

# Roberts Elementary PTO Board Meeting

Thursday, Oct 2, 2014

8:10 a.m. Roberts Cafe

In attendance: Ali Pilcher, Alyson Rooney, Amy Basa, Angela Adams, Ann Heikkinen, Amy McCallum, Anna Kaplan, Arghavan Banan, Aparna Jotwani, Carmen Pratt, Christine Robins, Dan Easley, Denise Metry, Donna Scudder, Elizabeth Grandich, Elan Ghovan Krishnan, Eman El Sharif, Emanuela Corradino, Emily Raley, Helen Belgrove, Hillary Short, Isabel Khan, Jaesun Kang, Jennifer Thornton, Jenny Beech, Jieun Kim, John Thornton, John Watson, Jocelyn Williams, Judith Castello, Kara Niles, Kelly Wehrer, Kirsty McCormack, Lara Frazier, Laura Weiss, Lauren Montesi, Lauren Bloomquist, Liu Yam, Lori Bullwinkle, Lucie Fredennick, Maureen Glancy, Mercedes de Alvear, Meiyee Ku, Meredith Beebe, Paige Castaneda, Pia Weyandt, Prashant Murti, Renae Holman Murti, Rocio Suayfeta, Samantha Madero, Scott Tranweaver, Tom Fowler, Valerie Tompson, Vanessa Wegner, Vera Peneva, Wenjun Zang, Yoriko Miyake and others

<b>Meeting Called to Order</b>	Kelly Wehrer
<b>Staff Appreciation Lunch</b>	Chris Robins
<b>School Report</b>	Rita Graves
<b>Approval of Minutes</b>	Kara Niles
<b>Treasurer's Report</b>	Lara Frazier
<b>Culture of Giving Campaign Kickoff</b>	Ann Heikkinen
<b>International Festival Report</b>	Helen Belgrove
<b>Audit Committee</b>	Lori Bullwinkle
<b>International Garden</b>	Lori Bullwinkle
<b>Book Fair</b>	Denise Metry
<b>PADRES</b>	Jennifer Thornton
<b>AOB</b>	Kelly Wehrer
<b>Adjourn</b>	Kelly Wehrer

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**Meeting Called to Order**

Kelly Wehrer

Sorry so cramped – we are in library today because it is Picture Day

**Staff Appreciation Lunch**

Chris Robins

Thanks to all who donated, they really appreciated it.

**School Report**

Rita Graves

5<sup>th</sup> grade exhibition – It's their Primary Years Project as they get ready to leave IB. In the past we've used 'Sharing the Planet' quite frequently. This year the 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers have chosen "How We Express Ourselves".

They are looking at written and oral expression, visual arts, music as mediums for expression for the topics they are interested and concerned about.

They've identified one of the biggest concerns is about the use of natural resources in our society. They will spend several weeks researching and then they will decide how they want to express themselves about that. It marries our Fine Art program with the IB program – it's new so everyone is digging deep and looking at the way we express ourselves about the world around us.

All of our kids are in the learning – ask Qs about what your kids are doing. I think everyone has finished goal-setting for reading. If you don't know about that, you should ask your child about that. All grades except kindergarten have finished setting mid-year goals. There is a level goal for mid year, and then a skill goal that they will change every week or 2. Kids will work with their teacher on their individual skill goal – fluency, comprehension, etc. Ask them. They will develop strategies for their goal areas.

We are in the process of hiring assistants for kindergarten. The numbers for kinder are higher than anticipated – 4 more per class than what we've been used to. We do not have another classroom. One choice in hiring is teacher's assistants. The pay level is very low so I usually prefer not to go this route. We have two candidates who are certified but not in TX, and one who is obtaining certification from TX. So kids will get support on reading. Assistants will support teachers so that every group in a class gets seen every day.

One is ready to start on Monday, other two hopefully will start between Monday and Wednesday. I am pushing HR to move this forward.

Last night we had the DeBakey High School community meeting here – that's important to you if you live in this neighborhood – they are just south of Holcombe, Montclair.

We will put it in front page for those of you interested in learning more about it. It will be a really beautiful campus, I think it will be a nice addition to the neighborhood. Architects brought the designs last night – it will be a beautiful facility. It's slated to be finished about the time they start Greenbriar re-paving. We are trying to get HISD to work closely with us,

including the neighborhood association (Cheryl Sorak) and the Rebuild Houston committee. It's probably not within our sphere of influence but we are trying to get what we can.

I need your help with adult behavior – people are rolling down windows and shouting at teachers. Reach out to new families and connect them. Our teachers are very good and I feel protective of them – because they are really good. I don't want their work to be harder for them than it should be. We get more done when we are nice. Be good ambassadors. If someone has an issue, they should go to the teacher and ask for help.

Q – Could room parents receive concerns?

A- I appreciate that, but the teacher should really be the focal point on that.

Q – At drop off and pick up – they say “the principal handles that, talk to the principal” Parked cars are getting hit on Swift. There isn't this problem at West U.

A – West U is a small municipality – they can change laws and rules about parking. I can't do that. I've asked RACS and police to ticket illegal parking. Email me with your questions. There is also the house across the street which is being built which is compounding the issue.

Comment – In regards to the traffic pattern problem, it's the reaction of parents to the problem. PTO could help with this part

A-This is also out of my control. The only people who can go to the city about it are the people who own the homes on those streets. They can petition the City on this.

Comment - The residents are talking about doing something about that but it's not easy, even if all the homeowners are in agreement. You can contact Ellen Cohen's office, or 311, or parking Management at the City. It's harder to get something done for Montclair.

A - I hear all of these concerns, but my focus and energy really needs to be on what's going on inside the building. We are focused on that first.

Next topic:

Committee to Re-Spark our Park. SPARK puts playgrounds and greenspaces in to communities. They partner to open up school parks to the community after hours and on the weekend. A Re-Spark is a re-do. This will be our second one. It's a 2 – 2 1/2 year project. We set budget and timeline and then we start fundraising for that. Because we don't qualify for Federal funding the fundraising may include XK from HISD, XK from SPARK and Spark will help us look for corporate funding. We will ask families in the neighborhood to contribute. The committee will have 3 school parents, 3 teachers, 3 residents without kids at the school.

Jennifer Thornton will be moderator and facilitator of the committee. We are looking for nominations for the 2 parent spots. If you will be around awhile and are interested in what will happen please let us know.

Jennifer – Our first Spark was playground, the second was stage and equipment. I want to work on the playground again.

Rita – The track and hard top also needs TLC.

Q – Whose authority is it to clean and maintain the park (mowing, etc)?

A – It's the school's responsibility. Whoever in PTO has been in charge of grounds (Dan Easley) helps direct how exactly it gets done.

Comment – XK of PTO budget goes to grounds maintenance.

We've asked them not to mow so low on our new sod so that it can take. They trim trees, I don't let them do oldest oak trees – we are working with an arborist on preserving them. They don't do much in our garden as we are caring for it.

Q – As we Spark – does HISD say they are not going to maintain that?

A – We put in things that are easily sustainable. We have our school people going on to the grounds, cleaning and checking for contraband.

Comment – there could be signs that encourages people not to leave trash on the grounds - glass, paper bags, etc.

A – I get a lot of complaints on dog poop. This is a very fine line to walk. I could say no dogs allowed – but there's no one here to monitor that. People don't pick up after their dogs. Should we put out bags? Spend money on that? No. We just have to say, this is not our first focus. It would be helpful to have community members reach out and encourage people to clean up after themselves. Also – alcohol is illegal on school grounds – it's a felony. You can't smoke either.

Comment – Ants on campus, ant bites

A – The District can treat, but we are not allowed to use pesticides. We treat one bed then it rains, then they move somewhere else.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Kara Niles

Kara Niles, Recording Secretary, presented the minutes from the Sep meeting for approval. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Alyson Rooney and seconded by Aparna Jotwani. A vote was taken and motion passed. All in favor – Aye.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Lara Frazier

It's going great, money's coming in, money's going out. Call me with questions.

**Culture of Giving Campaign Kickoff**

David Heikkinen

Thanks to Ann, Prashant and John Watson. We almost raised \$xx. 2 classes – Waterman and Punch are at 100% participation, Ms Britton’s class is one short – probably three classes will be at 100%. The overall participation rate is 75%. 613 of 812 student families have donated.

**International Festival Report**

Helen Belgrove

International Festival is next Friday. Hope it doesn’t rain. We got a tent for every booth. All under control except we don’t have a USA booth. There is some interest from the scouts in perhaps taking that on.

Also – if any kids want to sing the American anthem. We have a finale – 20 different songs, including the American Anthem.

**Audit Committee**

Lori Bullwinkel

We met, audited 2013-14 financials, Thornton, Jenman, Bullwinkle and Wehrer. We did find check requests and deposits not signed – please make sure you do your stuff properly. Many thanks.

**International Garden**

Lori Bullwinkel

We want to plant in the fall. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade girl scout group cleaned out the beds. We are planning a cleaning day next week – maybe Wed morning.

Lemons – we have a lot – want to help pick? Let me know.

**Book Fair**

Denise Metry

I’m working with Julie McFarland – in November we have Book Fair. Nov 18-20<sup>th</sup>. It’s Tues – Thurs. There will be classroom visits to library. Kids buy for home use or for the library. Then, on the last night it will be in the cafeteria. We will have food trucks. It’s a fun night, family night. James Coney Island and Moon Rooster. That date is Thurs Nov 20th from 5:30-7:30.

We need help for classroom visits, especially for younger grades, they need help figuring out how much money they have to spend.

PADRES will help us move from library to the cafeteria. We will need help moving, from about 3:15-5:00. There will be childcare, so come help us out.

There will be a sign-up genius so keep an eye out for that. Or contact me by email. The fair is fun and great for our school – we get book donations for classrooms and for the library.

**PADRES**

John Thornton

Camp out – Friday Oct 24th. There will be the same format – dinner, movie, breakfast, special guests making pancakes. Last year numbers jumped from 150 to 550 people. As generous as Rita’s been, we are going to limit it at 500 this year. We’re at 408 right now. We’re not taking

walkups. All gates will be locked, there will be wristbands with phone numbers, etc. It's twenty dollars a person, last registrations on Oct 8 at 3pm.

Q – Has it been communicated that we're not doing walk-ups?

Yes, on the Camp Out flyer and on Front Page

Comment - It's not a fundraiser but proceeds will go to father-daughter dance.

**AOB**

Kelly Wehrer

Camille Jenman – she's not here today but she is doing the directory. It's all on track .

**Adjourn**

Kelly Wehrer

We are adjourned at 8:55.

**NEXT MEETING FRIDAY NOV 7th - See you then!**