

Richmond PTA General Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 24, 2013
Richmond Cafeteria 6:30pm-8pm

PTA Board Members in attendance:

Amy Starr Thomas, President
Kyle Begley, Vice President
Salina Wood, Treasurer
Sarah Price, Secretary
Sue Baer, Classroom Support Chair
Shannon Bromenschenkel, Rich Coffee Co-Chair
Sara DeLuca, Super Green Team Chair
Mary Klinger, Board Member
Jason Love, Communications Chair
Andrea Obana, Special Events Chair

Teachers & Staff in attendance:

Matt Goldstein, Assistant Principal
Deb Madore, Physical Education Teacher
Kelly Marsh, Kindergarten Teacher

Guests in attendance:

Counselor Kate Mouery & Student Representatives of the Bulldog Brigade
Krissy Forness of Fusion Landscape Design

Welcome and Call to Order: 6:30pm

Approval of Minutes: October 25, 2012 general meeting minutes approved as written.

Executive Committee:

Amy Starr Thomas began by introducing the present members of the board and welcoming new people.

Salina Wood presented the financial report (*Monthly Treasurer's Report January – Attachment A*). She highlighted the success of the new fundraiser, Richmond Bulldogs t-shirt and sweatshirt sales. She also noted that the Craft Fair, Harvest Festival and Ice Cream Social are well loved PTA events that do not generate revenue to cover all of the associated expenses. Amy added that with two Scholastic Book Fairs happening this year, the proceeds from the fall sale will be used to purchase Japanese books for the school library and the revenue from the spring sale will be used to add to the library's English book collection.

Special Topics & Programs:

1. Kate Mouery, Counselor & the Bulldog Brigadiers

Kate was on hand with a group of Bulldog Brigadiers (BB), the 4th and 5th grade peer mediation group making its debut this year at Richmond. A group of brigadiers performed a skit illustrating the steps they go through to help solve conflicts amongst younger kids during recess. Some of the strategies used included outlining feelings and asking each party to repeat the other's point of view, offering apologies and encouraging creative solutions. The brigadiers involved in the mediation then fill out a report detailing the names of everyone involved and the outcome.

After the skit, Kate spoke about the nuts and bolts of the program. She explained that there are 30 total Bulldog Brigadiers and that 6 are on duty per day, so all 30 work each week. There are 10 students that make up a "sub pool." Kate said the brigadiers are averaging 1-2 mediations per recess and that adults are actively referring students to the brigadiers. In the future, the goal is to have the BB more actively seeking places to be useful and possibly manning certain problem areas of the playground.

2. Krissy Forness, Fusion Landscape Design & Sara DeLuca, Super Green Team Chair Richmond Nature Walk

Krissy and Sara introduced the design for the Richmond Nature Walk. They explained that the Nature Walk was created in the hopes of solving two distinct problems. One, was the dormant north garden that was "unmanageable" and two, the array of difficulties resulting from limited parking, a narrow driveway and the mixing of cars and pedestrians of all ages in this area. Therefore, the Nature Walk was created to direct foot traffic along the path of the Nature Walk and to cross to the cafeteria safely at a designated crosswalk.

Details of the plan include an ADA approved path that runs the east-west length, a focal point of some sort in the middle, bamboo fences and entries at the east and west ends of the walk and a split rail fence along the south side adjacent to the parking lot. There is also a community fundraising component to the plan as there will be an ongoing sale of engraved bricks to honor Richmond community members past, present and future. Krissy also outlined the importance of making the nature walk garden an educational tool that will feature plant signage.

The timeline for the project directs that February and March will host the brick dedication fundraiser, April and May will be for confirming contractors and June, July and August will be the bulk of the time construction. The current budget is approximately \$13,000 but Sara and Krissy are in the process of applying for grants as well.

A short discussion followed the presentation and more details came to light such as dedication bricks will be \$25.00, with 200-250 bricks for sale right away and a total of approximately 600 bricks in total.

There was also some discussion regarding potential problems with clogging in the parking lot. Alenna Merrihew pointed out that traffic currently backs up as parents drop their kids at the cafeteria entrance. Amy responded that it is the goal to promote safety and that also, once the nature walk is in place parents will hopefully drop off kids at the east and west entrances of the nature walk and avoid the parking lot altogether.

Sarah Costello asked where grants had been submitted, to which Krissy and Sara responded that they

had applied for a grant through the East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District. Sarah Costello then volunteered her services as an experienced grant writer.

3. Playground Improvement

Amy kicked off the discussion by explaining that managing a major capital campaign like playground improvement is new territory and that while a certain pace was expected initially, she has learned that slower is better – more time to consider the possibilities, ramifications, ideas and objections will lead to a more thoughtful and successful outcome.

Amy invited those present to draw their ideas on the playground schematics that had been distributed and she presented the student survey results (*Richmond Playground Schematic – Attachment B, Playground Improvement Student Survey Results – Attachment C*).

The members of the Playground Improvement Committee are Pat Lando (chairperson), Robbie Trebelhorn, Deb Madore, Sam Adelman and Joe Tripi.

Assistant Principal Matt Goldstein

Matt gave an overview on the playground currently as he sees it in use every day. He stated the playground is busy – it's the recreational center for 660 kids over 6 recess periods, with anywhere from 200 to 240 kids outdoors at once. It gets crowded, especially when the field is closed. Matt noted that the available space is pretty small for the number of kids and that it should be our goal to find a way to make play safe within our limitations.

Matt went on to describe the use of the play structures, one of which he characterized as older than the other two. He explained that the structures get used, but not as much as you might think; many kids run around and pretend. The tire swings are always popular, but the district is “not big on swings.”

He described very muddy areas, namely the hill at the northeast corner as a “disaster.” Wallball is popular but there is only one wall to play against with no windows but it interferes with the basketball court.

Following Matt's presentation, there was some discussion surrounding playground equipment. Rand Thomas inquired as to whether the district was opposed to a zipline, which was one of the most popular requests featured in the student survey results. Pat Lando, Playground Improvement Committee Chair responded that PPS must adhere to the national safety standards, but that the district frowns on attractions that require more maintenance. Amy chimed in and explained that after meeting with people from the district, it was her impression that they might be more receptive to certain changes if contingency for maintenance was included in the plans.

There were a series of questions at this point in the discussion.

(Q) Rand Thomas: Is eating outside against the rules?

(A) Matt Goldstein: No

(Q) Sam Adelman: Do different age groups use the play structures?

(A) Matt Goldstein: Older kids don't play on the structures as much.

(Q) Sam Adelman: Are the older kids bored?

(A) Matt Goldstein: No, it's somewhat normal for that age group and has partially to do with how they want to be perceived as cruising around.

Deb Madore, Physical Education Teacher

Deb presented her experiences and ideas regarding the playground improvement. She stated that the paint on the playground is badly worn, the field is so bad it's difficult for her to find safe places to conduct outdoor activities. Some of Deb's suggestions included new and more creative paint on the black top, a bouldering wall, a path around the field for walking and socializing and a wallball court separate from the basketball court.

Following Deb's presentation, there were several questions from the membership.

(Q) Do we have to go through the district for painting the black top?

(A) Amy Thomas: Yes, but that shouldn't be problematic.

(A) Deb Madore: Peaceful Playgrounds offers grants and resources for creative striping.

Pat Lando asked Deb to please outline her teaching ideas. Deb outlined two major components that she works to integrate into her classes: conflict resolution and choice. She stated that she is not big on competition. For example in her class, scores are not kept individually but tallied as a group.

(Q) What about rainy day recesses? How would a covered structure or turf effect the rainy days?

(A) Deb Madore: Covered structures are not as useful as you might think. I was at Chapman when they put in turf. Turf would be heaven.

(Q) Salina Wood Does the gate to the playground have to stay open?

(A) Matt Goldstein: The fence could be closed, but when we have closed the fence we've heard about it. Turf would make a big difference to the community. Richmond is not a community school and it gets lots of use by the community.

(Q) Shannon Bromenschenkel: What about the effect of leaf debris on turf? What will be needed for field maintenance?

(A) Matt Goldstein: If turf is a serious consideration, research will need to be done to answer these questions.

(Q) Robbie Trebelhorn: Would it be possible to build a separate structure for wallball where people could play on both sides? How high would it need to be?

(A) Deb Madore: The wall needs to be high, not sure about building a structure.

(Q) Sam Adelman: What would provide the most physical activity?

(A) Deb Madore: The kids want to walk!

Pat Lando, Playground Improvement Committee Chair

Pat presented what he referred to as the "bucket list" - the list of all the possible contingencies to be considered for improving the Richmond playground and field. He emphasized that the list as it exists is a "live document," to be added to and to evolve with time and information. Pat said the committee is still actively seeking members and would especially like to find people who are Richmond families and

who live in the neighborhood.

Pat explained that the next steps for the PI committee are to analyze information gathered at this meeting and then produce an electronic survey to be completed by the Richmond community. This information will hopefully be ready to present at the March 7, 2013 General Meeting. Kelly Marsh piped up that she is very excited about the possibility of a path around the field.

Amy concluded the topic for the evening by explaining that the playground improvement effort may not be just one thing; it may be a series of improvements. She also reminded the people present that the money must all be raised before anything can go forward. As she put it, "We have to have 100% of the money in hand before we spend \$1.00." With this in mind, it was emphasized that it will be necessary to get corporate sponsorship. She also made a final reminder that while the survey will be school wide, this is a PTA project and therefore only PTA members may vote on how to take action. Finally Amy closed the topic by asking "What do we want our children to do and how can we help them to do it?"

Jennifer Gregor reminded the members present that it is imperative to remember ADA regulations so that everyone is included in these improvements.

Announcements:

1. Movie Night is coming Friday, February 8, 2013 – My Neighbor Totoro. Pizza will be sold by the slice by the 5th grade class.
2. Science Fair is coming Friday, March 1, 2013.
3. Next General Meeting is Thursday, March 7, 2013.
4. In early February, the new Japanese lettering on the school exterior will be installed reading "Richmond Shogaku."

Adjourned: 8:00pm

Date Presented for Acceptance: _____

President

Secretary

