

## Parents' Association Board Meeting

March 10, 2014

The meeting started promptly at 7pm with a discussion of the Nominations process. Lisa Curci, Secretary-Elect is heading the Nominations Committee. The call for nominations went out on Feb. 27 from Cheryl Rudbeck, President-Elect, and nominations will be taken for 5 weeks, ending April 4, 2014.

With the adaption of Wufoo to tabulate votes, Lisa Curci will get emails directly when someone sends in a nomination and when voting is done.

Lisa has received nominations for three Earl Shapiro Hall Council members and a treasurer so far.

Board members then went on to suggest several other possible nominees, mostly for various Council members.

The most glaring need seems to be for a President-Elect. One individual (Safi) was interested in a Co-Presidency if someone else was interested. A requirement for president-elect is that the individual nominated must have already served in some capacity on the PA Board.

Thomas Gaulkin has agreed to continue as communications coordinator and thanks was offered to him, but we will also need someone for the position of Communications -Elect.

Matthew Miller offered his name as Treasurer-Elect.

We also discussed the elimination of several board positions. We will need to amend the bylaws for this, but several positions appear to be unnecessary, among them Volunteer-Coordinator (and -Elect) and Fundraising Coordinator (and -Elect). They will remain on the nominations form that goes out with an explanation that the bylaws as they stand require them to be there, but we will be amending the bylaws soon to eliminate them. The functions of these positions can be formed as the bylaws currently stipulate, in an ad hoc manner if they are needed, along with committees.

Kemi Alausa, Treasurer gave a brief report of the finances. Aramark has been paid. The PA is up to date on all payments that have been submitted. The Councils, who generally have a better sense of budgets and expenses yet to be incurred, had a little more sense of possible issues. The High School Council budget includes money for some graduation and prom expenses. The current senior class wants a very nice prom, Debra Beinstein reported. They will have the graduation reception in tents (and it's possible the expense of these could be in part shared with Alumni needs for tents the weekend before). There are lots of other little additional pieces. Last year, Annette Bacola of the PA High School Council, underwrote half of the reception expense. High school administration keeps pushing expenses back to the PA Council. To date, if all goes as planned, with Prom at the Aquarium, the prom will be \$16,000 in the red. High School administration is not interested in contributing to this expense at all. Fund raising will need to be done by seniors, maybe senior parents will need to contribute, or find another underwriter. We are no longer holding receptions in the Quad Club due to expenses and conflicts there. When the Arts Wing is finished, likely all high school graduation receptions will be held there. We are in

a strange limbo period right now. Some discussion ensued, led by Theresa Van Loon and Debra Beinstein regarding high school and the new space in the future as a possible revenue generator. Demands on Earl Shapiro Hall space are great right now and the space is not available for high school.

Middle School budget expenses were presented and may be slightly over expectations right now with 5<sup>th</sup> grade grants. When teachers request funds, it's difficult to say no. The Middle School generally is in good shape. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation reception is also intending to use tents. They are working with Carol Swainson, MS Principal. It's possible costs can be shared on keeping tents up for MS and HS events. Triste reported that the Lower School is overbudget as is The Earl Shapiro Hall Council budget, which had been expected. A short discussion of needing more funds ensued. Someone suggested that PA Council budgets need to be bigger.

The communications committee with coordinator, Thomas Gaulkin has been in talks for several months regarding how the PA can communicate better with parents. There have apparently been log jams going through school email, etc. on PA specific communications. The Technical Committee has been formed for the Schools, headed by Catherine Braendel, who has been doing e-news and communications for the schools. Thomas is on the technical committee, which has met 3 times as committee. A survey was direct to a select group of a couple of hundred parents. The purpose of the committee is to develop a better communications strategy. On the day the survey went out, a MS survey also went out. The goal is to coordinate what is going out to parents and what works best. For instance, the PA has a separate webpage from the school. The survey also asked about sending out other information outside of school, such as a girl scout troupe forming or the running of a marathon for a school supported cause. When trying to coordinate communications, the school is sometimes taking four days to get a notice out. There needs to be some standardization across schools.

With a new Director of Schools coming, it is a good time for coordinating and revamping.

Highlights from each of Councils:

The high school has tried to incorporate more social activities which prompted the skating and cocoa outing at the Midway rink. The student council didn't manage to promote the event until a couple of days before the event. They had food set up in the cafeteria on a Thursday and then went to skate on the Midway. It happened on a Thursday and the weather cooperated.

Lynn Ponten of the University of California at San Francisco is scheduled to talk to the high school assembly on Teenagers and Taking Risks on April 30. She will talk to parents in the evening.

Middle School

A Parent to parent meeting was held at a parent's house. People were happy to get the information they got there from other parents regarding the selective high school and enrollment process as well as enrollment in other high schools. About 20 parents (maybe fewer) attended. Some parents expressed frustration that school doesn't do more about this. Former MS Principal Amani Reed did send out a letter listing some options after some parents were frustrated by the school's neglecting this topic. Some principal forums have been held. Parents ask 4 questions in advance anonymously. A quick survey went

out and about 80 people responded to the survey. It was discussed as a valuable tool for high school as well.

People also liked the idea of tagging an event such as the high school info session onto another event, such as giant gym night (while students attend something else, parents can talk).

Finally, the issue of substitute teachers was addressed. The middle school frequently gets inadequate substitutes for areas like Math, Spanish, Chinese, and Science classes. They are often not qualified. There needs to be a better system school-wide for substitute teaching.

#### Lower School

Open houses, Halloween and the New Wing were all discussed. Lower School parents are looking for opportunities to get together. It is hard to drop in on the Lower School these days and there's not so much parent to parent contact. There have been 2 rounds of teacher grants. There have been some excellent grant proposals. The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade held a coat drive which turned out to be a great event. The move has been documented with a series of photographs. Everyone's been in a good frame of mind; maybe next year will be the test of how everything goes. Mr. Matsikis is looking for a space for the 6<sup>th</sup> grade notecard event. The lost and found is filling up. All items will be donated to the burn unit at Children's Hospital. Everyone seems happy with the new space.

Earl Shapiro Hall – Makeda reported that we have come a long way, and are trying to get things done. The impact of the PA has not been as strong as ESH council members and the PA would like. The carline situation seems to finally be getting straightened out. Transitioning into the new space has taken lots of PA energy and attention.

Next year, once the dust has settled, we are hoping to move toward what issues evolved, so as to avoid them in future. Many parents patience levels have reached their limits. Principal chats and other plans for parents have not occurred because of the sort of "crisis management" mode the PA and ESH Council members have been experiencing this year. Although many of the issues, such as with carline, were anticipated, many parents feel that not enough was actually done early on to prevent the hassles that have occurred with drop off for a good part of the year.

A few announcements were made:

*A Meet and greet coffee took place on Friday. It was a very nice event right after drop off.*

*Something will be planned with Blaine for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders moving to Blaine in the Fall. Some sort of social function, probably a picnic will take place on the historic campus. At the start of school in August or September, a grander opening will be planned. Maybe it will include activities like a scavenger hunt to find, for instance, the new computer labs, and so forth. An additional class of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, all new to Lab will be entering in the Fall. The majority of new 3<sup>rd</sup> graders will probably have siblings in ESH.*

The addition of ESH will allow the Schools to grow one classroom per grade. The current number of N3 kids totals 132, which will be the target of all subsequent grades in years following.

The Rites of May will take place on May 17. There will be two bouncy houses this year, food trucks and international booths. There will be no book fair and no play this year. It will all need to be scaled back as it will take place at ESH.

Lab Arts will take place on April 24. It is a middle school celebration of the arts and the MS play will be shown over the 3 days, April 24-27. Art will be displayed in various spaces in ESH. Volunteers are needed on Thursday night. There will be drama, art and musical performances.

On June 11, a party honoring Dave Magill will take place in Jackman Field. There will be lemonade and cake. Attendance of 350 is anticipated at that event. Ms. Martonfy and Ms. Rickets will also be retiring, as will a number of other teachers. There will be a teacher appreciation luncheon to be held as well.

Carol Swainson has submitted her resignation. The MS Principal will be moving back to California. Her and her husband's business did not do so well here in Chicago and her husband has already returned to California to live.

Jason Lopez also announced his plans to leave in order to take a job as Head of School at Pegusus School in California.

There was some wrap up of discussion on communication between the Schools and parents with an interest on the parents' behalf of more transparency. Many parents are frustrated because of all the hurdles faced with the transition to ESH. Many of them had been brought up by parent body who thought they were being addressed. For instance, drop off was a big source of discussion with many of the problem areas anticipated. It was a rough transition and shouldn't have been. Many feel that administrators should have been more proactive. Carla and Susan have been making due, but face day to day problems without much support from above. The PA members have been working as intermediaries trying to help out the principals, but really that is beyond their realm of responsibility.

Finally, some discussion ensued about ESH space and how everyone wants to use the space for meetings and events. It is pretty fully booked and in high demand.

Susan Ataman