Meeting Minutes

Douglas Elementary PTO

March 20, 2025 Douglas Elementary 3:15pm

**Board Members: Birdie Holley, President – Ingrid Benson, Vice President – Chris Bowman, Treasurer – Raechel Hardin, Secretary – Michaelle Gust, DES Principal – Becky Starring**

Meeting called to order by: Birdie Holley, President Attendance: 12

Board Members not present: Becky Starring

Minutes: February meeting minutes approved via email.

**Officer Updates**

**President: Birdie Holley** (birdiewester@gmail.com)

* Board elections will take place in April. So far, interest in board positions are as follows: Raechel Hardin, President; Gaby Cote, Vice President; Renee Russell, Treasurer; Alison Mixan, Secretary. However, if you are interested in running for a board position please reach out to Birdie Holley (birdiewester@gmail.com) or Raechel Hardin (rhardinfbs@gmail.com). There is also an at-large board member position open so if you are interested, please reach out. While the board positions for next year are nearly filled, we are still seeking committee leads for various groups. A separate email has been sent out and those interested in the remaining positions please reach out to Birdie or Raechel. New members who take on committee leads will have the opportunity to shadow and meet with current leads to better understand their roles.
* We are currently awaiting feedback from our legal team regarding the 501(c)(3) status and whether we need to transition it to the new president's name.
* Additionally, some members have expressed interest in holding virtual PTO meetings to increase attendance. We are considering this option and will work on the logistics to see if it is feasible.
* There has been a request to schedule some PTO meetings at 5:30 PM to accommodate those with other commitments. Historically, this time has seen lower attendance, but we are open to trying it again in the future. We may schedule a few meetings next winter during this time to avoid conflicts with fall and spring sports, though that will be determined later.
* The school website is still undergoing updates, and we will ensure that the PTO meeting information is refreshed once the work is complete.
* We also want to remind everyone that we still need to fill the at-large and vice president positions for the middle school. If you have a middle schooler or will have one next year and are interested, please contact Birdie Holley (birdiewester@gmail.com).
* Please note that there will be only one more PTO meeting this year to be held on April 17th at 8:30am at DES.
* **Vice President: Ingrid Benson** (ingbenson2@gmail.com)
* No update.

**Treasurer: Chris Bowman**  (cjames.bowman@gmail.com)

* February has been a relatively quiet month, with only four transactions. We have a surplus in the budget from previous years, so we are well within our budget. That said, we will need to reduce expenses moving forward in case we don't maintain a surplus. Most line items haven't exceeded their budgets, though a few have, which was easily managed by being under budget in other areas. The walkathon remains one of our largest expenses, but we also came in under budget for that event.
* If you are a committee lead, please submit any expenses promptly to help us keep better track of our finances.
* If the school covers transportation costs for field trips next year, we anticipate being able to free up about $8,000 in the budget.
* An audit will be conducted in August to ensure all accounts align, and this will become an annual practice. Our auditor advises that we approve the budget as soon as possible and then make amendments after the walkathon if necessary.
* A copy of the current budget is posted on the PTO website. ([www.douglaselementarypto.org](http://www.douglaselementarypto.org))

**Meeting Information**

* **Principal Update (Michaelle Gust):** The teachers were grateful for the meals provided during the parent-teacher conferences. There were plenty of leftovers, and they would like to extend their thanks to the parents for the delicious food.
* Spring break is scheduled from April 4-11, and the M-STEP testing will begin right after the break on April 14.
* Popcorn Friday is on March 28.
* There will be no school on April 18 due to an in-service day.
* Michelle met with a representative from Velo Kids, a program that teaches children how to ride bikes. They offer a week-long program at the school, providing all the necessary equipment and instruction. Michelle inquired whether the PTO would consider sponsoring this program, which includes five sessions lasting 45 to 60 minutes, culminating in a group bike ride at Schultz Park. The total cost for the program is $4,000. She proposed trying it out this year to see if we would want to continue it in the future, with the sessions taking place in April after spring break. Michelle believes this could lead to future opportunities to provide bikes or helmets to children in need.
* Some members raised questions about the different levels of bike riding skills and whether the lessons could be tailored accordingly, which Michelle will ask the program director. After discussing the proposal, the PTO confirmed that there are sufficient funds to support the program. A vote was then held to approve it, which passed unanimously. As a result, the program will take place in April, following spring break.
* Whitney from the SCA mentioned that she collaborates with Velo Kids on various projects as well and suggested they could integrate their “Failabration” series with the bike riding program, linking it to reading month and recent SCA field trips. One member pointed out that this could be a great way to keep the kids active, while another proposed organizing a "bike to school" day in the future. It was suggested to form a committee to develop a biking club or program for kids.
* **Teacher Update (Mrs. Hale/Mrs. Robb):** Teachers are encouraged to take pictures of any PTO sponsored events and send to Birdie (birdiewester@gmail.com) or Raechel (rhardinfbs@gmail.com) so we can make sure to thank our donors publicly for their support.
* **Garden Update (Dana):** There will be a spring cleanup on May 2 from 9:30 to 11:00 AM, and we are seeking parent volunteers to help prepare the grounds for spring and summer. Tasks will include cutting back dead plants, tidying up the area, and possibly mulching. Additionally, we would like to obtain some rugs to place in front of the access doors to prevent mud from being tracked into the building. Michelle will check if we have any extra rugs available at the school.
* Dana is scheduled to meet with the Boys and Girls Club, as they plan to use the gardens during the summer, and we want to ensure they have access.
* Jess Gray is currently running a garden club on Wednesdays after school, where students will be working in the garden during their designated time.
* We would appreciate donations of peanut-free birdseed and mulch if parents would like to contribute. It is greatly appreciated!!
* Teachers can also have students harvest seeds from the plants before the spring cleanup.
* **Reading Month Update (Mrs. Kelley/Mrs. McKee):** Reading month is underway, and the kids are having a great time with all the activities planned.
* **Family Dance Update (Kelli/Joelle**): The family dance took place on Saturday March 22nd.
* **Teacher Appreciation Week (Karen/Ashley):** Teacher Appreciation Week is May 5-9th and there are a lot of fun activities planned. Teachers can enjoy a special treat every day including Roasted Rooster Coffee Truck on Monday, lunch provided by the PTO on Tuesday, massages in the teacher lounge on Wednesday, baked goods on Thursday, and swag bags with teacher’s favorite things on Friday. Students are also included in the festivities and on Monday are encouraged to bring their teacher some school supplies or a book, dress in 90’s attire on Tuesday, give your teacher a compliment on Wednesday, send a thank you or favorite memory note to your teacher on Thursday, and give high fives to all the teachers and staff on Friday. We invite all students and parents to give our wonderful teachers the gratitude they deserve this week!
* **Eloquence Day (Meagan):** There was a meeting in March and everything is progressing smoothly and as planned. A Sign-up Genius has been sent out for volunteers needed on the day of the event. Many local businesses from our wonderful community are generously donating food and have chosen not to accept payment from the PTO. Invitations and swag bags are currently being prepared. This event is on May 8th.
* **SCA Update (Whitney):** The Mountain Film event was a success, and all the DES students had the opportunity to watch the films at the SCA in March. The Film for Families event had to be cancelled due to low attendance numbers. The assembly for Reading Month is scheduled for April, and all arrangements for that are in place. Additionally, the third graders will be visiting the SCA for field trips in April and May.
* **Screen Free Week (Lauren):** Lauren is looking to pass this committee to another person next year and would like to do it seamlessly, so if there is someone that is interested in taking it on next year, she would love to have them work on it with her this year. If this is of interest to anyone, please reach out to Raechel Hardin ([rhardinfbs@gmail.com](mailto:rhardinfbs@gmail.com)). The library is helping with after school events again this year. Here is the lineup for Screen Free Week:
  + Monday - Sew Fun (this is a registration only class, so Monday will have no "drop in" activities available.
  + Tuesday - Creating with Perler Beads
  + Wednesday - LEGO Lab
  + Thursday - Board Games
  + Saturday - Puppet making workshop with the folks from Hystopolis Productions
  + Screen Free Week is April 21-25 with the Color Run on the 25th from 5:30-7:00pm at Schultz Park.
* **School Safety Update (Michaelle):** Mark and several district employees are attending the Ottawa Area School Safety Network meeting next week. There are 2 safety drills remaining at DES this year. There is a district-wide safety security team meeting to be held the week after spring break with a focus on our new building safety measures.
* **Member Comments:** A member raised concerns about potential safety issues for students walking from school to the library at the end of the school day. There have been numerous instances of kids not adhering to safety guidelines while walking along the road, especially since there are no sidewalks leading to the library. Occasionally, a Douglas police officer is present to monitor the situation, but this is not consistent. It was suggested that we could educate the students on safe walking practices to the library or consider implementing a crossing guard to assist them in crossing the street safely.

Meeting Adjourned At: 4:21

Minutes Compiled By: Raechel Hardin, Secretary