



## September 28, 2012 Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Commenced:** 9:25 am

**Board Members Present:** Cathy Gallinger – Treasurer, Marybeth Quaadgras – Secretary, Ranjini Reddy – President, Damian Sugrue - Principal

**Parents, Teachers, Community Members Present:** Beth Ali, Theresa Hoggins, Ezili Mayo-Joseph, Kathleen Little, Deborah Malloy, Pam Nelson, Sophia Park, Anna Sater, Robin Slupski, Ann Marie Testarmata, Paul Thompson, Mary Tsacoyeanes – Teacher Representative, Linda Vittum, Sujeong Yoo

### Welcome and Introductions

Ranjini Reddy thanked everyone for coming and offering to volunteer. She explained that two votes are needed to approve a motion. Introductions were done.

### Secretary's Report – Marybeth Quaadgras

Modification for May 2012 PTO meeting minutes – Ann Marie Testarmata requested that we include the playground presentation. Damian Sugrue – First motion to approve. Kathleen Little – Second motion to approve.

### PTO Board and Open Positions

Ranjini Reddy explained that we still have Open PTO positions, specifically Vice President and Gardening Chair. She urged attendees to talk up the positions to other parents.

### Treasurer's Report

Cathy Gallinger passed out the Balance Sheet and the PTO Budget for year to date.

- Total Assets \$104,657 with the following balances – checking account - \$50,349, business money fund - \$40,226, Fidelity investment \$6,400, and playground fund \$7,681.
- Total Liabilities and Equity – Liabilities total \$8772, including Sixth Grade 2012 and 2013 funds, playground needs, Scholastic Book funds, and Library funds. Equity is \$95,885.
- Cathy reviewed the PTO budget for 2012-2013 school year, including income events and expenses general to the school. Income of \$43,750 is expected to be raised from the Direct Appeal, Matching Gifts, Craft Fair, the Ice Cream Social, Soiree, Carnival, and Other Events (School Pictures, Willow Books, Target/Box Tops, and Scrip). Expenses are expected to be \$38,410, of which \$30,000 are designated for Teaching Assistant Fees.

### Tax-Exempt Status Update and fundraising

Cathy Gallinger gave an update on the PTO's tax exempt status. We found out this past July that our tax exempt status was revoked as of November 15, 2011 due to non-filing of tax returns. State tax forms (MA Form PCs) and Federal tax forms (990s) have since been filed for 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-11. As per conversations with the state Attorney General's Office, we can in good faith fundraise until we receive a new Certificate of Solicitation. In fundraising, we should stick with events and programs that have been done in the past and not introduce any new fundraisers.

For the 2011-12 tax filing, we are using CPA Thom Arrison in Littleton. Cathy Gallinger explained that the PTO will most likely receive notice of penalties, but Mr. Arrison stated that we can ask for forgiveness.

Kathleen Little gave a history of why returns were not filed. The treasurer for the year 2007-08 left prior to the completion of the school year and told Kathleen that she would file the taxes. She, however, failed to do so. Kathleen had incomplete records for that year and felt it was difficult to file for the following years without having the prior records reconciled. She was not aware that the failure to file would result in the revocation of the tax-exempt status.

Kathleen Little explained that over the past spring and summer, 300,000 + nonprofits' tax exempt statuses have been revoked. Form 1023 has been filed for reinstatement of our tax exempt status. Ranjini Reddy noted

that it could take 6 to 9 months for our tax exempt status to be reinstated. We have not yet heard from the state Attorney General's office regarding the Certificate of Solicitation. Thom Arrison has recommended that we hold no new fundraisers. We are also waiting to hear back from the IRS.

We have written a letter to be distributed to the PTO community explaining our tax exempt status. It will go out in the *Newsflash* on Sunday and the *Conant Crier* in October.

### **Budget Review**

Ranjini Reddy discussed requested modifications to the budget that had previously been approved in June.

- The Author program has been budgeted for \$1800. Mrs. Bell has requested an increase of \$200 as fees for authors have increased. She explained that due to the rising costs for book authors to visit the school, we may need to alternate the grades which get an author visit each year. Currently (and has been done in the past), we have two separate authors visiting this year for the lower grades and the upper grades. Helen Lester is visiting Grades K-3 while Penny Noyce will be speaking to Grades 4-6. For 2013-2014, we may only be able to fund one author for either the lower grades or the upper grades.
- Deb Malloy has asked for increase of \$75, for a total of \$150 to the Nature Walk program to cover costs of replacing equipment.
- Website expenses include costs of owning the domain name *conantpto.org* and standard emails for board positions and several committee positions. An increase of \$50 was requested, from \$25 to \$75.
- We are requesting additional monies to give to the teachers for supplies. We are requesting an increase from \$650 to \$1800. Ranjini Reddy explained that we have some cushion this year as we are not budgeting as much as last year (\$30,000 for 2012-2013 vs. \$35,000 in 2011-2012) for teaching assistants. We are looking to support 36 teachers and staff at \$50 each.
- In the past, funds have not been requested for the Festival of Cultures. For last year's event, the committee had to pay for audio-visual and kitchen support whereas in the past, those expenses were not charged to the event. The event broke even last year, with the Douglas PTO covering a small amount of those costs. This year, the Festival of Cultures is requesting a placeholder in the budget of \$200.
- We have included costs for filing the Form 1023 tax exempt status reinstatement paperwork - \$850 and monies to pay for state tax filings - \$140.

The budget modifications were voted on. Linda Vittum – First motion to approve. Damian Sugrue – Second motion to approve. General meeting vote – all attending members voted Yes to the budget changes. There were no objections to the budget modifications.

Ranjini Reddy explained that the PTO will be going ahead with the Direct Appeal this year and the letter for it will include mention of our current tax exempt status.

### **Craft Fair Update**

Beth Ali explained that the 31<sup>st</sup> annual craft fair will be held on Oct. 28<sup>th</sup> from 10 to 4 pm. Seema Shenoy will coordinate volunteers. Marybeth Quaadgras will reformat the program. Paul Thompson has worked on the print advertising with putting ads in the Action Unlimited and having flyers printed. Martin Petracchi handles parking coordination.

We have 75 crafters so far, and Beth would like to see eventually 85 to 90 crafters. There is a great balance of returnees and new crafters, including photography, jewelry, gourmet popcorn maker, and sewn goods. Beth explained that we will see a push for volunteers in the next month. Many of the teachers get involved.

Advertising has been done in Action Unlimited and another publication. No ad was put in *The Beacon* as their rates are very expensive. Printing expenses in general have risen. Facebook is a very good media to use for advertising. People can click on "Likes" and raises awareness. It has been recommended that we advertise Michele's Gourmet popcorn as a vendor. It was suggested that the committee consider posting the event on Craigslist, as well as *Acton Patch*. We need to check with Luanne Reynolds on what other online venues were used last year for publicity. Coupons will be placed at the Ace Hardware, Dunkin Donuts, and Middlesex Savings Bank and included in an edition of the *Newsflash*. Linda Vittum has offered to help with online advertising.

### **Student Directory Update**

Ranjini Reddy explained that Mrs. Olsen is working on gathering the data for the directory. It takes time as parents are given until late September to update the Parent Portal and class lists are finalized.

The question has come up as to whether we should or shouldn't charge for the directory. NiNa Fernandes and her husband have quotes for printing 500 copies of the directory at 28 pages each, ranging from \$520 to \$960. Someone brought up the possibility of sending out the directory electronically. There are privacy issues if we send out the directory electronically as Damian Sugrue explained that the information then becomes part of public record.

We would like to charge for the directory to cover costs; we are looking at \$5 to cover printing costs. After much discussion on this issue, it was decided that for this year, we will hand out the directory for free, but we will publicize the generation costs.

### **Principal Update**

Damian Sugrue explained that the budget process for 2013-2014 has started. Steve Mills will be pushing for an investment budget which means maintaining level services plus needs. The principals want full time assistant principals but that is probably not going to happen. Damian mentioned that Steve Mills believes the Finance Committee is going to fight on this. He urged parents to keep up on town government actions and to keep supporting the school budgets.

For Conant, he is requesting funds for building maintenance and a 15 station mini-computer lab, including iPads. The school can pilot new Math assessments online.

### **Friends of Hannah Keenan**

Theresa Hoggins informed the group that Hannah Keenan, a current Conant 3<sup>rd</sup> grader has been diagnosed with leukemia. There will be some fundraising events for the family. On Tuesdays in October, Not Your Average Joes restaurant will be donating 15% of eat in and take out proceeds (not alcohol) to the Keenan family. Rebecca Bregman will be hosting a shopping night on October 11<sup>th</sup> at her home where the vendors will be donating some of their profits to Team Hannah. There will be an all school meeting on October 11<sup>th</sup>, and students and staff are encouraged to wear their Team Hannah T-shirts. T-shirts will be sold at the craft fair. Someone questioned whether some shirts can be sold at the school store. Beth Ali mentioned that her son Noah Ali suggested that the Student Council can be used as a resource. Linda Vittum suggested that a picture be taken with all the kids wearing their Team Hannah t-shirts and given to Hannah.

### **Open Items**

- 6<sup>th</sup> grade money left over from 2012 graduation was approximately \$215. Traditionally these funds have been rolled into the playground fund.
- Oktoberfest - Does Conant PTO want to participate? It was decided that we would not participate in this event this year.
- Worcester Sharks Conant Family Night/Fundraiser – We need someone to follow up on this program. Linda Vittum suggested that we see if there is a wider interest and that we mention this program in the *Conant Crier*. This program has the following features: The Sharks will give you tickets for \$12 each while you sell them for \$14 each; the school receives the profit. Through this program, in attending the game, the school would get their own seating section and a photo on the Jumbotron. As it has been recommended that we should not do any new fundraisers this year, we have decided not to pursue this opportunity.
- Sargent Camp – This year the fee is \$272 per child. It was suggested that the 5<sup>th</sup> grades start to raise monies for next year by holding a bake sale during the upcoming presidential election. As per Damian Sugrue, we cannot conduct sales of sweets during the school day. The presidential election will be held on a non-school day so a bake sale can be held. Geetha Prabhu needs to send a note to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade room coordinators (RCs) that fundraising needs to happen soon to help defray some of the camp costs next year.

**Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned 10:30 am

**Next Meeting:** October 18, 2012 7 pm