**PS/MS 278**

**General Membership Meeting Minutes**

**06/25/2014**

1. **Welcome**
2. **May 2014 minutes and approval**
	1. May Minutes were reviewed and approved by the general membership
3. **Principal’s Report (**Reported by Ms. Reyes, on behalf of Ms. Guido who was not able to attend the meeting tonight)
	1. Reports from the DOE are in and **PS/MS 278 is still in good standing**! Yahoo!
	2. **On behalf of Ms. G., Ms. Reyes said thank-you** to the PTA, the Wellness Council, the School Beautification Team, title I Committee, Spring Fair Committee, parents who volunteered during the day to do the Math Facts, help in the cafeteria, manage the website, upgrade the lighting/sound in the auditorium, and a general thank-you to all. The school keeps improving every year and they couldn’t do it without the parents. THANK-YOU!
	3. **Update on recruiting a new Music Teacher to replace Mr. Quinto**
		1. They interviewed 2 candidates that week and one in particular was deemed “Mr. Wonderful”. He was observed teaching a class that day and was awesome. His ability to interact with the kids was extremely impressive. He is their first choice and they are keeping their fingers crossed that he will accept the position.
		2. The other candidate was not so Mr. Wonderful.
		3. **Comment**: A member noted that she had spoken to a mom in the neighborhood who is a Music Teacher, asking her if she would consider applying for the job. The Music Teacher said that she saw the posting but because it stated the responsibilities included teaching Middle School Band and because she is not strong in band, she was not interested. The member suggested that if Mr. Wonderful doesn’t work out, perhaps we should remove the mention of Middle School Band in the posting and make it more generic, e.g. Music Teacher for a K-8 school, with the hopes that the PTA could supplement the music program with outside help in any area that a particular teacher feels he/she is not strong in.
	4. **WITS Cafeteria Menu Update**
		1. Due to the challenges of having 2 different menus between PS18 and PSMS 278, they will be experimenting with a hybrid of the 2 menus in the Fall. If the hybrid doesn’t work, they may have to give up the WITS menu altogether.
		2. **Comment:** A member asked if the hybrid doesn’t work, can we still fight to keep the WITS menu for our children.
			1. Ms. Reyes and other members of the PTA chimed in to say that we could but that it would be a long hard fight that we have been fighting for a long time. We have to understand that this is our set up, we share the cafeteria space with PS 18 and we have to come to an agreement with them. We can no longer sustain having 2 different menus. It is too much work for the Cook. Let’s hope the hybrid menu succeeds as an acceptable compromise.
4. **Introductions of the 2014-2015 PTA Executive Board**
	1. Co-Presidents: Danielle Floyd and Annie Shikany
	2. Co-vice-Presidents: Seana Wyman and Nely Quinonez
	3. Co-Secretaries: Danielle Strauss and Diane Hill
	4. Treasurer: Anina Young
	5. Co-Translating Secretaries: Monica Barnkow and Maggie Velez

**Shout Out** **to Monica Barnkow for her translation during the Kindergarten Orientation!** An incoming parent commented that it was the best translation job he had ever heard ☺

1. **Financials for June 2014/Preliminary Budget 2014-2015**
	1. Danielle F. introduced the topic by first stating that this was the best year ever for the PTA with regard to its fundraising. She thanked everyone for all of their contributions over the course of the year, and reminded everyone that at the end of the day, we all have the same goal: to enrich our kids’ lives, help support our teachers and staff, and make these childhood years the best we can for our children.
	2. We have raised $40,000 to be carried over to next year, which is over double from last year.
	3. We are working off of a 30k operating budget. However, due to our extreme push to have has much as possible donated this year, we actually only spent about 20k. So what we are doing is obviously working. But since we can’t count on continuing to get these donations, we are keeping the total amount of our expenses in our budget to ensure that we have enough money to cover our costs for the upcoming year.
	4. What we are doing is working, but what we need to do is broaden our reach to bring in more volunteers who can provide more in time and money. Despite our increase in donations this year, our number of volunteers has dropped substantially and what we are finding is that the same people keep giving and giving and giving. In order to prevent our own burn out and not run ourselves dry, we all need to reach out to our friends (other parents in the community) and ask everyone to pitch in, to commit to helping out in at least one event next year, etc. We need more foot soldiers!
	5. **Spring Fair:** We spent about $2100 but we are budgeting for $4000 for next year in case we don’t receive the same amt. in donations.
	6. **Due Drive**: We raised $3503.40! About $500 more than last year and the envelopes still seem to be trickling in.
	7. **Library Updating Project:** We need to make a decision about how to spend the $5k donation we received from a family foundation which was supposed to have been dedicated to upgrading the library.
		1. **We also received $5k from Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez’s office for the library upgrade**. *We asked for $3500 but they gave us $5000*.
		2. So we don’t need the family foundation money for the library upgrade. The family was approached and they said they were willing to dedicate the funds to meet another school need.
		3. **The school needs a photocopier**
			1. The DOE is only willing to support one and that one is down most of the time.
			2. The PTA does a lot of photocopying on the school’s photocopier and is partly responsible for the wear and tear of the equipment.
			3. There are several other copiers around the floors and in the basement but the service contracts on all of them have expired so we have no idea what it would take to fix them or if they should be replaced. They are also DOE property and we are not allowed to toss them. They must stay onsite, despite the fact that they are nonfunctional.
			4. Per membership approval, the PTA EB would like to propose that we dedicate the $5k from the family foundation to helping the school purchase a new copier, lease a copier, or repair one of the old copiers.
				1. The expense will come from next year’s budget and will need to be approved in September.
				2. **Comment 1:** Can parents volunteer to do copies for the classroom or if one parent works for a larger company that won’t notice if a PTA member uses their equipment for a large project (e.g. printing 550 copies of a flier)?

**Answer:** Of course, but we need a more reliable solution for the amt. of copying the school and the PTA need to do.

* + - 1. **Comment 2:** A member (Araina) stated that she has a friend who might be able to come out to diagnosis the problem on the copiers that have been determined nonfunctional.
				1. We thanked Araina for the offer and recommended that her friend focus on the 4 currently in the hallway as opposed to any of the copiers down in the basement.
				2. Danielle F. stated that she appreciated everyone’s ideas and recommended that everyone should do some research on this and email their ideas to her. Then we will evaluate our options and make a decision regarding what we can do to help the school acquire a second, working photocopier.
	1. **Back to School Night:** Currently is not an expense on our budget but with the revised UFT proposal it might become a Parent/Teacher Conference night. If this is the case, we (the PTA) might need to decide if we are going to do something for it, such as the Community Dinner/Bake Sale that we do for the other Parent/Teacher conferences.
	2. **Walk-a-thon/92nd St. Y**
		+ 1. As of this year, we (the PTA) voted/approved to support the 92nd St. Y Dance Program by doing a walk-a-thon in the Fall. Previously, the walk-a-thon was a school run event and 100% of the funds raised went to support pediatric cancer research.
				1. This year we voted/approved to take $2,000 of our proceeds from the walk-a-thon and give it to the pediatric cancer research cause.
			2. We have committed $8K of next year’s budget to continue the 92nd St. Y program for K-4 for next year.
			3. A proposal was made by a member to expand the program to the 5th grade for an additional $2K or $10K total.
			4. **PTA needs to decide two things going forward:**
				1. Do we continue to dedicate some of the funds raised from the walk-a-thon to pediatric cancer research, and if so how much? Or do we make the walk-a-thon 100% about raising funds to support the school’s arts programming and perhaps do another event (or have the school organize another event) to raise funds for pediatric cancer research).
				2. Do we expand the program to the 5th grade for an additional $2K

Factors to consider regarding these decision:

5th graders lose one period/wk. of physical activity without the dance program, which is already way below standards. And they have the block of time in their schedule for it.

However, it is the same program they’ve had since Kindergarten. Do they really need another year of the same? Perhaps there is something else we could fund to give them a 2nd period of physical activity such as capoeira, martial arts, etc.

Middle Schoolers are walking/raising money for the school too. What are they getting out of it if all of the funds are going to support the elementary school age kids? What can we do to support more arts for the Middle School kids?

Note that they do not have the block in their schedules for anything like this but we could do more to support them in after school.

* + - 1. **Comment:** If we are carrying over $40K from this year, why is an additional $2K a problem?
				1. **Answer:** Because the amt. we are carrying over is an accumulation from several years of fundraising. It should not be assumed that we will have that much going forward, if our expenses increase and/or we find ourselves needing to/wanting to cover the costs of another school program that gets cut from the school’s budget. We know that all Title I funds will eventually be cut from the school’s budget. Also, if we are going to commit to expand the program to 5th grade for next year, we are making that commitment for every year. We, the PTA, have said that we will raise funds every year going forward to fund the 92nd St. Y. We need to be fiscally responsible with our spending and plan for our future.
				2. **The question is what are our goals as a PTA? What would like to do as a PTA and are we providing as diverse a program for all of our kids?**
				3. **Comment from the Wellness Council:** Anything we can do to support wellness and more physical activity for our kids, we are on board and can possibly help with writing grants and fundraising.
	1. **Movie Night:** Last year (2012 – 2013) we only made $53.10 from Movie Night. This year we made $393.89 because everything was donated. Hopefully we will do the same next year.
	2. **5th Grade/6th Grade Dance:** Ms. G. does not want to give them a “Moving Up” Ceremony so what we’ve done is fund a trip for the 5th graders @ $500. However, Mr. Tierney suggested a new idea which is to sponsor a dance for both 5th and 6th graders (the Bridge Dance) instead. The 6th graders can welcome the 5th graders to Middle School.
		+ 1. Note that the 6th graders are not invited to the 7th/8th grade dance because the feeling is that they are too young for it, so this would also be a nice event for them that they don’t currently have.
	3. **8th Grade Breakfast:** We budgeted $300 for this year and it wasn’t enough so we increased it to $450 for next year. We want to make this the biggest event we do.
	4. **Website:** There will be a Technology Mtg soon to discuss upgrading the website.
	5. **Classroom Support:** Ms. G. was hit hard this year in a reduction to her budget with regard to classroom supplies. We need to discuss how we can help support our classrooms in purchasing basic supplies they need for the school year.
	6. **Technology funding:** K-2 has iPads. We need to assess the needs of the other grades. For Middle School, we need to talk to Mr. Demieri to figure out who else needs our support. Some Middle School teachers are using their own equipment.
		1. Note: we have enough base mounts and security cords to support 8 more iPads. We would just need to buy the iPad.
	7. **Athletics Dept. Support:** A new line item for the budget
		1. We don’t have consistent and adequate gym space, especially for the Middle Schoolers.
		2. We need to research options from around the community to be able to utilize gyms at other schools, such as PS98. If we go into another school, there should be no fee except for security if after hours.
		3. Mr. Riley said that if we can find the space, they will fill it with more athletic programs for the Middle School kids after school.
		4. Also, Mr. Riley requested assistance in replenishing their **Tigers Lair** supplies ($100) which could come out of the Athletic budget.
	8. **PTA Meetings –** Despite being a Wellness initiative (as opposed to the PTA) the Wellness Council cannot continue funding the coffee because coffee is not considered healthy. The PTA agreed to buy the coffee for 5 Cafecitos/yr. @ $25/Cafecito or $250 total.
	9. **Event Supplies:** We will be stocking up on plates, styrnos, etc. for the year at the beginning of the school year so that we won’t be scrambling for such items for each event.
	10. **Dues Drive –** We will need to redesign and order new envelopes for next year. We should increase the amt. in the proposed budget to $200 to cover this expense.

**A move was made to approve the proposed budget. Proposed budget was approved!**

1. **Announcements/Committee Updates**
	1. In an effort to improve our communication with the greater community, we now have a FB page. **Like us on FB.**
	2. Annie presented a letter she wrote on behalf of the PTA to appeal to the DOE regarding a situation where 2 families in our community were not able to get a Kindergarten spot in next year’s Kindergarten class, because the older siblings were in Middle School and the Priority 1 status only applies to K-5. We asked the DOE to move them up on the waiting lists so that they could at least get a chance at the spot if the school gets an opening.
		1. Ms. G. wrote a similar letter of appeal.
		2. **The PTA approved the letter**.
	3. **Wellness:** If interested in helping out in the cafeteria next year, please see Sarah Townley.
	4. **Uniform Exchange:** The Uniform Exchange raised $255 so far. It was a great idea to do it at the end of the school year in conjunction with the Cafecito. They should do more.
	5. **PS/MS 278 will be providing Free Summer Meals!**

Finally and most importantly we ended the meeting by acknowledging the amazing Carmen whose daughter graduated from 8th grade this year. The PTA thanked Carmen for her many years of service to the PTA and the school and let her know how much she will be missed.