

Thoreau Elementary School PTO General Meeting Minutes

Date: November 9th, 2010 @ 6:30pm, Thoreau LMC

In attendance: *PTO:* Louisa Medaris (President), Sherri Stroebel (Vice-president), Aphra Mednick (Secretary), Jenice Con Foo (fundraising chair), Gina Skubanelli (co-treasurer), Marty Skubal (co-treasurer),
Teachers/staff: Lisa Goetzman (staff), Kelly McCann (staff), Greg Vallee (teacher), Kathy Costello (Principal), Maren Hill (teacher), Heidi Nielsen (teacher), Kate Giambelluca (teacher) *Parents:* Clint Thayer, AnneMarie Banas, Janet Callan, Eric Carson, Neena Thomas-Gosain, Rosita Gonzalez, Susan Willis, Robin Grey, Michelle Frehner, Leah Sandholm, Jonathan Sleeman, Connie Roderick, Camille Campbell, Susie Groblo, Suzanne Lee, Jill McNaughton, Wendy Brand, Betsey Parker, Karen Kleman, Stephanie Robinson, Erin Weiss, Shaun Krueger, Tom Willis, Laurel Ralser

Agenda:

6:30 Greetings and Introductions
6:40 Treasurer Update & Budget Approval Vote
7:00 Fundraising Update
7:10 Voting on funding items
7:30 Guest Speaker: Mr. Vallee on field trips
7:40 New Business

1) Greetings & introductions: (Louisa Medaris)

- called the meeting to order
- introduced the board

2) Treasurer Update & Budget Approval Vote (Marty Skubel):

- multiple copies of the budget were at every table

- reviewed handout of budget from 2009-2010, discussed how and where the \$ was spent, a majority of money was spent on playground last year
- \$8,000.00 is typically carried over from year to year
- there are less fundraisers planned for the 2010-2011 school year
- request forms are available for people who have new ideas on where to spend money, or projects they would like funding for
- reviewed fundraisers – Carnival, charitable donations, garage sale, coffee, bake sale, T-shirts, Box Tops,
- the PTO will soon be Tax-Exempt to aid in the increase in direct donations

Aphra Mednick: The reason that there are less fundraisers then last year, is based on the feedback that we received from parents in an evaluation from that went out at the end of last school year. Parents said that they wanted less fundraisers, like the wrapping paper, and we're listening to that.

Leah Sandholm: Are we now separating the playground money from the other money?

Marty Skubel: We know which money is earmarked for the playground.

Jonathan Sleeman: "I notice that the administrative costs have gone up. Can you speak to that?"

Marty Skubel: "That has gone up primarily due to student council costs. Also the staff person who runs student council gets paid.

Jonathan Sleeman: Why not take out a CD so we can get interest on the money that is in the account?

Marty Skubel: Historically we have had large amount checks coming in at any given time, say \$1,000.00, so we want to be sure that we have the money to cover our expenses. But that is something we can look into.

Lisa Goetzman: I'd like to pre-request that the budget for the safety patrol be higher this year, due to no other funding coming in. It will be about \$1,600-\$1,700 for trips for this year. We didn't get any money from the Endowment and were told at that meeting that the PTO would help pay.

Louisa Medaris: Sherri and I were at that meeting. Our understanding is that there would be money from permission slip fees that would help pay for it, any other additional fees the PTO would be happy to look at and vote on paying for.

AnneMarie Banas: Louisa, can you review the funding request form process?

Louisa Medaris: Gina designed this great form that folks can fill out requesting funds – for what, how much and why – and then it will be voted on in the general meeting if the form is on in time.

AnnMarie Banas: Now we need someone to support the budget for a vote.

Rosita Gonzalez: I have a question. What is under the “miscellaneous” budget line item?

Marty Skubel: Small amounts that get collected – a \$10.00 here, a \$10.00 there. I know that’s not a great answer but it’s where we put those small checks that have no designated spot in the budget.

Rosita Skubal: What is “printing cost”?

Marty Skubal: Envelopes, letters, things like that.

Louisa Medaris: All backpack mail.

Rosita Gonzalez: Don’t you use the copier in the staff lounge?

Louisa Medaris: Yes, but we need to pay for the cost of paper.

AnnMarie Banas: Who supports and nominates the budget as it stands?

Suzanne Lee: I nominate the budget be approved as it stands.

Kelly McCann: I wasn’t here last year, but did we stop doing popcorn/is there going to be popcorn Fridays?

Sherri Strobel: Last year when the budget felt so tight and we had some less than enthusiastic staff feedback on it. It’s not dead in the water but we don’t have a committee. We still have the machine.

Louisa:

Janet Callan: My son is a 5th grader and loves the sledding. Will the PTO be paying for sledding and the hay?

Louisa Medaris: The PTO has never been asked to pay for that before. I’m not sure who pays for that.

Kathy Costello: I don’t know anything about sledding

Kelly McCann: The city pays for it, it’s a city park. I think the grounds crew does it.

Jill McNaughton: What is the relationship between the city and the park/staff?

AnnMarie Banas: Let’s table that question for the end so we can get through the budget and the agenda.

Laurel: What happened to the annual school directory this year?

Clint Thayer: I just received the information from MMSD this morning. The directory should be out digitally by next week.

Rosita Gonzalez: There won’t be a printed version?

Louisa Medaris: Last year we went electronically and we only printed for people that requested one, it went great.

Rosita Gonzalez: I would argue that some people maybe wouldn't request or have access to a computer and rather then make the assumption that they would request it.

Louisa Medaris: We sent a sheet home in every backpack and asked if people would like a copy. I made 40 copies last year. It worked great and there was a lot of support going electronic. Last year we were tight and tried not to spend any extra money.

Janet Callan: Will it be put up on the Parent Portal?

Clint Thayer: I can give the file back to MMSD after I clean it up, but I don't have any control or ability to post on the Parent Portal. That is controlled by MMSD.

AnnMarie Banas: There are no expenditures in the budget for the directory.

Christy Ehlert: Have we considered using the directory as a fundraising tool? Shorewood sells ad space for their directory so it also raises money. Also, what is the healthy snack line item?

Kelly McCann: There was a time when several years ago that some rooms were having trouble getting snacks for the kids in their class. The PTO paid to have food available to the classes as well as to some children that were homeless.

Stephanie Robinson: It was done as a pilot for three of the 2nd grade classroom, which were struggling, it was really successful. We used our WI Homegrown money, which is something we don't do now. We provided food 1x a week, brought things in a cooler and things that were organic. The last principal kept it going on an ad hoc basis.

Tom Willis: I always thought that one of the most important things that we did was fund raising for field trips. I want to be sure that the teachers feel that there is enough money in the budget for field trips.

Greg Vallee: I wasn't going to bring this up but I looked on the budget and it says "\$2,000", I will speaking about that later.... We don't know what students need until the end of the year. I trust the PTO will be generous as it has in previous years and I'm sure that will continue.

Marty Skubel: We are above budget to fund field trips, which is something that we want to be sure we support. Wells Fargo helped out in the passed and maybe will do so again. Based on history we are budgeting way above demand.

AnnMarie Banas: Any other discussion on the budget as it stands? Everyone who is in favor of the agenda raise their hands.

Majority of hands went up.

AnnMarie: Anyone opposed?

None.

AnnMarie Banas: Budget approved.

3) Fundraising Update (Jenice Con Foo):

-Thank you for all of your support.

-Art fundraiser – the due date is the same date as the parent/teacher conference, please have your forms in by 12pm on Friday (11/12) at the latest, this important deadline is to ensure that the orders are delivered on 12/6, and in time for the holidays

-Carnival – this Saturday, from 11am – 2pm – this is a main fundraising and community event, games are being sponsored by families and classrooms, advanced tickets are available now, however the big place where we make money is the silent auction and we are still looking for people to donate items for the silent auction, if you are a photographer, artist, talented or have an item please let Christy or I know

Christy Ehlert: Please help us!

- Barnes & Noble fundraiser – December 5th @ Barnes and Noble West, Susie is the chair, we are looking for 3 people per shift

-less fundraising will be happening in the spring as we want to raise in the beginning of the year so we know how much we have to spend

Maren Hill: I don't know that kindergarten parents know to save Box Tops.

Jenice Con Foo: We do have a chair for Box Tops and there have been announcements in the Oakleaf regarding Box Tops.

Camille Campbell: Isn't this a Bids for Kids year?

Leah Sandholm: Yes, Bids for Kids will be March 26th @ Nakoma Golf Club – cocktail party, for the whole community not just the school community. There is a silent and live auction with some great things like vacation homes, and it raises between \$35,000-\$50,000. It's a fun night!

Wendy Brand: Are we doing milk tops?

Jenice Con Foo: We weren't but I did receive milk tops in the PTO mailbox today. If someone would like to chair this committee, please let me know. Also, please clean the milk tops thoroughly.

Sherri Strobel: Rosita, do you want to report on the bake sale?

Rosita Gonzalez: Many thanks to all of those who baked and did a shift. A special thanks to Robin and Janet. The bake sale raised \$854.58. The reason that I did the bake sale was to help raise money for a project that I'm interested in doing.

4) Voting on funding items

Sherri Strobel: Do you want to present on your request?

Rosita Gonzalez: I've taught college age and school age students and have used pinhole cameras as a project for students to learn about chemistry, how a camera works, how light travels and how analog photography works. You use a large can and paper film. I received some funding from the Endowment fund but am requesting \$273.00 for all the supplies. It would be for the 5th grade classrooms.

Greg Vallee: Ms Gilmore and I (5th grade teachers) This fits into our curriculum with the kids.

AnnMarie Banas: All in favor? (Multiple hands raised.) Approved

Sherri Strobel: Dawn Daly could not be here tonight and asked that I present for her. She put in a request for up to \$200.00 for wall fans in the computer room. It gets very hot in the computer room as there is no window or A/C. The 4th & 5th graders have longer classroom time and typically are coming to class after recess. Two wall fans that will be installed by a custodian.

AnnMarie Banas: All in favor? (Multiple hands raised.) Approved.

5) Guest Speaker: Greg Vallee on field trips

- The staff loves and really respect the support we get for field trips from the PTO
- Thoreau staff has recently received money from a coke cola machine which will help pay for either 1) PA sound system for the gym, 2) color printer with cartridges, 3) A/C for the large work room upstairs,

- \$1,500. has popped up from donors over the past 2 years for funding
- 2 years ago MMSD decided that elementary schools (not middle or high schools) can only charge \$40.00 per child/per year.
- \$82-84 is the cost of 5th grade class trips
- the Overture Center is \$10.00, so 5th graders haven't been there in a number of years
- At the end of last year we remembered that Safety Patrol had to go to the Brewer game, but we couldn't ask for more money from families

Leah Sandholm: I see that there is \$750.00 for Safety Patrol, what does that go for?

Greg Vallee: I see the budget on the back for \$2,000. Between the principal and the staff, we haven't arrived at what the final analysis is going to be. Lisa doesn't want to go past the amount that we can charge parents. This is not a field trip, this is a reward. We could ask the parents to pay for it, and if it goes beyond that we could ask the PTO.

Leah Sandholm: I guess a loophole is to ask the parents to donate \$40.00 to the PTO to pay for the trip.

Greg Vallee: We're in a tough economy, we don't want to ask parents for more money and we don't want to ask for more if the PTO can pay for it. Leah:

Leah Sandholm: Are we voting on this today?

Greg Vallee: No. It's too difficult to fill out the request form every time. I have checks from parents, for \$80.00- \$100.00, they are very generous.

6) New Business

Stephanie Robinson: A suggestion for the formatting of the budget - it would make it clearer to group some of the expenditures by categories like "cultural/arts", "teacher support", etc.

Jenice Con Foo: Does the pie chart speak to what you're looking for? It's broken into categories.

Stephanie Robinson: It would be helpful to have it as line items.

Jenice Con Foo: I want to say on the projected budget that they did try to prioritize because the small font is confusing. Ex. 25% is going towards this type of event. There is always a balance between giving you enough detail and

transparency and not overwhelming. We don't expect everyone to have read the entire thing over in the 2 minutes before the meeting but we don't want to leave anything out either. If you have concerns you should speak with the board.

Gina Skubenelli: As opposed to alphabetical order?

Stephanie Robinson: Yes.

Erin Weiss: I was at another school and they had a thermometer right when you walk in. It identified what fundraising had occurred and how much more was needed.

Jenice Con Foo: It would be hard to find a place that's not disruptive to the flow of traffic and I'd hate to block the Thoreau mural.

Erin Weiss: Since we now drop kids off outside of the school, I always think that it would be a good idea to put a notice board outside on the playground for parents who are dropping off their kids.

Shaun Kruger: Yes, that's a good idea.

Gina Skubanelli: The glass board by the elevator could be a place.

Greg Vallee: Yes, you could do that.

Leah Sandholm: In the end I know that it's a ton of money but are we going to vote on safety patrol and field trips when the time comes?

Louisa: I hope so, yeah. And if we are asked for it.

Jenice Con Foo: If there is a general meeting in the time frame.

Aphra Mednick: Is there a plan in place to ask for it?

Greg Vallee: We had a field trip this fall and had an extra \$20.00...Kelli collects checks and then at the end of the year the PTO has paid for the remainder, if there is any outstanding bills for the trips at the end of the year they get paid out of that. I don't think that the PTO needs to vote on that.

Lisa Goetzman: Right now we have no funding for the \$1,200.00 Brewers trip and the \$400.00 Washington Trip.

Kelly McCann: But there's \$750.00 in the budget.

Lisa Goetzman: They always put extra in there, that's for supplies, the belts and stuff. I think we have to decide because the kids will want to know. If we don't do that trip I think they'll want to know how we'll reward them. We have to decide are we just going to do a flat charge of \$12.00 per child, or should we eliminate the child going to Washington DC or whoever is chosen if they can pay the \$400.00 fine, but we have a commitment.

Jenice Con Foo: Not that I don't want to ask you for more money... I received a letter from a school for their Wisconsin trip, looking for funds. It's part of a

class project that the students come up with a budget and then the students write letters to businesses. I don't want to suggest or add to teacher's workload, that is not my intention but there are other avenues besides the PTO that may be worth exploring.

Greg Vallee: I appreciate that. I know how Lincoln does it, if that becomes our goal to do a big trip we might do that but for something like the Safety Patrol we want to do something different. I'm hearing from Mrs. Goetzman that she would like to know tonight how to proceed. She would like to know that the PTO to possibly vote on, if the PTO can give money for the DC trip and if we can't come up with a system to bill the parents for the Safety Patrol trip to the Brewers.

Louisa Medaris: I would love more numbers and different payment options and what the supply costs are this year. Have you considered going to a Mallard game or is it Brewers for sure?

AnnMarie: I just want to clarify, Louisa. You're not asking for those number right now because this doesn't need to be voted on or voted tonight, right?

Louisa Medaris: No, but we can certainly turn it around quickly but we would need dollar amount detail.

---lots of people talking, difficult to hear

Lisa Goetzman: In February...we would like to know so we know what we can do.

Louisa Medaris: Can you get us numbers by tomorrow?

Lisa Goetzman: I wrote it all down for the Endowment request so I have that. I'm not asking for supplies, I don't spend all that we are budgeted for on supplies, not even half.

Marty Skubel: Historically based on what Todd told me was for Brewers.

Louisa Medaris: Last year we split it with the Endowment but we didn't pay for the Washington trip.

Greg Vallee: That was paid for by money that the principal found, it may have been Wells Fargo money.

---lots of people talking, difficult to hear

Robin Grey: I'm having a hard time hearing what's being said. I'm wondering because we have bake sale money and we have something that needs funding, can we use that?

Shaun Kruger: I second the motion.

---lots of people talking, difficult to hear

AnnMarie Banas: How much are we asking to be funded?

Leah Sandholm: They shouldn't say bake sale money vs. the rest of the PTO money.

Rosita Gonzalez: That was money that was made that wasn't on here why wouldn't you say make it for the DC trip.

AnnMarie Banas: Louisa, would you like to clarify the funding procedures?

Louisa Medaris: It makes sense that money that is raised for the PTO go to general funds and money that is asked to be spent on certain things be voted on. The money that was raised for the bake sale goes to the PTO which was my understanding and thought was Rosita's intention.

Rosita Gonzalez: It was, yes.

Louisa Medaris: Let's stick to that plan.

Rosita Gonzalez: However it's money that's not in your original..

Louisa Medaris: I'm not saying we're not going to pay for Lisa's...

Janet Callan: She needs a commitment from us and that's what we have to give her. If we don't meet till February that's too late.

Jenice Con Foo: The board does meet before then.

Janet : It's found money, like in a coat pocket, and those kids are going to the Brewer game and that kid is going to DC, come hell or high water, so you can either deal with this now or we can deal with me later.

Christy Ehlert: Some of the money that was raised at the bake sale was coffee money. I'd like to know how much was raised at the bake sale.

Jenice Con Foo: Although it's easy to look at the bake sale as found money, the Carnival is slated to raise \$2,000 on Saturday, but what if it doesn't raise that money? We would need to use the bake sale money for other expenses that we have. My issue is not that we won't fund it, it's that we're having a hard time giving a commitment is we're not sure how much money we're asking you to commit to...What if we can't fund what we have said we would? I'm not saying I'm opposed to this but I think it's a dangerous approach to count money and say every thing is going to go according to plan...those are projections.

Janet Callan: My impression of the lukewarm approach to the bake sale, it wasn't on anybody's radar and we put it together on relatively short notice. There is nothing on here – oh, there is a bake sale – there's no expenditures on it and I don't see why we can't give her what she's looking for.

Marty: How much are you asking for?

Lisa Goetzman: It could be between \$1,600-\$1,700.

Rosita Gonzalez: Robin said what I wanted to say, but if we can't vote on it tonight I don't want it to wait until February. I would like to have another general meeting before then.

AnnMarie: To clarify the funding procedures, if a request is brought before a general meeting it will be voted on at that meeting. If not the board will vote on it and address the timely matters.

Rosita Gonzalez: The board is only how many people?

AnnMarie Banas: The board is Marty, Louisa, Sherri, Kathy, Aphra, Jenice and Gina. Can we vote on this tonight?

Louisa Medaris: We can vote to have a special meeting and bring people together sooner. Can we have a meeting in one week to vote on it?

Leah Sandholm: It's funny that this is becoming such an argument. The Brewers game trip is the motivation for kids to do safety patrol. It's a passage, and it's huge for them. I don't remember ever having to vote on if there would be this trip.

Stephanie Robinson: Leah said a lot of what I was going to say, that it is a lot of why kids do it. They have to get up early and stand out in zero degrees.

AnnMarie Banas: Are you talking about the Brewers trip or the DC trip? It's only one child that gets to go on the DC trip, correct?

Maren Hill: I was the child chosen to go to Washington DC but my mother made me give up the trip for another child who would never be able to go to DC. I remember the name of the kid that went on the trip. It was a good lesson. I think it's really important.

Jonathan Sleeman: Procedural points that come to mind: I fully agree that we shouldn't be setting motions that dedicate funds from a particular event for particular projects. The motions should be from teachers that are requesting the PTO to fund a particular event not to direct funds from a fundraiser to a particular event. If I recall from the bi-laws the voting goes the membership in the general meeting, not for the board to vote. It has to be general membership that votes on funds.

Louisa Medaris: Yes, that is correct. The problem is that what happens if we need money on Friday. Last year we didn't have much money so we didn't have many votes. We have never said no to a request and we intend not to.

Laurel Ralser: I mainly wanted to say what Leah already said, our son is on patrol this year. Getting up early four mornings a week is a big deal. The Brewers is a big trip, and the hope to go to DC is a motivator. What I was hearing earlier was that there are projections and that there is some flexibility.

Sherri Strobel: I want to speak, I hope on behalf of the board, but I don't think any of us are saying that this isn't a worthwhile thing. I know Gina created the request form so we could be more formal. I'm sorry Lisa, we weren't prepared to vote on this tonight and it wasn't on the agenda. I'm sure that we're all in favor for this. Historically the Washington DC trip was never paid for by the PTO.

Greg Vallee: Teacher's have paid for the DC trip in the past.

Lisa Geotzman: Teachers have paid for it in the past. I wish we had a standard format.

Janet Callan: Mrs. Geotzman, I'll pay it.

Lisa Geotzman: That's not why I'm here. I'm just providing clarification.

Janet Callan: I will pay for it.

---lots of people talking, difficult to hear

Jenice Con Foo: I'm going to back Sherri up here, I don't think that anyone is opposed to this, but if you are asking for \$1,700.00 for something there should be more specifics. It would be irresponsible for the board to endorse that decision-making – to vote on anything without exact numbers. That's my comment for Lisa, let's put a number value to it and then put it to a vote.

Greg Vallee: I'm kind of lost. DARE use to pay for the Brewers game.

Leopold has extended their buses so we can go with them so this is a good deal for us. The parents provide all the food. 6th graders move onto Cherokee with our students and it's a nice way to meet each other before.

Clint Thayer: There are 34 people in this room. If each of us commit to \$50.00 it would be covered.

Shaun Kruger: I'm rescinding my prior motion and making a new motion that the PTO fund up to \$1,700 for the Brewers field trip and the Washington DC trip for Safety Patrol.

AnnMarie Banas: Do we have a second?

Many agreed.

Shaun Kruger: And for discussion purpose, if people want to donate then that would be great. I get the sense from this meeting that people want action and we'll all be better off that this will be taken care of.

Leah Sandholm: Make funding the trip a priority, as it seems to be causing people grief. It means a lot to the kids and it's great.

Jill McNaughton: This may be redundant, but will this be a line item every year?

AnnMarie Banas: That's a good question. Was this paid for by the PTO last year?

Marty Skubal: You can see we spent \$551.00 for Safety Patrol last year.

Louisa Medaris: That's up to the PTO next year. Last year we spent ½ the money and the Endowment fund paid for the other half.

Erin Weiss: Just to clarify the Endowment fund decide to help fund it last year, because we knew that the PTO did not have a lot of money. We also said that we would not pay for it again because it does not meet our mission. I would suggest it does go through the PTO in the future because we've lost outside funding.

Marty Skubal: Going back to 2005, the most we spent on Safety Patrol was \$911.00 in 2008.

Jonathan Sleeman: I'd like to propose a friendly amendment to the motion that could be a compromise, reach resolution to this. I propose that the motion that the PTO fund the Safety Patrol trips an amount determined by the PTO board upon receipt of the proposal. We are expressing our desire that these projects get funded and recognizing that we haven't seen figures and are delegating to the reliable board the amount to be determined.

AnnMarie: Shaun, are you are okay with your amendment being funded?

Shaun: I graciously decline the friendly amendment. I think that if we put a cap on \$1,700 then it will come back.

Marty Skubal: Just step up at the silent auction at the Carnival.

AnnMarie Banas: I think that we need to vote on the motion as it now stands on the floor. The original motion for the PTO to vote on maximum \$1,700...

Sherri Skubal: I'm confused... what does the \$700.00 cover the Brewers trip. We only paid \$500.00 last year.

Lisa Goetzman: Last year the endowment paid \$400.00. Maybe that money paid for some scholarships.

Louisa Medaris: The PTO paid \$400.00 last year to match the Endowment, isn't that right Erin?

Erin Weiss: Yes.

Christy Ehlert: Are you asking for \$1,700 in addition to the \$700.00 line item?

Lisa Goetzman: I'm not sure entirely, but I think that it's in addition.

Jonathan Sleeman: I propose that we increase the budget line item for Safety Patrol to \$2,500.00.

AnnMarie Banas: All those in favor of the motion on the floor.

Many said yes.

AnnMarie Banas: Approved.

Marty Skubel: That is the second highest amount that the PTO will be spending money on this year.

Aphra Mednick: How many children are on Safety Patrol?

Lisa Goetzman: 30-35 kids.

Maren Hill: Is it possible to have these meetings earlier in the evening? It's hard for me to stay late and then I have to drive to Stoughton.

Louisa Medaris: My understanding is that the earlier you hold the meetings the less people will attend.

Wendy Brand: It's hard for working parents to get here earlier than 6:30pm.

AnnMarie Banas: Meeting adjourned.

Next PTO General Meeting - Save the Dates:

February 8th from 6:30-8pm. The Location is TBD, likely at another location, then Thoreau, closer to families outside of the direct school neighborhood.