PTO Council Meeting

January 23, 2017

Location: Home of Heather Weingart, PTO Council Co-President

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

1. Co-Presidents’ Report:

The Board of Education has voted to place a $30M bond issue on the ballot for May 2, 2017. This bond issue is the smaller of two amounts being considered, and will cover only necessary maintenance and repairs to keep all buildings “warm, safe and dry.” A Triad public opinion survey indicated that a larger $50M bond issue (that would have included replacing the existing Middle School building) could have passed, but was likely to cause a great deal of dissension among the community, particularly among those who do not currently use the Shaker schools and feel their taxes are already prohibitively high. Only 25% of current residents have students in the Shaker schools.

See the attached Power Point presentation for an overview and FAQ of the Bond issue. PTO members are asked to be familiar with the issues and share key messages. Heather and Mark also asked that if PTO members hear negative feedback to share it with them, and if possible, to put Heather and Mark in touch with community members who have concerns about the Bond issue.

The Board will most likely make a presentation about the Bond issue at the next PTO Council Meeting, scheduled for Monday, March 20 at 7 pm.

1. PTO Council Slate

Missy Sherwin, Nominating Co-Chair, shared progress on filling the 2017-18 PTO Council Slate. She requested possible candidate names for the following open positions:

* Co-First VPs - This is a critical need! The position is open on this year’s Council and needs to be filled so that we will have PTO Council presidents for the following year.
* VP of Outreach
* Health and Safety - group provided several names of local pediatricians who might be good candidates for this role
* VP of Education and Advocacy – Missy has a possible candidate, still waiting to hear back.

Missy has held off on recruiting for Tour Your Schools because it is not yet known how that role may be changing. She is waiting for clarification from Administration on this.

Please forward any names of possible candidates for above positions to Missy ASAP.

1. CommUnity Builders

Roxanne Jaber, Hannah Mendelsohn and Jen Bordeaux reported on

the first District-wide MLK Day of Service, which was hugely successful and brought in more than 600 students and family members to perform service projects at the High School.

They agreed that what made the day so successful was having the entire community involved in various age-appropriate projects, all held in one location.

Suggestions for next year include having PTO put a budget in place now for next year’s event, having a more coordinated fundraising effort (one source for fundraising on PayForIt rather than separate fundraisers for each service project), and possibly having a pre-event to prepare necessary materials ahead of time (like cutting fleece blankets.)

1. PTO President Reports: Best Practices

ON – Created a comprehensive list of job descriptions for all PTO positions and sent it home to all families with a letter inviting them to become more involved in PTO, whether in a particular role or as a general volunteer. The hope is to be more inclusive and have a more diverse representation in PTO that is reflective of our community.

* Started having PTO Exec Board meetings on the months in between regular PTO meetings to conduct majority of business during those times and allow more time at the PTO meetings for guest speakers, in the hope of increasing attendance.

WO – Setting up a PTO table at band and orchestra concerts to reach out to parents about becoming more involved with PTO. Principal Danny Young has also reached out to specific parents to invite them to meetings to help broaden and diversify the attendance.

HS – Publishing meeting curriculum ahead of time so parents can plan to attend sessions of interest to them. Principal Jonathan Kuehnle also reminds parents about upcoming PTO meetings in his weekly robocall.

* Instead of having just one teacher liaison this year, there are now 3 teachers and a guidance counselor. Helps to alleviate the burden on one person attending all meetings.
* Nominating had success in filling slate by making all positions “co” – which helps someone who is hesitant to accept the role.

BO – Working to streamline events this year because the volunteer base is shrinking. All PTO Presidents agreed that this is a trend they are seeing.

* Asking teachers and admins to help identify families who volunteer in the classroom and might be interested in becoming more involved with PTO. They have also identified that International Families are an untapped resource. They may be hesitant to volunteer due to ESL or other barriers, but are often willing when invited by someone they know.

ME – Extending outreach to families in the Moreland neighborhood to make sure they are welcome and connected at school events. Block party at Chelton Park in the fall is one example.

* Eliminated some long-time events on the calendar to make room for other things that provide more access across the board. Ex – after school enrichment, Meerkat Club, that offers free activities with late bus service, run by parent volunteers.

1. Other Business

Mark Levin asked about ways to increase attendance at meetings for families with special needs students. Discussed having building principal work with 504 Teams to reach out to families when they work with them, to provide meeting schedules and encourage them to attend. Possibly provide a form that asks for permission to contact them by email to notify them of meetings.

PTO Council Treasurer Bev Saylor noted that it may be wise for PTO Presidents to consider streamlining their fundraising efforts. Buildings that have one or two major fundraisers seem to do better than having multiple smaller efforts. She also noted that PTO Council fundraising is below target.

Heather Weingart reported that an online spirit gear sale is in the works. Proceeds would benefit PTO Council.

Book Fair – it might be worth investigating if there is a better way to conduct Book Fairs and/or use a different provider (Barnes & Noble vs. Scholastic) to reduce the volunteers and setup time needed. Some schools take a percentage of the proceeds; others use it only to donate books to teachers in the classroom. Leslie Moore said she would ask Mercer Book Fair chair to investigate options and report back.

Meeting was adjourned at 9 p.m.