



**The Stoddert Elementary PTA Executive Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 18, 2014**

The PTA Executive Board met on February 18 and addressed many topics.

The Big Chill(i) – Chair of the Big Chill(i) planning committee, Neil Hare joined the meeting, along with parent Mike Gardner. Together, they presented an idea for creating tiered sponsorship opportunities that focus prominently on the Big Chill(i) but would incorporate benefits throughout the year. As envisioned, the program would include three levels of sponsorship that will hopefully attract local businesses in support of Stoddert. The Board approved the plan for the initial program year and will assess its success next year to determine if it should become a more permanent program. In the coming days the Board together with Neil and Mike, will finalize the benefit packages and sponsorship fees so that they can be offered in advance of this year's Big Chill(i).

The Playground - Two design concepts were presented. The Board discussed both, identifying elements they would like to see added, removed, and tweaked. The feedback will be provided to the design firm and a final plan is expected by the end of February. Stoddert is on the project list for DCPS and DGS and if the design can be finalized soon, construction should hopefully begin in late spring and, if all goes as planned, will be finished before the start of the next school year. The PTA-sponsored summer camp can still proceed. Currently, the PTA expects that DCPS and DGS will underwrite the cost of the engineering fixes and the PTA and the Stoddert Extended Care program will share the costs associated with playground equipment and enhancements.

Fillmore – There were two recent meetings relating to Fillmore. First, was a meeting of the Friends of Fillmore, which Caitlin Oppenheimer and John Claud attended on behalf of Stoddert. The next day, a meeting of the principals from the feeder schools was held, which Principal Don Bryant attended. Representatives of Fillmore's administration and DCPS attended both meetings. In summary, we have been told that funding for Fillmore at current levels is affirmed for next school year so there should be no last-minute news that the program will be halted or in jeopardy. DCPS seemed to be signaling a commitment to Fillmore's longevity. Principals raised some concerns about program quality, professional development, classroom management and logistical concerns (busing). We hope to see these concerns addressed to the community's satisfaction.

School partnership program – Recently, parent Brian Cohen brought to the PTA the idea of identifying another DCPS school to partner with in order to help them develop a well-functioning PTA. This plan was to include a donation from the Stoddert PTA reserves to aid in this effort. While initially approved, the PTA and Board revisited the decision based upon significant feedback questioning the decision to donate funds. Brian has not found a school to partner with, has limited personal time to dedicate to the project and no formal proposal has been submitted. As a result, the request presented to the PTA has been withdrawn. Many on the Board felt that regardless of the partnership project, the Stoddert community should be dedicating more effort to philanthropic activities that would engage the students as well as the parents. Experiential coordinator Julie Schneider will be asked to look into activities that would both explore philanthropic goals as well as teach kids about social responsibility. We can also revisit the partnership idea.

Principal's Report

1. DC CAS tests are coming up for 3rd through 5th graders, March 31st through April 7th is the DCPS testing window.
2. During DC CAS test days, Pre-K through 2nd grade will go on field trips and as a result buses will be

needed. Payment for busses during the DC CAS was discussed. It was determined that the PTA would pay the upfront money to rent the needed buses, but that families would be asked to contribute to the field trip costs. The availability of scholarship funds will be publicized and the PTA will absorb any difference between the cost of the buses and the parent-supplied funding. The Board generally felt that most parents are happy to contribute to the cost of a field trip, particularly when many of the destinations being considered do not charge entry fees.

3. Planning for next year's faculty and staff needs are underway but nothing can be finalized before DCPS releases budget estimates. He identified 4th and 5th grades and kindergarten as areas he would prioritize for expanding with additional classrooms/teachers if funding allows.

4. Principal Bryant relayed that Stoddert has requested four demountable classrooms to create additional teaching space needed for the 2014-2015 school year.

5. Asst. Principal Walker. Davia Walker has been accepted to DCPS' Mary Jane Patterson fellowship that prepares assistant principals to become principals. She will not be at Stoddert next school year.

Teacher's Report

1. Teachers are busy preparing for DC CAS testing for 3rd through 5th graders. Second grade will not be tested.

2. Stoddert is the No. 1 composting school in DC. Ms. Choi and Ms. Kealy have received invitations from other schools to present demonstrations on how to implement a composting program at their schools.

3. Ms. Choi expressed appreciation for Julie Schneider's support in making the 3rd grade field trip happen despite a snow day on the originally scheduled day.

LSAT Report

1. Budget. During a recent budget meeting with Chancellor Henderson that included 20+ schools, Stoddert's LSAT team was given an exercise to plan and think of programs they would like to have if budgets were increased by 10%. The Chancellor also challenged the team to identify ideas if budget was no issue at all. They were asked to "think big." The exercise bodes well for an expanded budget for next school year. Stoddert faculty and parents discussed options of adding classroom teachers to reduce class size, an additional reading resource teacher, additional physical education instruction and/or a music instructor to offer chorus onsite.

Communications Report

1. Stoddert Community Marketplace. A dedicated page on the Stoddert website will be created to allow the Stoddert community to share information about services they offer. The concept is similar to the general Stoddert student directory, which is accessible on the school website. Providing a dedicated marketplace to the Stoddert community will help limit announcements on the Chalkboard and Facebook to school-related activities. We will begin collecting marketplace information ahead of the 2014-2015 school year.

Garden Report

1. OSSE grant. Grant application for \$15K has been submitted and a decision is expected in early March. The grant will cover garden expenses, including salary for the garden coordinator for the remainder of the current school year.

2. Garden intern. Demand for Ms. Kealy's time continues to grow as she spends time with classrooms. To help with her non-classroom workload, DC Greens has hired an intern to help her.

3. Chickens. Chicken eggs will be part of the garden curriculum in the spring. Eggs will arrive at the school and they will be kept in an incubator where students can observe the eggs as they develop and hatch. A fund request was presented to the PTA to cover expenses for the incubator, coupe rental, and other related expenses. The PTA approved the purchase, pending a total cost.

Advocacy Report

1. Public Education Adequacy Study. A [letter to Mayor Gray](#) signed by several councilmembers from

different wards was presented to the PTA. The letter emphasizes support to increase funding for education on the scale suggested by the study, which was recently released by the Deputy Mayor for Education, Abigail Smith. Link to report:

http://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/publication/attachments/DC%20ADEQUACY%20STUDY_FULL%20REPORT.pdf

Other

Big Chili – We need more auction items. We will ask Neil and his planning team to have a large presence at Family Fun Night on March 1 to sell tickets and gather ideas and commitments for donations/auction items.

Next General PTA Meeting – Set for Thursday, March 6 at 6:30 p.m. We will not invite any speakers to this meeting because our agendas are always too rushed in order to accommodate speakers.

International Night – Robin Spence volunteered to lead this event and will identify a date in coordination with the teachers.

Teacher Appreciation – Eve-Lyn will reach out to the appropriate people to make sure planning for Teacher Appreciation is on-track.

Russian Community Outreach – Leigh offered to try and identify a liaison at the Russian Embassy for next school year who can help us engage our Russian families. Perhaps we can approach the embassy for PTA support and dues in lieu of asking each family individually. How else could we partner? In addition, we want to devote more energy to translating important PTA and school messages in ensure that we're communicating with Russian families effectively. LSAT has also discussed this.

Update PTA Bylaws – Because she will be rotating out of the president position next year, Caitlin is willing to embark upon a review, revision and updating of the Stoddert PTA Bylaws.

Mbp/2.19.2014