

## Minutes for the Stoddert PTA General Meeting on November 6, 2014

### PTA and School Administrator Attendees:

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

### PTA Presidents' Report

#### Fall Festival

President Leigh McKenna reported on the Fall Festival which was very successful. She thanked everyone involved, especially Cari Adams and Kathryn Matto who led the effort for the Fall Festival. The Festival actually generated income this year, which has never been a goal of the event. The Festival made approximately \$3,000 due to ticket sales and the sale of Stoddert gear.

#### Yearbook

Pavani Challapalli has very kindly volunteered to head up the effort to put together this year's Stoddert Yearbook. Many thanks to Pavani, but she also needs help, so everyone is encouraged to volunteer to assist with the yearbook. She is especially looking for volunteer photographers for Stoddert events. A Shutterfly account will be set up for compiling and sharing pictures for this year's yearbook.

Pavani is cognizant of possible privacy issues with regard to the yearbook. To avoid the use of student photos where those families object to having their child's image included in the yearbook, we are asking parents to reach out to let Pavani know. A notice will be added to the Chalkboard.

We are also trying to determine the price for the yearbooks. Pricing varies depending on the number of pages and advertising in the yearbooks. It is possible to sell advertising in the yearbooks to defray the cost of the yearbooks. If this year's yearbook has the same number of pages as last year's yearbook (which had 70 pages), it would cost \$26.99, assuming no paid advertising in the yearbook. If we want more pages, the cost of each yearbook will increase \$3 for each additional 10 pages added beyond 70 pages. There was some concern about the cost of the yearbooks last year. The PTA needs feedback from parents on what price parents want for the yearbooks this year.

Pavani shared her idea of having a contest for the cover for this year's yearbook. There seemed to be a general consensus that this would be a good idea.

Everyone is encouraged to email any suggestions they might have for the yearbook to [Stoddertyearbook@gmail.com](mailto:Stoddertyearbook@gmail.com).

### **Big Chili 2015 Planning**

Planning for the Big Chili fundraiser is underway. Most of the leadership team from last year's event have volunteered to reprise their roles for the 2015 Big Chili. May Piotrowski and Alyssa McClellan have volunteered to serve as co-chairs of the 2015 event. The leadership team will be meeting next Monday, November 10. No date or venue for the Big Chili has been set, but hopefully both of these will be locked in by mid-December.

Alyssa McClellan, has a website that shows the art projects that classes at other schools have done.

Lisa McCluskey has joined the Big Chili's solicitations team. Many thanks to her for her continuing willingness to volunteer. The solicitations team is still looking for more volunteers.

### **Playground Update**

Caitlin Oppenheimer provided an update on the progress in improving the playground. Caitlin has talked to Stephen Kitterman at DC's Department of General Services. The first phase of the playground improvement, which will be paid for by DC government, was put out for bids. The permits for this phase will most likely happen in January. Work on the first phase should start very soon after the permits are issued in January. At least that's our hope, but we do acknowledge that this has been a slow-going process.

Principal Bryant added that today, he talked to Earl Gilliam at DC's Department of General Services. Gilliam stated that the request for bids for the first phase of the playground project will go out tomorrow.

### **Garden Update**

Maria O'Donnell gave the update on Stoddert's garden. The garden's hens are back at the farm for the winter. The hens will come back to the garden when the weather gets warmer in the spring. The deer in DC have discovered the garden. Discussions with people at the National Arboretum indicate that the only way to really keep deer out of the garden is with a deer fence. We are looking into getting a deer fence for the garden.

Our Stoddert garden has won Best DC Sustained Garden Award in DC and was selected out of 110 school gardens across the District.

The farmer's market is doing great. About 8 children are running the farmer's market. Because the children really seem to enjoy the farmer's market, there was some discussion as to whether we

could keep the farmer's market going over the winter maybe with produce from Whole Foods or another store. Ms. Kealy is the School Garden Coordinator and is partially funded by PTA dues.

### **Experiential Learning Program Update**

Julie Schneider listed the upcoming in-school performances at Stoddert, including a Native American story teller on November 12. All parents are welcome and encouraged to come to these performances. There are also a number of great field trips coming up. These field trips are paid for primarily by DCPS funds.

### **Local School Advisory Team (LSAT) Update**

Each DCPS school must have a Local School Advisory Team. The LSAT is supposed to work on budget and planning for Stoddert. The Stoddert LSAT's first meeting was earlier today on November 6. Mrs. Stevenson will be the chair of Stoddert's LSAT this year.

### **Community Projects**

In years past, the PTA has identified a project that would be a "give-back" to the community from Stoddert. The PTA is seeking someone who would be interested heading up this project by filling the role of "community project coordinator." Everyone is asked to think about what we could do for the community that benefits and involves Stoddert students. Possible ideas include having students collect things for the needy. Students could also do a build-a-bear project that would have them build a bear and donate them to other children. Julie Schneider agreed to look into what other schools are doing as community projects and report back to the PTA. Please email community project ideas to the PTA presidents. Ms. McKenna expressed a hope to have a community project idea and volunteer by January. Lisa McCluskey then volunteered to serve as community project coordinator. Thank you, Lisa!

In addition to this, the PTA has in the past and will continue to help families over the holidays. Last year the PTA gave scholarships for buying books at Stoddert's book fairs including buying Stoddert's award-winning book "Home for the Winter." The students' recent walk for the homeless raised \$2,850 for Friendship Place that helps the homeless. This was a great event for the children raising their awareness of others who are less fortunate than them. We are also planning to have the students do a sock drive for the homeless later in the year.

Brian Cohen raised an idea last year to have our PTA adopt another school's PTA which is not as well-organized or well-funded as our PTA. There were some objections to this idea last year and it was decided to table the idea and might be worth reconsideration now. One suggestion was for our PTA to partner with the Hardy PTA on community or bigger projects. One idea offered is to have Hardy and Stoddert students make pictures for Operation Smile kids who have had surgery.

### **Parking/Traffic Problems at Stoddert – Particularly During Morning Drop-Off**

It is still dangerous in the mornings at Stoddert during drop-off. With the children walking to Stoddert while cars are double parking and making u-turns, especially with the Fillmore buses parked on Calvert near the school, this creates a dangerous situation for our children every morning.

Everyone is asked to drive carefully and slowly in the morning even if they are in a rush. There should be no illegal parking or u-turns, especially no parking right in front of the school to drop off, thus blocking the steps or stop signs. Everyone should find a legal parking spot to drop off their children.

DC police officer Davis drives the police van at Stoddert in the mornings. He said that he would give warnings to people making u-turns at Stoddert in the mornings.

### **Lice – DCPS' New Policy**

There is a new DCPS policy on children with lice. Lice is and has been a problem at Stoddert, so it is not new, but it is a challenging problem when it occurs. There have been 6 cases of lice at Stoddert so far this year.

The new DCPS lice policy is that children with lice nits will no longer be sent home from school. All parents will be getting an information sheet on the new DCPS policy on lice with upcoming report cards.

At Stoddert, Nurse Poindexter will continue to check for lice. If lice are found on a student, everyone in the same class gets a lice notice. Nurse Poindexter will check only the children known or suspected to have lice. She will not check the whole class of a child that has lice unless specifically asked to do so.

There is a lot of lice treatment information for parents on the internet, including on Stoddert's website: <http://www.stoddert.org/2013/12/lice-advice-from-a-stoddert-parent/>. There was discussion of having a meeting for parents about lice, but it was decided that this was probably not practical because there probably would not be a big enough parent turnout for the meeting to effectively get information to most parents.

The PTA buys lice combs for Nurse Poindexter to give to children who have lice. Plastic bags are helpful in getting rid of lice. Plastic bags are used for coats to keep lice from hopping from coat to coat. It is hard to get rid of lice once they are in a classroom, especially in the winter. Also, children in a class with a child who has lice can wear their hair back to help avoid the transfer of lice from one child to another.

### **Volunteers to Coordinate Teacher Appreciation Week (May 4-8, 2015)**

Lisa McCluskey and Kate Hare have volunteered to coordinate Teacher Appreciation Week in May. Their generosity with their time for this project is greatly appreciated.

### **Hardy Middle School Information**

There was a recent meeting at Stoddert with Hardy's Principal, Patricia Pride. Principal Pride brought two teachers from Hardy's SEM (gifted and talented) program. Principal Pride, the two teachers, and several Hardy parents provided a lot of information about Hardy.

There was also a meeting of the Hardy feeder schools to provide information on Hardy.

Hardy offers tours to parents on Thursdays. A tour of Hardy for just Stoddert parents will be set up for later in November.

Parents who have children at Hardy and Stoddert may be willing to meet with Stoddert parents and answer questions about Hardy. Hardy parents love Hardy and having their children at Hardy, but some of them have grown a bit weary of defending Hardy and their educational choices for their children, so be aware of this when asking questions of them.

### **DCPS Boundaries and Feeder Implementation Plan Update**

The new school boundaries were finalized over the summer and have been approved by Mayor Gray. However, Muriel Bowser was just elected and there is no telling what the new Mayor may do with the new boundaries. Early in her campaign, Bowser said the boundary plans were “not ready.” But in recent days she has not indicated her intent to undo what has been approved. The DCPS lottery for assigning students to schools for next year will launch December 15. This lottery is a unified lottery including charters. The DCPS website has more information on the lottery.

Under the new boundaries, Stoddert’s boundaries will change. The Burlieth neighborhood will go into Hyde-Addison's boundary, but this is not scheduled to happen until the 2016-17 school year, and may even happen a year later than that. Three blocks on the northern border of Stoddert's current boundary has been re-assigned to Eaton and that change is currently scheduled to take effect next year. All current Stoddert students (and their siblings) are grandfathered in and can attend Stoddert through its final year (5<sup>th</sup> grade).

### **Sign-Up for DCPS Notifications**

Parents are encouraged to sign-up for DCPS notifications. DCPS notifications are helpful, especially for knowing when school is closed or delayed due to bad weather.

### **The Book Fair**

A big thank you to Caitlin Oppenheimer for running the recent Stoddert book fair. The book fair’s total sales were between \$8,000 and \$9,000. The book fair company is still reconciling its books to come up with the final total sales for the book fair. Stoddert should get back about 35% of the final total sales. All of the Stoddert teachers got the books on their book fair wish lists. Caitlin is looking for help and volunteers for the next book fair.

### **Principal's Report**

Stoddert hosted a group from Watkins Elementary School which is undergoing renovations.

Through the Hubert H. Humphrey Program on Education, the Director of Nepal’s Education Department came to Stoddert. He will return for the last 6 weeks of the year.

Stoddert’s current enrollment is close to 420 students.

Stoddert will probably need another 5<sup>th</sup> grade class next year. That will probably mean one less Pre-K class next year. None of this is decided yet, but this is what Principal Bryant thinks may happen next year.

Stoddert has filled out its staffing with the hiring of a half-time psychologist and an English Language Learners (ELL) teacher.

The trailer classrooms in the parking lot known as the “West Wing” is an ongoing project with slow and steady progress. The ramps to each trailer now have non-skid strips. Principal Bryant is trying to get all of the interactive projectors in the trailers fully functional. The company that made the projectors is coming out to help with some of the problems with the projectors. Principal Bryant is looking to get covers for the entrances to the trailers. We may try to get a fully covered walkway to the trailers. Principal Bryant stated that the West Wing classrooms are nice classroom spaces and we really needed the extra space.

Principal Bryant talked to two DC police officers to express concern about illegal parking and u-turns during morning drop-off. The DC police will eventually write tickets for illegal parking and u-turns during morning drop-off. It is not possible to get speed bumps on Calvert Street in front of Stoddert because Calvert is a bus route.

Stoddert is entitled to a crossing guard. DCPS will supply a crossing guard for Stoddert at some point in the future. We may move a crossing guard to the front of the school from the intersection of 39<sup>th</sup> and Calvert Streets.

Principal Bryant asked parents to have their children read 10 more minutes per day. That is his challenge to us, the parents. The more words each student reads per day results in many more words per year.

The iReady project should launch soon at Stoddert. One of the DCPS goals for Stoddert is to improve iReady scores, so this is important for Stoddert students.

The playground lights are not on when it gets dark, making it pitch black on the playground. This is a serious problem. Principal Bryant has talked to Earl Gilliam at the DC Department of General Services to get the lights for the playground on/replaced/installed.

### **Teachers' Report**

Picture day went well thanks to help from parents.

The Native American projects went well.

The class Halloween parties also went well.

The teachers want to give a big thank you for the books to the teachers from their book fair wish lists.

The teachers want to thank Stoddert parent and local artist Wes Lawrence for the four square on the playground.

### **PTA Budget/Treasurer Report**

The PTA has approximately \$75,000 in the bank.

The PTA has collected \$24,000 so far in dues this year. The PTA raised over \$8,000 from the recent push for dues by sending out letters to all parents.

The Fall Festival raised over \$3,000 which was much better than past Fall Festivals which traditionally have not raised much money.

Teacher stipends are a big outlay by the PTA at the beginning of the year. The PTA also pays part of the salaries for two staff members.

The PTA was very concerned at the beginning of the year about a budget shortfall this year, but we have had some extra dues collections this year which have helped out. The budget is looking better now.

The PTA counts on the Big Chili to raise a lot of money for the PTA, so the PTA needs it to be a big event. The Big Chili usually brings in about \$30,000. Please make the Big Chili a success.

PTA dues paying at Stoddert lags behind other schools like Key and Mann Elementary Schools. The PTA dues at Mann Elementary School are reported to be \$1,500 per student. Other schools use the extra money they get from increased dues to pay for additional aides and lunch room monitors at their schools.

The Stoddert PTA could charge dues per child next year. Peer schools make \$60,000 to \$100,000 at their big fund raising events which is more than double what the Big Chili is expected to bring in. The PTA's budget was very short at the beginning of the year. The budget is better now, but if we do not bring in more money, we will have to make cuts to current PTA spending.

Stoddert PTA dues are currently set at \$400 per family. However, some parents pay more while others pay less. It is possible to pay dues through automatic monthly payments over 10 months. Every parent is in the PTA whether they pay dues or not, but the PTA needs dues to pay for everything it does. The PTA is a tax deductible organization, so PTA dues are tax deductible.

### **Other Business**

There was a request that when parents bring snacks for Pre-K and Kindergarten that they bring healthy snacks.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.