

Adam Hirsch, 2017/2018 PTO Board Secretary
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Parking Fundraising Changes

In October 2017, a Madison newspaper journalist wrote a short piece about the FR/PTO fundraising efforts, and specifically called out the PTO football parking efforts as "letting the rich get richer." (The piece was published at http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/columnists/chris-rickert/chris-rickert-madison-school-group-s-parking-privilege-lets-rich/article_0d1fd0c4-dad5-508c-a68a-b91947b35098.html)

The subject of parking revenues and privilege had been discussed amongst various board members for years, but it's fair to say that the piece, despite some frustrating inaccuracies, inspired the board to more focused discussions. Starting in December, we discussed lots of the facts on the ground: how much money we raised via parking, what part of the budget it comprised, how the principals and PTO have compensated for having such a great resource at hand, and the current state of our equity and inclusion efforts. Board President Megan Spicer asked board members to come to the next meeting with structured suggestions for what we could change going forward.

Board members brought in four suggestions, which we found broadly fell into two main options: donate some noticeable portion of the parking fundraising dollars outside the immediate F/R community, or retain the monies while explicitly acknowledging funding sources that F/R has declined to pursue.

We also realized that every board member agreed that regardless of how the fundraising discussion went, we were all committed to re-examining next year's PTO budget with an eye towards seriously prioritizing our equity efforts. This statement, acknowledging the persistent needs within the F/R community, became the foundation for further discussions.

Realizing that we needed more clarity, the board called a special session in February to consolidate and clarify the four suggestions down to two. The F/R principals made a late

suggestion which (spoiler) ultimately gathered the most support: rather than raise funds and donate them outside the school, the PTO could relinquish some of the fundraising days and allow MMSD to run them, after a transition and training period.

We put together a slide deck with the 2.5 options (keep the funds; donate funds/donate fundraising days) and brought it to the February PTO Membership meeting, where we presented the various options, took a few questions from people attending, and sent out a carefully crafted survey via email, so as to allow more people to vote. After a week of submissions from general members and the PEG groups, the idea of donating two fundraising days carried the most people.

Next steps: the 2017-18 PTO board are leaving this document as an archive for future boards. Many 2017-18 PTO officers are continuing on to the 2018-19 school year, so there will be lots of institutional memory to reshape next year's budget.