

Richmond PTA General Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 26th, 2013

Richmond Cafeteria, 6:30 p.m.

PTA Board members in attendance:

Amy Starr Thomas, President
Sara DeLuca, Vice President
Salina Wood, Treasurer
Tricia Waineo, Treasurer
Amy Seaholt, Secretary
Andrea Obana, Special Events
Bonnie Zadeyan, Classroom Support Chair
Jason Love, Communications
Pat Lando, Playground Improvement
Kate Day, Super Green Team
Erin Estes, Super Green Team
Emi Advonstondt, Rich Coffee
Steve Gutmann, Membership Chair

Guest in Attendance:

Bev Pruitt, Principal
Dr. Gretchen Schlag, Assistant Principal
Lavonna Zeller-Williams-Bratschi, Music Teacher
Claudia Sterry, Counselor

Welcome and Call to Order: 6:30 pm

Approval of Minutes:

May 23, 2013 General Meeting Minutes, approved as written.

Reading of PTA Standing Rules:

Amy Seaholt read the Richmond PTA standing rules, which must be read and approved at the first PTA general meeting of each school year. Amy Star Thomas also suggested that everyone looks over the PTA program objectives.

Rand Thomas moved to approve the Richmond PTA standing rules as read. Andrea Obana seconded the motion. Motion passed and the standing rules were approved as read.

Treasurers Report:

Salina Wood introduced her new co-treasurer, Tricia Waineo. Salina noted that the goal of the PTA funds are to contribute to the educational and emotional well being of the kids. This year the PTA will draw down on reserve funds by about \$17,413, which will leave PTA with about \$68,273 carrying over to the 2014-15 school year.

The wrapping paper sale is run by the PTA this year and proceeds will go toward the classroom support fund. Salina briefly went over all the other fundraisers scheduled for the year.

PTA will be using carryover funds from last year to support: playground improvements, classroom technology upgrades, classroom support, website development, clothing center and student fund, PE grant, Ellison die cutter and the outdoor school grant. The last two were voted on and approved at the May 2013 general meeting.

The question was raised regarding the strategy for spending PTA funds. Amy Starr Thomas responded that the strategy with the drawdown is not to get to zero, but PTA does want to use the money to benefit the kids in the year it was actually raised, as much as it is possible. There is not specific strategy to this end. The goal is to focus on programs that can be sustained year after year through regular fundraisers. Last school year PTA raised \$40k more than expected, so we are happy to have the problem we have.

Another member asked if there is there a target dollar amount that of reserves that we'd like to have in the bank. Amy Starr Thomas clarified that there is no current number, but the IRS suggest that as a non-profit, PTA should reserve one year of our operating budget. If members have other suggestions, PTA would welcome the conversation. Reserves will be spent with membership approval and PTA will work with staff to spend money on items for the school and classroom that are needed and match with PTA values.

Jennifer Greger motioned to pass the PTA Budget as written. Tricia Waineo seconded the motion. The 2013-2014 PTA Budget was passed as written.

Guest Speakers:

Principal Bev Pruitt spoke to the attendees. She said that she feels good about the year so far and that new hires and returning teachers have been successful. She thanked PTA for being productive and respectful and she appreciates that the President and Chairs ask for input and open conversations. Bev thanked the PTA for the nature walk and the wall ball. When PTA takes such a large role, it frees her up to work on academics and instruction.

Richmond students scored in 90th percentile in math and reading on the Oregon state report card. Students scored in the 80th percentile in science, so staff is working on improving that score, and the reading scores for disadvantaged kids. Bev pointed out that the state gives the school no credit for spending half the day in language immersion. Bev is looking into enrichments that will help round out areas of education that Richmond teachers don't have time to focus on. She appreciates that the parents want to have a Japanese tea once a month on Wednesdays to practice the language and get together.

The teachers union is in negotiation with the district over contracts. The district called for a mediator to talk with both PAT and the District representatives to negotiate contract terms. Bev doesn't think either the teachers or the district representatives want to strike, and she thinks their differences will be resolved, but it will take time. Also, the budget allocated to the school is reduced but there are more children at the school. The Richmond School Foundation contributed money to fill the gap, but she's uncertain whether the budget at the end of the year will allow the continuation of current staffing. She also appreciates the additional money raised during Run for Richmond for teachers to enrich their science and social studies teaching in the classroom. Bev said Art enrichment is difficult to plan because the budget for the Arts is given one moment and taken away the next. The goal is to incorporate art into learning. It's embedded in reading and in Japanese study as much as the teachers can include it.

Lavonna Zeller-Williams-Bratschi, the new Music Teacher, introduced herself with a song. She comes from the Gresham Barlow school district where she was laid off twice since 2009. She spends time here and time at Rieke Elementary and is really excited to be back at elementary. She teaches music classes to other teachers, and will be travelling to Nashville for the music conference there. She'd be happy to help PTA spend their money. She doesn't have musical instruments, and has put a request on donorschoose.org for non-tuned instruments, like drums and recorders. She invited attendees to contribute, if they can. She also wants xylophones, and ukuleles so that she can include a ukulele element to 5th grade instruction at the end of the year.

Assistant Principal Dr. Gretchen Schlag introduced herself. She comes from the Beaverton district and was in Georgia before that. She's been in teaching and education for 16 years. Dr. Schlag worked in elementary and as a reading specialist, and got her doctorate in teacher leadership and reading instruction. She was a professional development advisor in Beaverton, helping teachers teach better. Is also an adjunct instructor primarily with Concordia University. She is the person to go to with concerns about the grounds and safety around the school. There is a school safety committee that meets once a month and parents can attend. She keeps in touch with Custodian Dan about facility issues around the school. She is also the second stop, after the classroom teachers, for disciplinary problems. If any student has to come talk with her, she will call parents, even if the student is not in "trouble."

School Counselor Claudia Sterry introduced herself. She is here full time and comes from Ainsworth Elementary. This is her ninth year as a school counselor and she likes being at an elementary. Her job is to make sure everyone here is safe and happy, but that can mean a lot of things to different people. She teaches in every classroom three times per month using a guidance counselor curriculum and using monthly themes, but she changes it for the grade level. Also once a month she works on the specific needs in any one classroom. She can address teasing, conflicts, or other issues the teachers want addressed as a group. She relies a lot on role playing. She does not do individual counseling. She will be working with the student council, encouraging school spirit and will be opening a student store soon. Items in the school store can only be purchased with Bulldog Bucks. Bulldog Bucks can only be earned by doing well in the classroom.

The store will be open before school, and she will ask a parent supervisor to help, so she'll send a help request out over Big Tent. She would like to have the store open perhaps three times a week (but she's not sure of that) and no money will be exchanged at the store. She will also be working with the Bulldog Brigade, who are 4th and 5th graders who will be trained in peer mediation. She chairs the building screening committee, which is a parent's first stop if you have a significant behavior or learning concern. She also can be available to sit in on any teacher meeting if you would like her as another set of eyes and ears, if you have special concerns. She wishes she could have an open door policy, but her schedule requires that parents make appointments to talk with her.

Additional Business:

Amy Starr Thomas also thanked Teacher Deb, our PE specialist, for attending PTA meetings so consistently.

Rich Coffee has contributed two punch cards for free coffee. At the end of the meeting Amy will pull two names from all the staff members who have signed up for PTA membership as a thanks for joining and supporting PTA. Input from teachers is critical for our success.

Upcoming events:

October 26th is the new date for Harvest Fest, rain or shine.

October 4th is movie night. The PTA is showing Chicken Run. Japanese language shorts will show before the movie.

October 2nd, before school, is the first Bank Day for students. Information will be going out to the lower grades about how to start depositing into accounts.

October 19th is breakfast in the garden and will be paired with a planting day to beautify the nature walk.

Open Floor:

Amy opened the floor to suggestions for objectives, concerns, questions of any sort related to PTA.

Jason Love brought up the PTA website, and mentioned that if you use Amazon, then go through the links on our site, Richmond PTA will get a commission on some purchases. It bolsters the revenue that PTA gets and doesn't add to the cost of the purchase on Amazon.

Bev used the opportunity to thank Amy ST for her role and service to the school.

Coffee Card Drawing:

Steve G pulled the names of the staff winners of the Rich Coffee punch cards: Uchida Sensei and Anna Kapranos were the winners. Amy Starr Thomas awarded another punch card to Teacher Deb for her continuing support.

Meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.