

General Gordon Elementary PAC Meeting April 27 2009 6:45pm

In attendance: Ingrid Sulston; Reuben Ford; Kristine Chapman; Anna Guner-Johnson; Jennifer Sears, Tricia Wallace; Noreen Morris; Andrew Brougham; Elke Porter; Charlotte French; Z Smith; Chris Shirley; Roberta Stuart; Diana Schmidt; Jean Gordon

Meeting called to order: 7pm

Quick business

March minutes: Motion to approve Jennifer, Seconded Z, Passed

The District PAC wants representatives from all schools. The main responsibility is to attend their meetings. For more details on how to become GG's rep please contact Ingrid.

PAC executive elections are next month. Ingrid is willing to stand again as chair. She is thinking PAC might plan fewer events while making them more coordinated with the students (i.e. running more joint events rather than separately). Ingrid is happy to continue with Fall BBQ + Spring Fling but will be engaged in fewer of the other social activities, so other volunteers are required. Preferably, a PAC events coordinator is required (possibly vice chair). There would be a warm welcome for volunteers who come forward by the next meeting. Having a rotating Secretary seems to be working. Jennifer is willing to stand as member at large. Anna will stand again as Treasurer.

Ingrid asked whether PAC should have less frequent meetings? Every other month? Would it be better to switch nights? There was some discussion of likely problems with setting the calendar and the need for turnaround on some proposals. No changes were proposed.

There was a suggestion for an orientation to PAC for Kindergarten parents. The school will have an introductory day (Wed June 20) for incoming parents and PAC can have a station for parents to receive information.

Budget update and possible loss of VP

General Gordon has lost its VP position and efforts are now focused on trying to get it back. Charlotte and Kristine took parents position to the last VSB public meeting. They had five minutes to deliver their position statement (also posted on PAC site).

Trustees ran through their second draft of budget which reinstates VPs to other schools that were going to lose theirs through retirement.

The next meeting is 28 April at 7pm. Charlotte and Kristine will make points that GG is losing its VP after seeing gains in enrollment, up to a forecast 405 for next year, in excess of the accepted threshold of 400 that normally secures a VP position. Neighbourhood

schools have all seen steady or increasing enrollment, pointing to stable or increasing enrollment in future for GG. They will highlight the profile of the school with larger numbers of intermediate students and G6 Immersion. Plus GG has seismic upgrade and Neighbourhoods of Learning initiatives to manage, which are typically recognized as requiring more administrative support. Parents are being encouraged to make these points to the trustees and MLA, and to attend the meeting at VSB offices 7pm on 28 April. The efforts of parents who wrote in before the last meeting were much appreciated.

Kristine will prepare a note for parents for Friday's Newsletter and email message.

Neighbourhoods of Learning (NOL)

Z Smith reviewed the background to the NOL pilot project: a response to (what parents' viewed as) inappropriate application by the province of current school building minimum standards to calculate the size requirements for a seismically-safe GG (whether upgraded or a new school). One consequence would have been the loss of vital spaces such as music space and JKC. The premier's launch of the pilot project NOL provided an opportunity to support as much school function at GG as now. After the Sept 2008 announcement of NOL, MoE and school board negotiated a memorandum of understanding that states that the consequence of the exercise has to be building space that puts the school's educational purpose first.

Consultants appointed to oversee the process have organized a series of four meetings involving 'Representative Teams' from each school to help define the "program" (the list of required spaces and areas) that will be given to design teams. The Representative Team consists of 2 teachers, 2 administrators, 2 VSB reps, 2 parents of current students, and, at PAC insistence, 2 community members. Charlotte and Z reported on the most recent project meeting including an expanded group of parents, teachers and invited community organization representatives (e.g. Kits Community Centre, Kits Neighbourhood House, Daycare, Coastal Health, West Coast Family Resource Centre, JKC). A total of 40 people were present.

At the meeting, Keith Millar (Assistant Deputy Minister, Resource Management Division) corrected a misperception that capital contributions would be sought and required from community partners. Instead, examples were provided at the meeting of how GG space is currently used by community agencies and how it could be used in future. The current space for occupational therapy/sensory needs could be purpose-designed. More Community Centre programs for Grade 6 and 7 age youth could operate closer to home. The meeting seemed to help build some trust that community partners would not be competing for space nor diminishing the primary educational function of the school. There were small group break out sessions and GG parents were chosen as spokes people for 4 of the groups.

PAC proposed the addition of two steps to the flowchart: a design team should be involved in upcoming meetings to turn emerging space requirements into sketches. This should help to accelerate the process as it would be more realistic to seek neighbourhood feedback by mid June with such sketches to present. It would also be possible to consider options for including such space in the seismically-safe future GG school, either an entirely rebuilt interior within the existing shell, or a new school.

The discussion included question whether PAC has a position on any limits to the sharing of space (this is part of process although they are not trying to design in which groups have what) and on contacts/resources for building community school vision based on Bayview's experience as a functioning community school up until 8 years ago..

Destination Imagination (DI)

Kristine reported on a community-based, school-friendly program that aims to build team work, creativity, problem solving experience bringing groups of seven youth (4th and 5th grade) together with committed parents. Some students and parents at GG have been involved since December, making some use of school space for activities. Teams work on a central, long-term challenge combined with instant challenges. Examples of instant challenges: build the tallest structure you can with cups and straws; pretend you are putting on a circus under water. Long term: write a play advised (not steered by) parents. It requires a major commitment from parents and students: over 3 months, at least 2 hours each week of active involvement from team members and more from parents. The money to register a team is low compared to what youth get out of it. One team of GG students has excelled locally and provincially and now has the opportunity to go to the global DI finals in Tennessee.

There was a discussion about how access to the groups was managed, since few parents knew about DI when it started. The process for becoming involved was not transparent. Noreen explained that it was an initial pilot try-out to see how it worked. Since DI could be run entirely outside school or in school, the school hoped to learn from a small group what the pros and cons were from running it in school.

Although the competition was not the rationale for getting involved, the success of one of the teams (Gordon Penguins 7) presented a fund-raising challenge for the team, to pay for their travel to the finals. Kristine had two proposals for PAC support:

Proposal 1 was that PAC support an application to a unique new funding source from gaming commission – the BC150 Volunteer Incentive Program.

Proposal 2 was that the PAC contribute from its own gaming commission money for extracurricular activities an amount of up to \$1400. In total, this might cover one sixth of each child's cost.

There were some questions about the available budget : About \$6K of the total balance of \$10K for the year had been allocated already. There were no foreseen expenses for the rest of the year, except perhaps an author's visit. Sending \$1400 would still leave a reasonable carry over balance in the account.

There seemed to be agreement that the program could be of benefit to GG students, building critical and creative thinking and team building skills, regardless of the competition. Some discussion followed about how best to manage future enrolment to cover more students with more equitable access.

A motion that PAC support a BC150 Volunteer Incentive Program application was put forward by Charlotte, seconded by Z. All were in favour.

It was proposed that PAC bring a motion to its next meeting to commit up to \$1400 from its gaming funds to support the students to travel to an international competition. This was proposed by Charlotte seconded by Jennifer. 5 in favour, 2 abstained, 2 withheld vote. The motion will be placed before the 25 May PAC meeting.

Spring Fling (9 May)

Ingrid expressed thanks to Jennifer and Tricia for organizing this key fundraising event for PAC. Some classes were organizing their own activities. It seemed appropriate that some portion of funds raised should go to PAC.

Motion: Anybody wishing to run a fundraising activity at Spring Fling should contribute 25% of funds raised to PAC funds, as recognition of PAC organizers' time and effort.
Passed.

Adjourned 9.05pm