

November 13, 2012

Franklin-Randall PTO Minutes

Board Members present: Eileen Kennedy, Elizabeth Kerwin, Noelle LoConte, David McMurray, Beth O'Callaghan, Dana Prager, Jason Speich, Suzanne Swift, Soraya Willems-Neal

Administrators present: Britta Hanson, John Wallace

Guests present: Amy Thomas (Grants Coordinator)

Call to order: 7:15p

1. Review October and Grants Meeting minutes – deferred.
2. Budget Review (Jason)

The full board reviewed a Budget v. Actual Handout. There was a brief discussion about the savings balance of \$34,891, which has accumulated over many years. It was noted that the board has frequent conversations about the on-going balance, and that the amount is adequate to cover budgeted items should any of our fundraising efforts in a given year fall short. It was also noted that the savings balance has been decreasing over the past few years. Past budgets, and grant award amounts, are available on the PTO website for review.

3. Fall Grants Review (Amy)

The total amount requested for the fall grant cycle was \$16,994, which exceeded the amount budgeted of \$7,400. Award recommendations forwarded to the board by the Grants Committee came to \$7,400. It was noted that many of the proposals were in alignment with the School Improvement Plan at Franklin, and supported by the Leadership Team at Randall. In addition, there were many requests to upgrade existing or old technology, as well as fund new technology.

Each proposal was reviewed and discussed by the Board, with special focus on the recommendations of the Grants Committee.

Highlighted by discussions about individual grants were larger issues for the Board to consider. These include:

- Recognition that the grants program is one of the most visible, exciting and important things that the PTO does.
- How the board can effectively stimulate creative and innovative grant proposals that also fulfill the core instructional needs of each school. (Previous examples cited include window gardens and chair pockets for classrooms.)
- How the board should approach the growing technology needs of our schools as required by the implementation of the Common Core Standards. It was noted that the board has yet to develop an overall plan for how to approach a growing list of instructional needs from the schools.
- Discussion of how well the grants program aligns with the results of the spring PTO Priorities Survey.

- Development of a more formal grant evaluation process. Included in this is the possibility of funding 'buckets' (i.e. academic, enrichment, building/grounds, etc.).
- The grants program represents 10% of overall PTO expenditures.
- Changes to the Grants Committee meeting time should be considered so more people could attend.

It was noted that these items are part of necessary and on-going conversations for the board, and the possibility of developing a sub-committee or thinking group to look at these issues was raised.

The board made the following adjustments to the recommendations of the Grants Committee:

- 1) John Wallace may request funding for the Read Your Heart Out event if other funding is not located.
- 2) The Scientific Aquasquad grant will be funded on an 'as-demanded' basis, up to \$200. It is expected that John Fayarm will follow-up on individual teacher participation for the program.

With the changes stated above, the Board unanimously approved the recommendations of the Grants Committee.

4. Fall Campaign Update (Suzanne)

The fall campaign is on-track in comparison to this point in previous years. As of Monday the campaign had reached 81.2% of goal.

5. Newsletter Changes Update (Suzanne)

The transition from paper to e-mail distribution is going very smoothly. Approximately five families from each school have requested continued paper copies. Frequent notices about the transition have been going out. It was suggested that additional (paper-based) outreach go home with students in about a month to ensure that families are aware of the change. The transition should save the PTO approximately \$200-300/year.

6. Playground Update (Britta)

Britta updated the Board in her progress towards developing a plan for the future of the Franklin playground. There have been initial conversations with a small Franklin committee (a parent and two teachers), visits from staff at the district-level to confirm their commitment to performing certain tasks, and meetings with representatives from a playground design company.

Discussion items include:

- Play equipment that no longer meets code requirements needs to be replaced.
- New ground cover material will be wood chips. Artificial turf is a possibility for a soccer field where black top is currently. Any grass planting would be maintained by the district.
- New play equipment installation will be appropriate for 4 to 8 year-olds. Britta shared two design boards with pricing options. The one with the most support is priced at \$50,000 which does not include installation costs. While the district would install for a cost, the board agreed to consider a donation for installation or a planned work day to involve the community.

- The district will pay for and install new chain-link fencing. Aesthetic upgrades could be planned or coordinated by parents.
- The 4k play area is being considered for new play equipment as well. There is a preference for natural materials in this area (similar to the Dane County Zoo).
- Upgrades to the rest of the school grounds are not being considered as part of this plan because there are other issues to consider such as snow removal and shaded areas, etc.
- The district needs to know by March 2013 about whether to schedule work for the summer months. As such, a timeline needs to be developed.

Britta has asked the PTO take the lead on fundraising for this initiative. The Board recommended that a parent-committee be formed to kick start the multi-phase planning, timeline and fundraising goals. The PTO will take time at a future meeting to consider its financial support of the project when fundraising begins, as well as its role in asking parents to contribute to the project. It was also recommended that the parent committee involve the neighborhood in the planning and decision making process. The PTO is very excited to support the project, and encourages the playground committee and school staff to reach out to other schools that have recently upgraded their equipment and grounds to learn how they were funded.

7. Funds to support "Walk to Remember" on November 18th (Britta)

The board unanimously approved \$200 in support of the walk.

8. Language Program Update (Elizabeth)

The fall term for the language program ends on December 18th. It was suggested that the board discuss its future role in the program. An agenda item for this matter will be added to the December meeting.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:00p

Respectfully Submitted,
Beth O'Callaghan