**PS/MS 278**

**General Membership Meeting Minutes**

**03/19/2014**

1. **Welcome**
2. **February 2014 minutes and approval**
   1. February Minutes were reviewed and approved by the general membership
3. **Treasurer’s Report**
   1. PTA Treasurer, Anina, requested members to let her know ahead of time if they are going to have expenses towards a fundraising event rather than have the event and hand her the receipts after the fact. We need to make sure that the event is approved by the PTA and within our budget before we can reimburse any expenses.
   2. Anina also requested that members use her 278 gmail account – [psms278treasurer@gmail.com](mailto:psms278treasurer@gmail.com) – when communicating with her regarding 278 PTA business rather than her business email because she doesn’t check her business email when she is not at work.
4. **Principal’s Report** 
   1. **Book Fair –** was a great success, again.
      1. Ms. G. reported that the school received $1200 from the Fall Book Fair which will go towards another bus for the 8th grade trip this year. Last year we didn’t have enough buses for all of the 8th graders who wanted to go and some were not able to go as a result. This year we will have more than enough space for all of the kids thanks to the Book Fair $.
      2. The Spring Book Fair raised $5397 but we are not sure yet how much of that will go to the school or what we will do with that money yet.
   2. **Technology Grant**
      1. Last year we received a Technology Grant from Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez. We just received the $ and it will go towards Promethean Boards so that every classroom will be equipped with these interactive smart boards.
      2. We plan to apply for another Technology Grant in order to upgrade the library furniture.
   3. **Library Upgrade**
      1. Last year Ms. Smith attended a Professional Development training at which it was asked how many librarians worked in school libraries that were not automated. Ms. Smith raised her hand. As a result, we got this $3000 grant from DOE.
      2. They started but are progressing slowly. They are weeding through every book and removing the ones that are old, falling apart, and/or outdated. All books that are being removed but are in decent condition will be given to students to take home. Once they complete the weeding process, they will replace the books removed with newer, up to date books and automate the whole system. This should be completed by the end of the summer, in time for the new school year.
   4. **State Tests**
      1. We are in major test prep mode.
         1. ELA tests are scheduled for 4/1-4/3
         2. Math tests are scheduled for 4/30, 5/1 and 5/2
      2. Currently there is an ELA Blitz happening in the afternoons from 3-4 during which students are getting additional test prep help in preparation for the ELA tests. The main focus of the blitz is on timed reading – helping students develop strategies (called chunking) for reading comprehension and understanding that for the purposes of the test they are reading for a score not for pleasure.
      3. After the ELA tests they will offer a Math Blitz afterschool.
      4. In addition to the ELA and Math State tests, in June the 4th and 8th graders will be taking a State Science Test.
      5. The 8th graders just completed their Science and Social Studies projects which are requirements for graduation. The science projects were on display during the Science Fair last week.
   5. **High School Acceptances**
      1. So far we have heard that students have been accepted to Beacon, Manhattan Academy, Columbia Secondary, which is all very exciting.
      2. No students this year got into any of the specialized HS (e.g. Styvesant, Bx. Science, Brklyn Tech.) but last year one student did.
      3. Four 7th grade students this year are participating in a class that is offered to District 6 kids as a test prep for the Specialized HS test. The class is offered on Sundays and runs through the summer.
      4. We have also heard about many of our past alumni who are going on to college and doing very well.
   6. **Parent Surveys**
      1. They are coming in. The No Uniform Pass incentive seems to have really helped as an incentive to get them in.
      2. The reason why we need to send them to the school as opposed to mailing them directly, despite the instructions on the form, is so that the school can track how many get turned in.
      3. Middle School kids do their own survey – Ms. G. loves their feedback.
      4. Ms. G. thanked all of the parents who have turned theirs in so far.
   7. **The State of Northern Manhattan & Marble Hill Meeting**
      1. Sunday, 4/6, @ 2:30 @ Columbia University Medical Center**,** 650 W. 168th St.
      2. Facilitated by Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez, who has been a great friend to our school. We have received about a quarter of a million dollars from him over the years and it certainly will not hurt for us to show up to his event to support him and thank him for his support.
      3. We need a contingency from 278. Tentative plan is to meet at the school and go down there together. We should RSVP.
      4. PTA will help to get the word out and organize the logistics.
   8. **Kindergarten Acceptances**
      1. 255 students applied this year for 50 slots.
         1. We do not know how many of the 255 are from the zone.
         2. But we do know that 24 of them are siblings, meaning that the non-sibling applicants are competing for 26 slots.
   9. **Follow Up to Last Month’s Town Hall on School Safety**
      1. In response to comments made during last month’s General PTA meeting (*Thank-you Ms. G. for reading the minutes! ☺)*, Ms. G. did send home a note recently to inform parents about the lock down that took place.
      2. She explained the process of covering the windows with a dark magnetic cover so that no one can see in because it was noted that especially for the kindergarten classrooms someone could peak in the windows and see the students in a reflection in the window.
      3. She said that the students were very well behaved during the lock down, knew to be quiet and were well versed in the procedure.
      4. She explained why the information came so late. It has to be approved by all external players prior to being disseminated, including the local police and all of the local schools who agreed to take in our kids in case of an emergency. This takes a long time.
   10. **Bed Bugs**
       1. A member asked Ms. G. about the notice that went home recently about bed bugs in the school.
          1. Ms. G. reported that the school does not have a bed bug problem. But on 2 occasions a student came to school and a bed bug was spotted on the student. She emphasized the importance of not wanting to embarrass the child. She wants parents to feel comfortable reporting such issues to the school so that they can take the proper precautions so that they don’t spread and she is concerned that if people are concerned that their child will be stigmatized or humiliated they might be reluctant to report the problem.
          2. If a bed bug is identified, the protocol is to catch the bug and send it to the DOE for confirmation that it is a bed bug. Once confirmed, the DOE sends an exterminator to the school.However, Ms. G. does not wait for that. If a bed bug is found, the Custodians immediately go into the classroom and do a thorough cleaning of the classroom, top to bottom. To date, by the time the exterminator arrives, there has been no bed bugs found to exterminate.
          3. She further noted that it is the same process for lice, except in that case every child in the class gets checked.
5. **501c3 Update**
   1. Karen reported that we received a letter from the IRS stating that they admitted that this whole problem was their fault and that we never should have been revoked in the first place.
   2. The application fee we submitted with the re-application is going to be refunded.
   3. **We are back in business as a 501c3!!!!!! Hallelujah!**
   4. Karen also noted that if a company is making a matching gift, the parent should first make sure that they are willing to match a donation to a PTA because not all do that.
6. **Printer Ink Recycling Program**
   1. Program has been approved by Ms. G.
   2. EB is in the process of purchasing the bins and will send out a flier letting parents know to start turning in their printer ink cartridges as soon as it is all set up.
7. **Dance Performances**
   1. 3/24 and 3/26 @ 1pm – see flier/agenda for details re: which classes are performing when.
8. **Family Cooking Classes**
   1. Classesstart 3/27 and are full.
   2. If interested, see Cassandra about getting on the waiting list.
9. **Spring Fair**
   1. Date: May 31st, from 11-5pm (extended hours from previous years).
   2. We need volunteers and we need donations of supplies.
   3. The more we can get donated the more profit we will have from the event.
   4. **Member Question 1** – Have we reached out to local business for donations?
      1. Answer – Yes. We hit our local businesses hard for donations for the raffle and we hit the restaurants hard every year for Community Dinner. Local businesses get hit hard from every local school all year long and we need to be sensitive to their charitable burn out. But yes, we do reach out to them often and they are for the most part extremely generous to us.
   5. **Member Question 2** – Can we generate a wish list of all donations needed and post it somewhere such as on Amazon so that people could purchase the items needed?
      1. Answer **–** Great idea! Annie Shikany is Chairing the Spring Fair Committee and is in the process of gathering supply needs from all of the Table Captains as we speak. We will pass on this idea to her. But it probably would not be on Amazon since not all of the supplies would come from that one place but we could do something similar and if Captains have an idea of where specifically to order the item to include that info. on the wish list.
   6. More importantly we need volunteers for set up and clean up and all day. A list was passed around for people to sign up if interested.
   7. A member commented that she often signs up on these lists that get passed around but no one ever contacts her. PTA response was surprise because we are always struggling for volunteers. We will look into that.
   8. Karen said she was approached by Sarah Townley re: if we could do a community art project during Spring Fair for Hike the Heights. This could be in conjunction with her organization, Creative Arts, which works with PS students on creative art projects. Teaching artists would come to the school during after school hours to work with students on building a paper machete giraffe, or something like that, which could then get painted during Spring Fair and carried to represent the 278 contingency on Hike the Heights.
      1. Ms. G. was OK with the idea and said that maybe we could link this to the Salvadori project with the Kindergarten and 1st grade classes who will be studying animal habitats.
   9. Carmen asked when is Field Day?
      1. Answer – tentatively 5/29 (2 days before Spring Fair) but we have not received confirmation from Columbia on that yet.
   10. Maggie asked about HS student volunteers at Spring Fair who need community service hours
       1. Ms. G. said that we always use middle school students as volunteers and give them community service hours but they need to be closely supervised. Mr. Riley hand picks them. However, she does not want HS students.
10. **Title I/WITS Update**
    1. **Family Fun Night** was a huge hit and super fun. We had double the turn out from last year.
    2. **CPR class** was hugely successful too. 14 families are now fully certified in infant, child, adult and defibrillator CPR. So are 12 teachers. We had 2 instructors and everyone got their own dummy.
11. **Garden Committee Update**
    1. Indoor gardens will start after Spring break with the Kindergarten and 1st grade classes. There is a possibility that the 3rd grade classes will partner with the younger kids as a big brother/sister project.
    2. Once it is warm enough we will transplant the plants to the Woolly Pockets.
    3. RE: the water harvesting project – we have the barrel but we don’t have the proper roof to install the water diverter kit to collect the water and funnel it into the barrel. Dave Thom proposed hanging a tarp over the carport area to “create” a roof to catch the water and passed around a visual to show what he meant. Ms. G. said it would be OK. He’s on it.
    4. The Daffodil bulbs that were planted in the Fall are starting to sprout! Now the concern is educating the kids not to trample all over them. Also we need to build the tree guards. Joe Haas said he could build them in his shop Upstate. Dave is following up with him to get a prototype to show Ms. G. Meanwhile, as a temporary measure Dave will protect the plants with stakes and ropes.
12. **Middle School Dance** 
    1. Huge success. The kids loved it. Special thanks to Richard Tatum for providing the lighting design.
    2. Theme of the dance, which was sponsored by the Anti-defamation League, was “Everyone is a piece of the puzzle” “No place for hate”
    3. Food was great too. thank-you parents!
13. **92nd St. Y Update**
    1. A proposal from the SLT to expand the dance program to the 5th grade is on the table. Ms. G. spoke to Ms. Carina who said that it would cost an additional $1200 to add the two 5th grade classes
    2. Space will not be an issue because Ms. Carina said she was willing to start at 8am.
    3. PTA needs to discuss and vote on whether or not to add this cost to the budget to continue funding the 92nd St. Y dance program and expand it to include 5th grade.
14. **CEC Update**
    1. The next council meeting will be 3/20 at PS 132.
    2. Carmen Farina, the Schools Chancellor will be at this meeting.
    3. This is an opportunity for parents to voice concerns about Common Core and/or any other business regarding the public schools to Ms. Farina.
    4. The CEC compiled information to present at the meeting detailing concerns about common core.
15. **Box Tops**
    * 1. The school will be getting $358 from last year’s box top submission.
      2. Maggie will be taking this project on going forward and will be sending out a flier after testing to collect more box tops.
      3. The class that turns in the most box tops will get ice cream.
      4. They are still figuring out how to collect them. We might need volunteers to help make boxes for each classroom.