

Minutes of CES PTO November 12th, 2024 Meeting

Officers: Aaron Zain, Jen Rice, Heather Cobb, Mia Park, Tyson Stoddard

Call to order: at 6:01pm by Aaron Zain.

Attendance and introductions: Aaron Zain, Tawnya Ertel, Jen Rice, Evin Liljengren, Brendan Mahoney, Amanda Rasmussen, James Grzybowski, Heather Cobb, Brendan Bell, Meg Gister, Amy Sizer, David Champlin, Paul Sinusas, Tiffany Nemers, Anna Scott

Minutes approval: Motion by Jen Rice, 2nd by Aaron Zain to approve October minutes.

President's Report (Aaron Zain):

Halloween Town- Thank you to all of the volunteers. Was well attended. Received a complaint that is being addressed. Already planning for next year, looking for volunteers to join the committee.

Volunteer Status: Looking for help with committees beyond the Executive board. Need more volunteers to make events happen, otherwise risk restructuring or not offering certain events = less fundraising and less overall for our kids.

Need a volunteer to help with beautification of the planters in the front off the school. A small budget is available.

Bingo Basket Raffle, currently tentative, need a volunteer to lead.

Plan to offer in person and online option for December meeting.

Positions will be opening up on the Executive board for next year, give it a thought and express interest.

Also looking for a grant researcher/writer.

January meeting date changed to January 7th due to a conflict at the school.

Principal/Teacher's Report: Nothing to report at this time.

Committee Reports

Halloween Town (Evin Liljengren for Mia Park):

Halloween Town was a successful fundraiser and community event. HUGE thank you to the incredible Halloween Town committee, CES staff, and families who donated their time and goods.

We made over \$11000. Increased revenue was primarily from more admission tickets and sponsorships, including large donations from Whelen and the Chester Leadership Fund. We did

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not sell many bags <50 but will advertise them prior to the event next year. We stayed under the approved budget.

Partnerships with town, merchants and library were successful due to increased communication and to our selectwoman's love of Halloween Town. We had better communication with middle and high schools to schedule events and solicit volunteers.

We recognize there is room for improvement. And have ideas on how to streamline the costume contest and direct traffic within the cemetery, among other things. Did folks like the longer parade? We welcome your feedback!

We have a great team but we still need more help next year with setting up the cemetery, carnival game and food prior to the event. If either Bob (cemetery setup), Patrick (games setup), or Kim (food setup) became sick, the whole event would not have been possible. We need at least 3 dedicated volunteers to step up next year to assist and learn the ropes from these folks.

We had great support for the scenes and baked goods, but we needed more volunteers during the event to sell food, tickets, admissions and man the games. Volunteer breakdown this year: at least 27 parents on scenes, 14 parents for baked goods/candy, 8 parents for games, and 6 CES staff/teachers. We need at least 24 volunteers for the carnival games with 2 hr shifts. Suggestions on how to get more parents to volunteer during the event? Make them 1 hr slots? Get a lead volunteer/family for each game to coordinate volunteers? We did not get enough CES staff/teachers to fill the admissions and ticket spots.

Volunteer shortages are a chronic issue for this event, so the committee is considering creating a date cut off for volunteers and cutting games or food out if not enough support. Or rethinking the carnival section entirely - food trucks? fewer games? Ideas welcome.

We have reached out to Rotary Club, Chester Hose Company, and other local organizations with little success. Please let us know if you are part of a local church or other organization that could get involved next year.

Due to a complaint about Halloween Town's disrespect of the cemetery, the committee is discussing providing more guidance to scene creators to not use the actual tombs, to stay in areas between stones, and perhaps to put really flashy scenes at the part of the loop that does not have graves.

We are already anticipating next year! Halloween Town 2025 will be Friday, October 24th. If you would like to get involved in planning, please reach out to cescpto@gmail.com as we will start planning in early 2025.

Member discussion involving concern for public safety regarding the uneven walkway into the cemetery as well as parked cars along Water Street with poor lighting. Suggested having games downtown and use the cemetery parking lot for the haunted scenes rather than the cemetery.

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Discussed other options such as the prior hayride however concerns voiced regarding the amount of people and safety with the tractor moving in a crowd. Parents and kids need to stay on the path or we may lose the option of using the cemetery in the future.

Book Fair (Tawnya Ertel):

Recommend using both registers at the next fair and reduce the sale to 2 days. Consider moving dates to coordinate with Parent Teacher Conferences to allow for more parent attendance and providing childcare during conferences to allow them to attend together.

Discussed a free book program so that all children leave with a book. Accept gently used donated books to have in a bin at the book fair for children who forgot their money or may not be provided with money from their parents. Can ask for book donations at other PTO events.

Plan to have teacher book baskets for families to purchase selected books for the teachers.

Scholastic offers a BOGO event if the school decides to have a 3rd book fair in a year.

Mini-Grants (Given by Jen Rice on behalf of Caitlin Calder):

Complete for the year. Final tally, \$1375.02 spent with \$1624.98 remaining in the budget to be allotted to Special Projects as previously voted upon.

Class Parents/Heart Cart (Given by Paul Sinusas on behalf of Becca Sinusas):

Heart Cart collection for the 4th grade donations start November 13th with distribution on Friday. 1st grade contribution was small as they are a smaller class. Each month a new grade will donate.

Holiday Craft Fair (Given by Jen Rice on behalf of Allison Abramson):

Allison reached out to parents who expressed interest at Curriculum Night and so far we have 5 of the 12 craft tables set.

Save the Date flyers are going home in folders this week (in teachers' mailboxes Monday). Includes QR Code to Sign Up Genius.

Kathy Raymond sending home student sign ups for Green Team Gently Used Toy & Book Swap.

6th Grade Bake Sale is on. Sign up Genius includes donations of plates and napkins.

Still to do: Plan to touch base with James about the gym set up with new round tables. If rectangular tables are still available, they'd be preferable for bake sale and toy swap. Recruit a few members of the planning team to help decorate and order decorations. As volunteers sign up, Allison will reach out to discuss details and set up. One more event flyer will go home after Thanksgiving, week of the event.

Bingo Basket Raffle: Deferred until next meeting as we do not currently have a committee chair.

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Spring Fling (Jen Rice on behalf of Caitlin Calder):

Looking for a co-chair.

New Business

Clothing Merch Fundraiser (Jen Rice):

Attempted a sale for merchandise before the holiday with a new vendor however we were unable to finalize in time. Plan to have a sale February 3-16th instead. Using spiritsale.online website. Can vary what is sold with the CES logo. Looking for volunteers to assist.

Pura Vida (Aaron Zain):

Bracelet fundraiser sale. Can customize with school colors. \$4 each wholesale, sell for \$8-\$15 each. Must buy in bulk. 150 bracelets, \$600 at onset, 3-5 weeks for delivery. Could give as part of 6th grade grad bags. Aaron to confirm school colors.

Multi-Language Engagement Night (Jen Rice):

DRES hosted their dinner last week. We are planning to host in the spring. Goal is to improve engagement with multi-language speaking families in our school community. Looking for a bilingual volunteer to assist.

Crazy Class Photos (Tawnya Ertel):

Joseph's Photography takes funny class photos every year. Previously was used as an additional fundraiser. PTO pays 1\$ for photo and sell for \$10 each. Display with photos presented at Parent Teacher Conferences and Book Fair. Tawnya to coordinate with Joseph's and report back.

Social Development Committee: Evin Liljengren reporting from the collaborative committee including representatives from Tri-Town Youth Services, Chester Park and Recreation, and CES staff. The committee sent out a survey to community families regarding student behavior. The committee is looking for PTO involvement and is hoping to provide programming for parents to assist in addressing certain behaviors.

Treasurer's Report (Heather Cobb):

Income:

- Halloween Town Sponsors \$2,450
- Halloween Town (Night of) \$8,850
- Book Fair \$1,234.93
- Bank Interest \$1.11

Expenses:

- Cultural Arts - CT Audubon \$2,000
- Mini Grants \$1,375.02
- Book Fair Coupons \$450.75
- Operations Form 990 Filings for 501(c)3 \$100

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Total raised less expenses for Halloween Town \$11,713.06 We received a generous anonymous donation in the amount of \$4,000.

Old Business

Fish Tank Fundraiser (James Grzybowski):

Looking to replace the 150 gallon saltwater tank and replace it with a new acrylic 300 gallon tank. Current tank is 12 years old and needs replacing. Requesting \$12,000 total to include \$10,275 for tank and plumbing with additional money to cover supplies/decor within the tank. Also requesting donations from Rotary, Whelan and other community organizations. Discussed having a visual fundraising sign indicating goal and amount raised (donation thermometer). Suggestion made to create a tshirt fundraiser with kids at the school to design the shirt. Jen Rice to investigate t-shirt printing companies to determine cost.

Yearbook (Jen Rice on behalf of Adele McAndrew)

No significant updates. Submit photos from Halloween Town. Link went out in Chalk Talk.

Motion to adjourn at 7:13pm by Aaron Zain, seconded by Jen Rice.

Next Meeting December 10th at 6pm in person and virtual.