

## Minutes for the Stoddert PTA Executive Meeting on September 10, 2014

### **Attendees:**

Leigh McKenna  
Mary Clare Claud  
Caitlin Oppenheimer  
Don Bryant  
Alysia Lutz  
Diane Terrell  
Denea Bruce  
Brian O'Beirne  
Jen Perry  
Anne Banner  
David Clark  
Nick Jacobs  
Robin Spence  
Tim Brown  
Tom Strike  
Ginger Jacobs  
Liz Ludgin  
Cristina Boccuti  
Allan Gordus

### **PTA President's Report**

#### **Playground Rehab Project**

The playground rehab project did not get done this past summer due to various reasons, including widely varying bids from contractors for the project and the Department of General Services (DGS) being overwhelmed with work installing demountable classrooms at Stoddert and other District schools. The plans for getting this project done have been modified, with a current plan to complete the project in two phases.

Phase One of the project will fix the playground's debris and drainage problems. Stephen Kitterman at DGS has said that DGS will set aside approximately \$100,000 to fix the debris and drainage problems when DGS receives its new budget in this October. Work on Phase One could begin shortly thereafter in October and take 5 to 6 weeks. The upper part of the playground would be closed during this work. Council Member Mary Cheh and her staff were extremely helpful in our playground discussions with DGS.

Phase Two of the playground rehab project would complete the remainder of the original playground rehab project, which would be the planned playground enhancements. The expectation is that Phase Two could begin next summer and funded by the PTA and Extended Day Boards. However, both boards would need to reaffirm their continued commitment and ability to fund Phase 2 because it will have been more than a year after the original commitment was made. Everyone was encouraged to

go to Ross Elementary School to see what was done to their playground because DGS performed a turf installation there.

### **Extended Day Program**

The Extended Day Program is full this year with a lengthy waitlist. There was discussion about whether the PTA should try to increase the capacity of the program, and if so, when. Generally, all families who have needed extended care at Stoddert have been able to get it. The Extended Day Program helps Stoddert families and promotes a sense of community. The waitlist is new for us and will take some examination to solve.

Currently, Mia Perna has her hands full running the program and does not have time to focus on plans to expand the program. Besides, it's not clear yet that we should expand the program because to expand would mean changing the model of the program. Mia Perna is doing her best to shorten the waitlist, but she cannot run the program and plan for its expansion at the same time. If the PTA wants to expand the program this school year, the PTA will probably have to help Mia Perna figure out how best to expand it. Principal Bryant is willing to offer space at Stoddert to expand the program, but more needs to be done to expand the program besides finding more space.

The PTA gets much of its funding from dues paid by families with children in the Extended Day Program. Expanding the program would not only help families who need child care before and after school, but it would also increase the funding of the PTA. Allowing another entity to provide extended care for those families on the Extended Day Program waitlist would potentially deprive the PTA of dues that would otherwise be paid by those families if they were in the PTA-run Extended Day Program. See the PTA budget discussion below for more on ways to increase PTA revenues. That said, it is not the EDP's obligation to make the PTA solvent.

Coach Ricky with DPR has said he will do what he can to include waitlisted students in his afterschool program.

### **Hybrid Staff Funding**

There was a listing of the Stoddert staff whose salaries the PTA currently augments.

### **The Demountables or "West Wing"**

Principal Bryant is addressing parents' concerns with the demountable classrooms, including the punch list of things that still need to be done, security measures and technology issues. See more information on this subject in the Principal's report below.

### **Book Fair**

Our Book Fair is coming up soon. We have contracted with a new vendor called "Bookworm Central" (in the past we've used Scholastic). Caitlin Oppenheimer is coordinating the event. Note that

we did actually already have a mini-book fair with Scholastic held in conjunction with the Book Award ceremony for Mr. O'Beirne's 2013-14 class.

### **Fillmore**

Our own Stoddert parent, John Claud, is now president of the Friends of Fillmore. Fillmore is having its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary party on Saturday, September 27 from 3 to 6 PM. John Claud needs volunteers for this party and wants everyone to please come to the party.

### **Big Chili**

Neil Hare will not be the chairperson of the Big Chili this year, but he will return to handle various aspects of the Big Chili, namely sponsorships and help with the bar. President Leigh McKenna believes that she has someone lined up to take Neil Hare's place as Chair, but that person has not yet formally accepted the job. Many of those who helped with last year's Big Chili will return again to help this year, including Tom Strike, Courtney Toomey, Jason Orlando, Alysa McClellan and Anne Banner among others.

### **PTO/PTA Process**

David Clark has worked on tracking down the information needed to make the change to a PTO. The parents voted to convert to a PTO, but there are still things that need to be done before we can convert to a PTO. This change is on hold until we receive the IRS paperwork we need to formally pursue this change. The IRS has been promising to send the needed documents but they have yet to arrive. One of the things we need is the PTA's 501(c)(3) document.

### **School Boundary Process**

President Leigh McKenna updated the PTA on the proposed changes to Stoddert's boundary and that there is some question as to whether the new mayor will continue with these changes. The current boundary plan allows students to stay in their current school with their current feeder patterns, and for siblings to be "grandfathered" into the school attended by a sibling.

### **Long Term School Expansion**

Adding the trailer classrooms was a big project and will probably be semi-permanent. If parents want to push for a building expansion at Stoddert, this push should be organized sooner rather than later so we can get Stoddert on the DCPS list of schools to be expanded. A very rough estimate of the cost for expanding the kindergarten wing at Stoddert is \$9 million (offered by Stephen Kitterman from DGS when he was visiting Stoddert to discuss the playground).

### **Principal's Report**

Expanding Stoddert is not likely to happen soon because there are other DCPS schools that have not been renovated at all, and those projects will most likely come before any expansion at Stoddert. If parents want to expand Stoddert's building, they should make their intentions known to DC government

sooner rather than later. One question to consider is whether the current student expansion will continue or whether student numbers will decline in the future.

Stoddert currently has 416 students and there will most likely be 429 students by the enrollment count date this year. At 429, this will be the largest enrollment ever at Stoddert. Despite the high number of students, Stoddert had a very smooth opening. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades are bigger class sizes, but the other grades are fine at room levels. Stoddert cannot ask DCPS for more staff now, but once student enrollment gets to 429, Stoddert may be able to ask for more staff with a reasonable prospect of DCPS agreeing to our request. We believe that Mary Cheh, who is a true friend to Stoddert, would help with this request when the time comes to make it.

DCPS has increased the requirements for physical education to 100 minutes of PE instruction a week. With 2 PE periods a week, we are losing 50 minutes of instructional time for other subjects. We now have hired our own PE teachers for Stoddert. In years past, our PE teachers came from Fillmore. Also new this year is the requirement to teach world languages. Stoddert now has a world languages teacher to meet this requirement, teaching the children Spanish.

Principal Bryant listed the former Stoddert staff members who left at the end of last year. He also listed the new Stoddert staff members who have joined this year. Stoddert may be able to add a half-time ELL teacher if Stoddert's student numbers justify it. If Stoddert reaches 429 students, which we anticipate that it will, then Stoddert will most likely be able to add a half-time ELL teacher.

Stoddert will celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month this month.

Before school started, Principal Bryant did not think the trailer classrooms would be ready for the first day of school this year, but through the hard work of DC's Department of General Services and help from DCPS, the classrooms were ready to go the first day of school.

The trailer classrooms have added much needed space to help Stoddert educate its students more effectively. Many Stoddert staff members were required to work in literally closets, but now have proper space to do their jobs for our students.

The trailer classrooms are known as the "West Wing" with each classroom named after a president. The trailers are brand new and really very nice compared to what some other schools have gotten. Some schools have gotten used trailers that are not nearly as nice as the new trailers that Stoddert got. The trailers are spacious for the classes using them and have their own facilities, such as toilets, etc. The substitute promethean boards will be in the classrooms soon. Also, the new desks in the trailers arrived without trays for student books and materials. To fix this problem, the trailers will get desks that are no longer needed for classrooms in the building.

The security of the trailer classrooms has been addressed in a number of ways. Principal Bryant listed the numerous security measures that have been taken to ensure that the students and teachers in the trailer classrooms are safe and secure.

The 3rd and 4th grades were put into the trailers to minimize student traffic between the building and the trailer classrooms. Also, these grades have classes that fit the trailer classrooms as the trailers have a maximum student capacity. Grades with larger classes, like the 1st and 2nd grades could not go into the trailers because their classes are larger than the capacity of the trailers.

Letters are going out to parents to explain how to qualify for enrichment classes (EPASS). Students will be pulled out by grade, starting with the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. PTA members stated that the application process seemed to be unnecessarily onerous because of the amount of paperwork required for application. Some of the paperwork required for the application seemed unnecessary and might be a barrier for some parents, preventing them from applying when they otherwise should. The question was asked as to why there was such a big application for enrichment if test scores are the deciding factor.

PTA members also expressed concern that parents can only get access to test scores if they ask for them and some parents don't know that they can ask for them. Principal Bryant stated that part of the problem is that the final PIA scores arrive so late in the school year that it's hard to get them to parents before the school year is over.

There is new student testing coming and it will now be taken online. Principal Bryant stated that generally test scores go down when students first start taking tests online because the students have a harder time taking the test with the new technology. Also, schools without technology resources will probably not do as well with the new online testing because their students will be less prepared for the new testing technology.

There have been no reports of lice so far this school year.

The new budget arrives in October.

We have enough parking permits for teachers.

### **Teachers' Report**

Mr. O'Beirne and Mrs. Bruce reported that they feel the security of the trailers is very good. WIFI and other technologies are up in the West Wing, although the classrooms still need to have their electronic, interactive bulletin boards installed.

The teachers also wanted to thank the PTA for its generosity with meals, stipends and Yoga4Classrooms and Playworks training.

The teachers commended Julie Schneider for her work with Mr. O'Beirne's 2nd grade class last year on the book that the class wrote which won the national Scholastic book award. This was a stunning achievement not only for the class involved but for Stoddert as a whole.

Computer Teacher Deana Bruce made a request for funding for a keyboarding program that would help Stoddert students with typing and using a computer mouse. The first year cost for the

software licenses necessary for program is \$1,600. After the first year, there would be a continuing expense that hopefully can be incorporated into the schools' budget. Deana Bruce extensively researched this program over the summer and highly recommended the program. The keyboarding program will help students do better on the new online testing because they will be more familiar with how to use a computer keyboard during the testing. Students need keyboarding and mouse skills for testing even down to the 1<sup>st</sup> grade level. The PTA and Principal Bryant, out of his discretionary fund, each agreed to pay half of the \$1,600 cost of the keyboarding program. There was an objection to the PTA paying for this program because this program is an expense that DCPS should cover rather than the PTA. By the PTA stepping in and covering these expenses, the PTA is allowing DCPS to push requirements on the schools without properly funding them and to push costs onto the PTA. Plus there was a question of whether keyboarding is age appropriate. Mrs. Bruce affirmed that she has read a lot of literature extolling the value and appropriateness of keyboarding for elementary age student. There was a request that the record show that the PTA respect dissent, such as this objection.

### **PTA Budget**

Tim Brown presented the draft PTA budget for the coming year. He noted that the budget for the coming year is balanced. However, he also noted that long term, the PTA may experience a budget short fall as the PTA's financial commitments increase but revenues do not. Right now, the PTA is over-committed financially in future years, assuming no increased revenues. The PTA has taken on increased financial commitments to pay for increased teacher stipends, augmenting of some teacher salaries, and the playground enhancements. Currently, the PTA has enough funds to cover these new financial commitments, but in the future, these increased commitments may outstrip PTA funds, especially after the PTA pays for the playground enhancements. The PTA may lose its ability to fund small projects that come up spontaneously in the future because of its increased financial commitments.

Due to the potential future PTA budget shortfall, Stoddert should generally first seek funding from DCPS for school needs and come to the PTA for funding only after DCPS has failed to provide funding.

After the budget discussion, there was a discussion of how to increase future PTA revenues. More Stoddert families should be encouraged to pay PTA dues. Outside of those families who pay PTA dues as a part of their participation in the Extended Care Program, only 22 Stoddert families paid PTA dues. The PTA should search for ways to encourage more Stoddert families to pay some sort of dues to the PTA.

### **Local School Advisory Team**

There has been no LSAT meeting yet this year.

### **Hardy Middle School Principal Patricia Pride**

Principal Pride would like to come to Stoddert to talk to Stoddert parents about Hardy Middle School. The PTA will set up a time for Principal Pride to come to Stoddert, most likely in October.

## **Communications**

Teachers should let the PTA communications team know about anything going on in their grade or class so it can be put in the Chalkboard. The PTA communications team would also like to do a short bio on all current Stoddert teachers. The PTA would like to have someone who can be trained to regularly update the scrolling sign outside of Stoddert.