Meeting Minutes

Douglas Elementary PTO

March 23, 2023 Douglas Elementary 6:00pm

**Board Members: Birdie Holley, President – Ingrid Benson, Vice President – Chris Bowman, Treasurer – Raechel Hardin, Secretary – Michaelle Gust, DES Principal – Joelle Sanger (Tom Sanger Proxy) – Jeni Groenewoud**

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

Board Members not present: Joelle Sanger

Minutes: Minutes from 2/21/2023 meeting accepted.

**Officer Updates**

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

* Thank you notes for the Walkathon were completed by the student council.
* As we had a double volunteer of the month last month, there was no volunteer of the month for March.
* Members suggested it is time to start looking for new committee leads for next year. It was also suggested that there be a sign-up sheet at the Bye-Bye Breakfast so new parents can sign up to volunteer and lend a hand in future events as well.

**Vice President: Ingrid Benson** (ingbenson2@gmail.com)

* Walkathon update: We are in search of a theme for next year’s walkathon. If anyone has ideas for this, please pass them along to Ingrid. We are waiting for a confirmation date, which will be scheduled after determining the dates of the high school sporting events. We would like to hold a meeting with event leads in June. If you have an interest in leading an event, please don’t hesitate to contact Ingrid. Some of the brainstormed themes included a costume theme, monster mash dash, or a glow run.

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

* We have an updated budget that will be posted on the PTO website. Chris has color-coded the budget for easy reference. Yellow signifies areas where we have not spent any money this year. Red indicates areas where we have gone over our budget. Some areas that were over budget were the holiday workshop, the parent workshop, and swim lessons. To mitigate these overages, we have reallocated funds from unused areas. Thanks to a generous $2500 donation, our garden budget has increased from $6500 to $9000. Additionally, the unused Halloween funds can be counted toward any overages for the year. The funds for science improvements have been somewhat utilized recently. We have also signed up for an Amazon Business account to avoid having to pay tax when ordering supplies. We have allocated $6000 for books for teachers, of which only $3300 has been utilized. We need a list of teachers and their corresponding book budgets. Lastly, Birdie would like to take pictures of the science improvements to showcase where the walkathon donor money is being invested.

**Meeting Information**

* **Principal Update (Michaelle Gust):** Students will be attending the film festival at the SCA on Friday March 24th and will be traveling by bus. Additionally, a school wide pizza party is scheduled for next Wednesday, the 29th, to celebrate good behavior from the students. Michaelle is asking the PTO if she can use funds from the PTO budget to cover expenses. The PTO has approved the use of the discretionary funds to cover the cost of $300 for two pizzas per classroom. Michaelle was also seeking feedback from the children and parents about the PBIS behavior program that is being utilized. Members stated that it has been positively received so far. Michaelle would also like to assist at the family dance that is happening this Saturday, the 25th of March. Spring break is coming up and is March 31st – April 9th. During the meeting, Michaelle received a text message stating that the musicians for the artist-in-residence program will be providing their services for free. As a result, we have reallocated $2000 from the budget line, which will now go towards discretionary funds this year. However, the money for this expense will be needed for next year.
* **Teacher Update (Mrs. Hale):** The Sunshine Cart has been a huge success, and they are thrilled to see how much everyone is enjoying it. She is requesting that anyone with receipts for reimbursements submit them as soon as possible. She reached out to staff to gather ideas for playground needs. Suggestions included chalk, a map of the United States painted onto the cement, a hook and ring game, an obstacle course, and signs for exercises. Additionally, teachers have expressed a need for umbrellas or ponchos on rainy days. This will be a consideration for next year. She has also discussed seating for the outdoor classroom and are currently gathering specific ideas from teachers. As weather warms up, we can get a better idea of what the needs in this area are. It may be necessary to appoint either a parent or a teacher to lead the effort for playground equipment needs. Maintenance of the playground is also a concern. She will reach out to teachers to see if anyone is interested in spearheading this.
* **Eloquence Day Update (Casey Lokker):** Asking for an increase in the budget from $1000 to $1910. There was a concern that the prior budget would not be enough since the cost of this event was higher than the budget last year. The costs are estimated as follows: photographer ($250), paper invitations, etc. ($400), decorations ($650), food ($350), and gift bags ($520). It is the hope that they will spend less but she wanted to ensure they have enough funds to provide what is needed. Some members noted that paper products such as decorations, invitations, plates, etc. could be purchased at a store in South Haven called D&L which could significantly reduce the budget. Birdie suggested meeting in the middle and allotting $1750. Anna proposed approving the original budget and providing suggestions to reduce costs. Ultimately, the PTO approved the budget of $1910. Furthermore, it was noted that new families may not know what Eloquence Day is, so teachers should make sure that parents understand its purpose and benefits for the students.
* **Family Dance Update (Karen Kerridge):** Unfortunately, it was challenging to find a group of older students that were able to babysit during the family dance. Therefore, the volunteers who were helping with snacks, etc. will also be watching the kids who will be watching a movie while the other group of students are at the dance. Since we do not have to pay for the babysitters, there was enough money left over to hire a DJ. They are currently under their allotted budget. Additionally, it should be noted that a new school policy states that there is a janitor fee for events held at the school during non-school days. Lastly, if anyone is interested in helping with decorating, the doors will open at 11:45 am on Saturday the 25th of March.
* **Color Run Update (Kendra Briggs):** In need of a co-chair for this committee. Fortunately, Sarah Nelson has agreed to do this. Birdie brought up that there are bottles and sunglasses available in the PTO closet that can be utilized for this event. This event will serve as a celebration for the end of screen-free week and will be held on May 5th.
* **Teacher/Staff Appreciation Update (Karen Kerridge):** Karen needs a full list of all teachers and staff members. There will be theme days during this week and the theme is “Games”. The theme days are as follows: Hungry Hungry Hippo: Time for a feast, Press Your Luck: No Whammy, Candyland: sweet treat day, LIFE is better with a yummy breakfast, and Swag Day. Last year, they spent $3800, and the budget was $5500. This year’s budget is $3432.
* **Screen Free Week Update (Kendra Briggs):** Kendra needed a co-chair and Sarah Nelson will be volunteering for that position. They need ideas for activities for this week. Dana stated that there will be garden work available during this week if students would like to sign up to help with those tasks.
* **Parking Lots Update (Birdie):** It appears that there is no interest or volunteers for this particular committee. The PTO has decided to withdraw from the parking lots due to lack of interest and since no one has come forward to lead this committee.
* **Kid’s Big Idea Update (Gracie Bosch):** Student Council is working on presenting something to students and should have an update for the next meeting.
* **Garden Update (Dana Pecina):** Dana placed a poster in the lobby of the school during parent/teacher conferences as well as a sign-up sheet for anyone who was interested in helping with the garden. There was a lot of interest from parents who wanted to volunteer. Whitney and the SCA sent out a Google survey with timeslots for teachers to sign up their students to volunteer in the garden. During screen-free week, there will be time slots available for students to work in the garden as well. There may be a shortage of volunteers during MSTEP assessments starting after spring break. Additionally, there is a duck that has laid eggs in the courtyard, so students will need to work around her when volunteering in the garden.
* **March Reading Month Update (Anna Gregg and Meagan Lampen):** March Reading month is going well so far, and the students enjoyed the author who came to visit. It has been suggested that next year, planning should start at the end of the prior year to give more time for preparation. The budget for having authors come to the school is quite low, so there may be a need for a larger budget in the future. It was also suggested that walkathon donations can be earmarked for certain categories to raise the budget for the following year. There was also a question regarding the use of Venmo for the payment of the books from the visiting author because Venmo takes a percentage of the funds. This issue will be addressed in the future.
* **Member Comments:** A member asked if the PTO had ever considered hiring a grant writer. Birdie stated that currently we have a few parents who write grants for us when needed but that it may be a good idea in the future to think about hiring someone.

Meeting Adjourned At: 7:18 pm

Minutes Compiled By: Raechel Hardin, Secretary