is one coming up in January about social media and another in March about STEM. We are considering topics for future months and welcome any suggestions.
 - On the topic of professional development, we considered next steps after our recent staff training on diversity.

3. New Business: Acoustic Upgrades (Pablo Arraya)

- Following teacher feedback about noise in the cafeteria, we are currently considering a new initiative to lower the volume there.
- We propose covering a large portion of the cafeteria walls with acoustic panels which absorb noise. The product being considered is the most cost effective as well as compliant with relevant building and health codes. The initial pricing for the materials is about \$4,000, and the work of installation could be done by a group of volunteers.
- If we move forward, decisions will need to be made about the color of the fabric covering the panels and the possibility of placing anything on the panels (e.g., student artwork) -- since they can be used like bulletin boards.
- We also propose installing a new Sonos speaker system (~6 speakers) in the cafeteria to enhance the quality of the music that is played for students (e.g., ballroom dancing, background)
- In addition, we are considering an initiative to rationalize and improve the two sound systems which are currently being used in the Auditorium. We still need to perform a

detailed diagnostic in the beginning of the year to determine exactly what should be done and how much it will cost.

- Questions & Answers
 - Q (Jon Scott): Would the panels be compliant with the fire code?
 - A : (Pablo) Yes (Annie) We will need to work closely with Ryan and the Janitorial staff to ensure that everything is compliant with regulations.
- Q: What are the proposed speakers for?
- A (MrC): We have been trying to enhance the student experience in the cafeteria by playing pleasant background music during lunch, as well as using a song (rather than yelled commands) to signal transitions. Since we have been using a mix of personal teacher equipment and damaged school equipment, the sound quality is relatively poor and the set-up is difficult to use. It would be nice to have better equipment that's easier to use.

4. Financial Report (Darrin Cirillo - treasurer-onsite@ps58pta.org)

- We have raised ~\$67k and spent ~\$185k to date this fiscal year. We are generally tracking to our budget, which is deliberately projected this year to be \$44k under collections in order to absorb a surplus which was generated last year.
- The Direct Appeal has raised \$56k to date and seems to be tracking to last year's campaign.
- Our Form 990 is currently being developed by our CPA and should be ready for submission by the beginning of 2019 – significantly ahead of our submission last year.
- Merchandise is being sold this year and treated as inventory. We just filed our first NY State Sales Tax return and will continue to do so each quarter. Filing Sales Tax returns in this way enables us to sell in a variety of new ways, such as an online store.
- Our PTA uses Amazon extensively today to source materials for its activities. Individuals typically make purchases on their own behalf since the PTA is unable to hold a debit or credit card (it can only issue checks after receiving a vendor invoice – which doesn't work for Amazon) and therefore make purchases directly. The PTA subsequently reimburses those individuals for the cost of the goods, as well as Sales Tax and any shipping. So, the PTA in practice re-pays the Sales Tax that was charged to the individual, but in theory should not – since it is a non-profit entity. We are currently exploring a new service offered by Amazon (i.e., a pay-in-full line of credit) which will allow us to purchase as an organization and therefore avoid paying Sales Tax, which should generate significant savings relative to past years while greatly simplifying our purchasing process. We're still working with Amazon to explore this service and get it set up – and will provide updates at upcoming meetings.
- Questions & Answers
 - Q (Dan): Could this be the way for teachers to manage their Mini-grants?
 - A (Darrin): Perhaps, we're still exploring how extensively we can use this.
 - Q (Anique): Will we make purchases using our personal Amazon accounts and then link to the PTA account for payment?
 - A (Darrin): Not sure, we're still learning how this mechanism will work.

5. Updates from Committee Chairs

- Community Outreach (Jubi Williams/Linnea)
 - We have been exploring the possibility of helping other schools in need.
 - Such cross-school collaborations are being done in other cities, and we're trying to learn from these early experiences.

- Our initial idea is to establish a small program and see how it might grow, but we are working now to open this conversation to our community and look forward to shaping these ideas based on the input we receive.
- In the meantime, Katie has contacted the Superintendent about our interest, and we have been authorized to contact other schools about potential partnering.
- Fundraising (Renee - fundraising-coordinator@ps58pta.org)
 - Direct Appeal updates: n/a
 - Auction Update (Nikki / Jess): The Auction team is currently looking to fill two positions -- PR/Marketing Manager and Fulfilment Manager.
 - Read-a-Thon (Amanda Pisino-Galante): The new Read-a-Thon team conducted its first meeting yesterday. This team of two parents could use additional support, if anyone is interested in joining the effort.
 - Merchandise Pop-up (Linnea Olson): Being held this Thu-Fri to sell items that were unavailable in time for the Holiday Market sale.
- Community Events (Whitney Rallo / Anik Levy – vp-community@ps58pta.org)
 - Parents' Night Out: We're exploring the possibility of holding this new event in Jan-Feb.
- Afterschool Report (Carolyn Pravda - cpravda@ps58pta.org)
n/a
- Mini Grants (Shelley Stein / Negar Treister - minigrants58@gmail.com)
 - Q (Negar): Some teachers have raised the question of having someone else purchase an item on their behalf and reimbursing them using their mini-grant, so the recipient doesn't have to float the expense themselves. Is this possible?
 - A: This should be fine – as long as we document everything in writing.
- Arts and Culture (Michele Pravda / Cathy Diana – artsculture@ps58pta.org)
 - International Food Festival: n/a
- Operations (Amarah Sedreddine - vp-operations2@ps58pta.org / Carly Strelzik – vp-operations@ps58pta.org)
 - Supply Subcommittee: n/a
 - Website
 - A WordPress upgrade has been rolled-out recently, but we're unsure how our host will apply it to our site. We need to monitor the site over the coming weeks for any impact.
 - The PS58online.org domain was transferred to Dan from Mary Margaret. We have not yet succeeded in contacting two other owners of relevant domains. Amarah will soon make another attempt using more formal letters.

6. Wellness Council Update (Giselle Rockman / Becky Morrison)

- We conducted a meeting yesterday of parents interested in improving food choices in our cafeteria and are looking for additional volunteers to support this effort.

7. Open Mic

- Barbara Shelsky has offered to act as a community-wide point person for Konstella.