

VHE PTO Meeting Notes 9/12/23

Welcome-Mimi

- Primary focus will be on in-person group. Feel free to add comments to chat in Zoom.
- Introductions

Board Elections-Mimi:

- Still have a vacancy for treasurer. Ian and Kate are happy to train. Ian will be listed as a co-treasurer on the ballot.
- No candidates from the floor.
- Proposed 23-24 Board:
 - Co-presidents- Chrissy Greer/Mimi Johnson
 - Secretary-Andrea Olson
 - At large members-Lauren Harlowe (Communications), Ena Lee (Community Engagement), Adam Gratch (Events/Carnival), Joseph Clark (Afterschool Classes)
- Motion to vote by Carrie C. Seconded. Vote passes unanimously with intent to recruit a co-treasurer ASAP.

Introduction and Back to School Update-Becca:

Upcoming Dates/Activities:

- Fast Bridge screener for all students upcoming
- Fire Drills, once a month unannounced
- Practicum students from UW Madison coming this semester (about 7)
- Oct 20-No School, Oct 31-Early release for conference prep for teachers, Nov 2-Evening Parent-teacher conferences, Nov 3-No School for conferences
- Open House/Ice cream Social, Thursday, Sept 21, **4:30-6:30pm**: Students will be sharing school projects in their classrooms and doing a scavenger hunt around the school. Families including students, siblings, grandparents, etc. all welcome. Non-dairy ice cream available. For inclement weather, we will be inside, otherwise out on the playground for ice cream.

Other updates:

- Today's medical emergency update: all is okay and procedures were well executed by staff and students.
- Thank you for the cafeteria volunteer support! Allows students to be safe and staff feels supported. Students are doing well, still working on timing of some things. There were some issues with the menu being different than what was served. Becca followed up with the district and the MMSD Van Hise lunch link is now correct. Since VHE is connected with Hamilton, they serve from the middle school menu.

Parent Questions for Becca:

- **Per parent, allergens are only listed on the Food Cafe site. Will that site also be updated to reflect the lunch options at Van Hise for students with allergies?** Becca will follow-up with the

district on that. Lauren will link to the correct menu on the PTO website. Parent asked PTO or Ms Stein to send a link to all families with the accurate menu information.

- **Is hand sanitizer available in the lunch room?** Becca asked teachers to enter a door that will allow them to stop and wash hands before they go to the cafeteria. Using pump hand sanitizer in the interim. She does not plan to have students wearing snow gear during lunch time—will build in time to dress.
- **Will kids have access to water bottles for lunch?** Yes, hoping to set it up so that they have a chance to stop and get their water bottles.
- **Will there be times (with Covid/flu) that students may need to eat in classrooms?** Yes, that is a possibility.
- **What is a good opportunity to share information/discussion around air improvement for germ mitigation?** Please reach out directly to Becca after the meeting with information.
- **Will students be able to choose their seats in the lunch room? Sit next to friends in their grade?** Elementary students are not currently picking their seats. Currently taking the next seat for efficiency. That is the expectation at this point.
- **Students complaining to parents that they don't have enough space to eat or that it's too loud in the cafeteria.** We've added a few extra tables and can still make a few adjustments but it's tight when middle school students are in the lunch room too. When the weather is nice they eat outside. Due to the timing of new staff, they were not able to coordinate the middle school and elementary lunch schedules as well. Elementary students are doing well with expectations in the cafeteria but middle school students are still working on this. Please reach out to Becca via email if there are issues.
- **Are we beyond capacity for the cafeteria?** No, it's just tight and loud.
- **Could we add sound dampening?** Yes, meeting with grounds staff and checking that option.
- **Salad bar, is that a separate line?** There is a salad bar and a packaged salad. Students can have a salad bar ala carte, just let your teacher know. They also can still get just milk.
- **Where do you need volunteers the most?** Cafeteria support, play ground support and we love to have volunteers in the classroom too.
- **How do we volunteer in the classroom?** Complete the MMSD volunteer training and background check. Then contact your teacher and ask how you can help. Background check expires after a year, but is easy to renew through the website. Check the PTO website for more information.

*Please contact Becca if you have any issues or have suggestions. Becca Stein's email is rastein@madison.k12.wi.us.

- Empowerment groups will be up and running soon. Just working out details. Please email Becca if you are interested in participating.

Budget Approval-Ian

- Budget includes everything that we *might* spend money on, not what we *will* spend it on. Changes to line items need to be voted on, so things have been forwarded from previous years. Maybe hoping to restart some of these events from previous years.
- Red column: that's where we are putting our money donations from families each year. Grants and afterschool programs are the largest expenses.

- We are in a great financial situation for this fall!
- \$10,000 surplus from Afterschool program last year!
- Staff stipends \$200 for classroom staff, \$100 for non-classroom staff, \$500 for programs (e.g., art, music, PE). Appreciated and used by the most staff last year. They buy items, fill out a simple form and receive reimbursement.
- **Are new teachers aware of the stipends and grants?** Potentially not yet, but will email staff once PTO has an updated staff list.
- Safety Patrol has been updated to PrinciPals.
- The difference between our conservative estimates for annual fundraising and the annual expense limits for all the possible line items we've included is -17,000. To be clear, this is not intended to be an accurate projection of our annual balance.
- Added Spirit gear fund for a hoodie t-shirt for each student this year. Also added a placeholder for yearbooks to potentially purchase one yearbook per student.
- Gardening: A line item exists for gardening expenses and supplies, with no changes at this time. As an aside, PTO is exploring the Rooted program to help VHE teachers integrate gardening into the classroom curriculum \$3000(fall)/\$3500(all year), does not include materials for next year. Will get more information. Larisa suggested getting donated/discounted plants from the UW native plants sale.
- Playground fund: \$4700 meant to pay for elementary basketball hoops. Becca will check if there is still an invoice or if that was already paid using other funds. Would like to move the gaga pit and add a pad to make it more accessible. Ms Sorensen is teaching gaga pit rules.

Vote on budget as proposed: Motion to approve, seconded (many), budget vote passes unanimously.

Overview of Calendar and Volunteer Opportunities-Chrissy and Mimi:

- Check out PTO website for lots of useful information. <https://www.vanhisepto.org/>
- Class reps sign up - Andrea Olson andrea@lordolson.us for questions. Looking for 1-2/classroom to help with group gifts, relaying email reminders, may also include coordinating class social activities and volunteers. Sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/805084DAFA92FA57-vanhise1#/>
- We need to create a new email list for PTO this year. To add your family info, please go to https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfFqVI1-e8SPrz8zUBS2O7aLIQ_aJh2QUYrk0SnWa-toPt7fA/viewform
- Let us know if you have feedback for PTO. Let us know if there are ways to help more attend in person. Might consider childcare, but need to know that it would be utilized.

Open Forum-All:

Parent question about adding another section to 5th grade and concerns raised about change in 5th grade teacher specialization. Not looking to add a new class at this time since we are below the threshold at <30/class. Becca will follow-up with parents re:5th specialization.

Adam motioned to adjourn. Seconded. Meeting adjourned.