

# ALLENBY PARENTS' ASSOCIATION MEETING

Wednesday May 25, 2011

7:00pm – 9:00pm

## 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Lori, co-chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

## 2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

**Motion:** Lori moved to accept the agenda as presented. Andrew seconded the motion. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

## 3. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES FROM MARCH

**Motion:** Lori moved to accept the minutes as posted on the website, Bonnie seconded the motion. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

## 4. TREASURER'S REPORT

- As of Apr 30, 2011, we had total net revenue of \$75,560.03 and expenses totalling \$30,553.42 Accordingly, net income for the same period was \$45,006.61.
- Stuart reminded meeting attendees that during the year we account on an cash basis. As a result, there could be revenues and expenses that have been earned/incurred that are not reflected in these figures.
- Stuart apologised that this months financial statements do not reflect the decision to add \$700 to the Grade 6 Yearbook funds (voted on last meeting).
- Net revenues for the year are expected to exceed budget by \$5,000 to \$8,000. This is contingent on the Fun Fair meeting it's target of \$11,000 in net revenues.
- As of the meeting date, \$12,680 of the possible \$16,000 allocated to classroom grants has been spent. The unspent funds will be put back in the surplus.

## 5. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Jennie sent her apologies but was unable to attend the meeting due to illness. In her absence Marta LeGrady, Acting Vice Principal, read a statement prepared by Jennie about the math open day held last week.

Key points:

- This was the first Curriculum Day of this type at Allenby and overall it was a success.
- The math open house was an opportunity for teachers to show parents typical math activities that take place in the classrooms.
- Many classes focused on problem solving, some asking parents to get involved with activities, others teaching lessons for parents to observe.
- In the afternoon, the children were tired after the excitement of the morning. Next time, Jennie would consider a morning session only.
- It was also felt it would have been useful for parents to gather first to get an idea of what to expect.
- Jennie would love to have a discussion at a later date about the math day and would like to hear what parents learned about how math is taught.

## 6. TECHNOLOGY

The following motions were tabled in April's meeting to be voted on tonight.

**Motion 1:** To spend up to \$17600 on interactive white boards and computers to be installed as discussed, of which \$15325 has already been earmarked.

**Motion 2:** To spend up to \$4400 on an interactive white board and computer on a portable rover unit

**Motion 3:** To spend up to \$4800 on up to 8 computers for the smart boards already installed

**Motion 4:** To spend up to \$4000 to purchase 4 additional macbooks to augment the macbook numbers already in the school

**Motion 5:** To spend up to \$7500 to establish a mobile lab of 15 netbooks

**Motion 6:** To spend up to \$1000 on 2 tablet computers

Questions put forward by parents before the voting took place:

### **How much money is available to spend?**

Stuart Baltman, Treasurer, reported that the year ending August 2010 ended with a surplus of \$62,000 of which we keep \$5,000 back as a 'float'. Therefore, so long as we break even this financial year we have \$57,000. However, Stuart expected net revenues this financial year to be between five and eight thousand dollars.

### **What is the typical lifespan of a laptop?**

Yvette Duffy reported it was about 5 years.

## **Why are we spending money on Macbooks and netbooks? Would it be better to teach children using one technology?**

Lisa Parker, member of the Technology committee, reported that Macbooks cost \$1000 each whilst netbooks are about \$400. Yvette Duffy reported that the TDSB has decided support Macbooks mainly on the basis of cost compared with Dell. But they also have PC's in schools so students are already working on two different platforms. Students will be able to do many projects just as well on netbooks.

## **I think technology is important but are we sure as an APA that the technology is being used effectively? How are the teachers being trained?**

Ever since buying the first round of Smartboards it has been the intention that teachers who were early adopters of the technology would become proficient and then mentor other teachers. This has been very successful and more and more teachers are asking for access to a Smartboard.

Teachers are able to share lesson plans and ideas through a shared folder.

One sign that teachers are becoming more comfortable with the technology is that they are now asking for cameras to go with their Smartboards.

Madame Linka, Grade 6 teacher, outlined some ways in which she has used the Smartboard to enhance her students learning; setting up a class blog, data management using excel, student presentations on the Smartboard. She said this was in addition to the technology curriculum that is taught.

## **In buying this technology, what is our goal?**

Our ultimate goal is to see a Smartboard in every classroom being used effectively to enhance student learning. Many of the other items on tonight's wish list are based on opportunity, not need, and would show our desire to stay 'ahead of the game' with regards to technology in schools. By buying one or two sets of netbooks, for example, we are almost experimenting to see if they 'work' in the classroom.

## **Should we allocate some money towards buying software, not just hardware?**

At present, teachers have access to, and were recently trained on, the Ontario Resource Bank, which gives teachers access to 8,700 videos as well as a wealth of other resources. The board provides software to the school. However, if teachers express a need for other software, it is something to bear in mind when setting future budgets

## **What money is needed to maintain the technology in the school?**

The technology is all fairly new at the moment but some money will certainly have to be allocated for maintenance. In the long term, the Technology Committee hopes to get a commitment from the APA for a certain percentage of each year's net income to go towards technology maintainance.

**I know some work has been done into looking at the cost revamping the playground and school field. Should we think about saving some of the money for that?**

Bonnie, Playground committee, has been involved in a fact- finding exercise to look at ways to re-vamp the playground. There investigations are still in its initial phase and no proposal has been put forward. On that basis she felt, and other parents seemed to agree, that the money should be spent now. There is no point in fundraising for money to sit in the bank. Hopefully money for the playground could be raised at a later date.

**Should there be more parent involvement on the Technology Committee?**

A parent suggested that it might be useful to have a group of parents monitoring not only the hardware, but also the usage of the technology. Perhaps parents would be able to contribute some exciting ideas about how the technology could be used, for example, using Skype to communicate with children across the world. It was felt that, for now, input on the Technology Committee would be welcome but we should be careful not to tread on the toes of teachers who already have a Technology Curriculum to teach.

**Is sales tax included in these numbers?**

These numbers are only estimates of cost, as we have to wait to see how much the TDSB manages to purchase each unit for. However, the Technology committee would only be able to spend 'up to' the figure in each motion.

**Are teachers given "release time" to sit down with their mentors? Can the APA supply funds for teacher release time?**

No, that is not possible. It continues to be an issue for teachers finding time to acquaint themselves fully with the technology. They have to be very self motivated to do so.

Once these discussions had taken place Lori moved to vote on the motions. She expressed her concern that so few parents were at the meeting to vote on spending almost \$40,000 despite communicating the importance of the issue via the Allenbeat and distribution of the minutes.

**Motion 1:** To spend up to \$17,600 on interactive white boards and computers to be installed as discussed, of which \$15,325 has already been earmarked. (All in favour, none opposed, motion passed)

**Motion 2:** To spend up to \$4400 on an interactive white board and computer on a portable rover unit. (All in favour, none opposed, motion passed)

**Motion 3:** To spend up to \$4800 on up to 8 computers for the smart boards already installed. (All in favour, none opposed, motion passed)

**Motion 4:** To spend up to \$4000 to purchase 4 additional macbooks to augment the macbook numbers already in the school. (16 in favour, none opposed, 1 abstained, motion passed)

**Motion 5:** To spend up to \$7500 to establish a mobile lab of 15 netbooks. (15 favour, none opposed, 2 abstained, motion passed)

Before voting took place on Motion 6, further discussion took place about the purpose of the two tablet computers. What were they to be used for? If it was for students with Special Educational Needs, is there other funding that could pay for them? Lisa Parker said there was no research evidence to say that they would be effective in students learning but anecdotal evidence from parents who have said tablets motivated their children when they were struggling in maths. She felt that buying them was an experiment to get feedback 'in the field' about their effect on children's learning.

**Motion 6:** To spend up to \$1000 on 2 tablet computers. (8 in favour, 6 opposed, 3 abstained, motion ?). It was unclear at the time of meeting whether the motion was carried since we were unsure if the 3 abstained votes should be counted. It was checked in the bi-laws and it is a majority of votes (abstentions are not considered a vote) so motion was carried.

## **7. APA BUDGET PLANNING PROCESS FOR 2010-11**

A lengthy, and at times, heated discussion took place about the Fundraising Policy of the APA and the school. A parent, on behalf of a group of parents who wish to stay anonymous, raised a concern about what seems to be a lack of policy about fundraising at Allenby. She felt that a clearer framework for fundraising could help address the following issues:

- Parents would have a clearer understanding of what the APA funds in the classroom and what comes out of the school budget
- Parent concerns about the frequency and types of fundraising that take place in the school.
- Parent discontentment surrounding the number of times they are asked to give money to various 'causes' for example, Project Giveback, the Fun Fair, the dance-a-thon
- Parent discontentment surrounding the number of emails they have received about volunteering for the Fun Fair. Is it too much to ask for 200 volunteers?
- Concern that not all parents in our community can afford to be asked for money so frequently
- What our project objectives are for each fundraiser, what our goals are; we're not all about raising money but should also be running some events for the community, to

increase student involvement, to be inclusive, to create and maintain the 'spirit of the APA' amongst parents and students.

- To make sure core APA values are incorporated in fundraising events.

In summary, members of the APA Executive and other parents responded by making the following points:

It is important to distinguish between the three different groups fundraising in the school;

- TDSB - initiatives that Allenby have supported include Terry Fox and MS Read-a-thon,
- Allenby school - charities chosen by the Principal and Allenby staff to promote Character Education. In recent years Free the Children has been the chosen charity and the school has run events such as the Dance-a-thon to raise monies that go directly to the charity.
- APA - fundraising events such as The Big Night Out, Fun Fair and Lip Synch. All money goes directly to supporting programs at Allenby for our students, for example, Scientists in the Classroom, Attendance Verification, Supporting technology through the purchase of smartboards.

The acting VP felt strongly that any parents who were discontented with the number of school-led initiatives need to voice their concerns to Jennie so she could act upon that information. The parent who raised the initial concern acknowledged that the parents whom she represented at the meeting were discontented by the accumulation of events by the school and the APA.

A parent suggested that it would be clearer which events were run by the APA and those by the school if the distinction was made on the 'Important Dates' section of the Allenbeat.

The idea of 'donor fatigue' is not a new issue. Two years ago it was addressed when a group of parents met with Jennie Ucar to understand who was raising what; what is mandated by the TDSB, what is being asked for by the school, and what is being asked for by the APA. A timeline was put together showing when events would be held and what monies parents would be asked for. It was acknowledged tonight that it is maybe time to look at this again. It was also in that meeting that parents took the decision that the APA would not raise money for other charities but would support our sister school, Joyce Public School, through initiatives such as donating our Lost and Found, supporting parents in setting up a strong parent council, and teacher mentoring programs.

Another parent asked for clarification from the questioner about whether she saw a policy acting like a "Public Relations" tool, in that it would explain to all parents what our goals of fundraising are. The questioner confirmed this was the case.

Yvette Duffy, co-chair of the Fundraising committee, addressed some of the concerns about the goals of our fundraising events agreeing that they should be about the 'spirit of the APA' as much as about raising money. She gave some examples to illustrate how the APA incorporated

that goal into its fundraising events this year; Jamie in the office was aware of families who might need financial assistance at APA events, money is set aside to aid those families and they are helped in other ways, for example, by being given free wristbands for the fun fair. The committee has also made a conscientious effort to be inclusive to teachers this year by inviting them to the Big Night Out free of charge and giving their families wristbands for the fun fair. This has resulted in more teachers showing an interest in coming to the fun fair this year. Another parent mentioned other 'break even' events the APA run such as Kindergarten Family Night and Baseball.

Yvette said that she could see a need to market the APA more effectively so that every parent has a clearer understanding of what the APA's goals are.

It was thought that there is a written policy for fundraising but that the essence of what the questioner raised are issues that are discussed and debated in every APA meeting we have and especially the June meeting about the proposed budget.

More than one parent expressed that if a parent is feeling discontent it is their responsibility to come to the meetings to have their say about all issues, to listen to the discussions that are had every month and understand all the facts. As parents who do come to the meetings, it is our responsibility to encourage parents to come and have their say. Decisions about Fundraising are not solely our (the people sat in the room) decisions, they are the decision of all parents but you have to come to the meeting to be a part of that.

In the Open Question part of the meeting the questioner offered to work with the other members of the parent association to review and work on an Allenby fundraising policy and to communicate it to all parents.

## **8. FUNFAIR UPDATE**

Thanks were given to Irenke Payne to recognize her enormous contribution to the Fun Fair.

As of tonight, we only need 4 volunteers to fill the shifts.

Everything else is on track.

## **9. APA Board Recruitment**

New board members are needed. Please come forward if you are interested.

## **OPEN MEETING**

The following motion was put forward by the Environment Committee:

**Motion:** To spend between \$4500 and \$6750 on large stones to complete the stone wall on the NW side of the playground, in order to stop further erosion.

Because Helen Routh, who has been pivotal in the stones put in the playground so far and has all the history, Lori suggested that she get in touch with Helen to put the context and history in the newsletter so this can be voted on in an informed manner in the June meeting.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**