

Parent Group Meeting Notes
February 6, 2013

Attending: Dale, Rebecca Johnson, Mark Thorndike, Jennifer Hall Jones presiding, Sherry Borer, Victoria Weidel, Patti Randlett, Chris Selin, John Stahl, Wendy Woolf, Dorothy Pickles

Sherry Borer will be taking over as treasurer. Thanks Sherry! Rebecca Martin has been out of town and so Sherry has not yet received our financial info. Jennifer Hall Jones was thinking that it might be a good time to do an audit of our financials during this transition so that there won't be any issues or confusion as we go forward. The consensus was that this was a good idea and shouldn't be a big issue, just a matter of going over a balance sheet. Jennifer will speak to Heidi Smith, a Steller parent, about doing the audit.

There is no big money moving in or out of parent group right now though it is possible that we will begin seeing some grant requests from students and staff as we move into intensives and thinking toward next year's peer taught courses (we budgeted \$2,000 for both peer taught and passages).

Retention and recruitment: We were able to take out groups of students to nine different schools, most of them alternative programs, and all before the ice cream social and alternative fair. We were not able to get in at Rogers Park due to scheduling difficulties. The lesson learned is to schedule school visits much earlier next year.

Ice Cream Social: We had ice cream donated by a parent-Dave Reed (father of seniors Sylvie and Chloe Briske) so we are only buying utensils. John offered to buy scoops out of TOB funds and to use their two big containers of Hershey Syrup. Thanks John and TOB! A few parents and students will be needed to scoop ice cream. We are hoping that plenty of Steller parents will show up to talk to prospective parents about Steller. Our plan is to just put name tags on people and have them mingle.

Optional Fair: This Saturday, staffed by teachers with a few student volunteers and possibly their parents. Ken is hoping to show the video on a laptop in a looping format.

Karen Glavinic: There was discussion about whether parent group should make a special donation to the family of Karen G to help them cover medical expenses incurred during her illness. There have been some fund raisers but none of us have any sense of how great the need is. We are all aware of how indebted we are to Karen who started the Steller website and to Tinei who continues to troubleshoot when we run into problems. We have a Sunshine fund which only has about \$125 in it. It was decided that Rebecca J would contact Janice Banta who is close to the situation and try to get a sense of what would be a good donation.

Flash/Website: There have been ongoing technical difficulties with the Flash and the website since last November when there was an upgrade. It appears that we have

definitely been hacked and Rebecca wonders if there might have been an infection. Currently the website is back to running normally but the Flash is not going out via people's emails. Parent group is currently solely responsible for the website and as it currently stands-- when it is up and running are capable of posting announcements to the Flash and do updates at the website. However, we don't currently have any parent volunteers or students who know about the website infrastructure (Dreamhost, Wordpress, and feedburner). We had a discussion around the ongoing needs for the Flash, the email subscription service used to keep the Steller community informed.

The Flash is Steller's primary source of day to day information, but more than that it is also a community builder. Dale stated that the Flash is "absolutely invaluable" to a community such as ours. There was general agreement amongst the rest of the attendees.

Ideas for possible short and long term solutions were:

- Look into getting some technology grants and building the website/Flash design and maintenance into the curriculum, perhaps as a Passages class even.
- Dale says that there is talk amongst the higher ups at the ASD to do an "alignment" of all of the school websites in the district. While it may be helpful to us in terms of technology the sound of it is slightly sinister.
- Patti R mentioned that some sort of daily announcement list comes to her through iASD for the class that her daughter is taking at West. She isn't quite sure how it works or if there is any way to link it to our website. Dale was planning to look into it.
- In the short-term we may need to use the robo-email as a stop gap. Possibly sending the email out once a week or so with a list of what is posted over at the website and the top announcements.
- Dorothy P. mentioned that her husband works on websites doing both design and maintenance and that she will speak to him about the possibility of looking into our issues.
- Rebecca will continue to try to work with Tonei.

All Community Meetings: Staff has been discussing the possibility of reducing the number of ACM's per year to two due to the idea that people might be burning out. Staff also discussed a slightly different format in which there is a focus on celebrating what we are doing well at Steller and the visions and ideas that have been brought to fruition through various efforts and programs. At the next ACM, staff are also considering a plan to do a break out session on grant writing.

There was general agreement that the current format of the ACM's in which we have break out sessions to come up with ideas doesn't work at all three meetings because there isn't much of an opportunity to actually put those ideas into action.

Wendy (who has been around Steller for a long time now) reported that in the past the primary purpose for ACM's were to bring a vote before the entire community on issues that affected everyone. There was one at the beginning of the year to elect officers and welcome new families to Steller. Additional ACM's were called as needed throughout the year. Ad Board scheduled and facilitated the ACM.

Mark Thorndike suggested the following format:

- 1) Two ACM's/year.
- 2) Facilitated by Ad Board.
- 3) At the first meeting, possibly in September or early October, specific ideas, plans or updates are brought forward by the three different groups (students, parents, staff).
- 4) Ad Board discusses proposals and ideas at their meetings and decides which ideas we might be able to work on together or in our separate groups and presents a plan to each group as a possibility or gives the OK to go ahead. (For instance, an idea from parent group might actually be carried out better by Op Group.)
- 5) The projects are worked on throughout the year either collaboratively or in the separate committees.
- 6) A second ACM meeting is held sometime toward the end of the year (late March?) to regroup, report and/or celebrate what we have accomplished during the year.

Wendy Woolf moved that the Parent Group supports the idea that Steller has two All Community Meetings per year facilitated by Ad Board with the input of ideas, projects or goals from Parent Group, Op Group and Staff. Dale seconded. The motion passed.

Dale reported about staffing issues since the district is experiencing a budget shortfall. Basically at this point we know that we will be keeping a counselor position and that Natalie is planning to take a year's leave of absence. We will know in a few weeks if we will lose any staff positions at Steller. Due to continuing budget issues throughout the district, we are still susceptible to displacements like what happened last year to Chris and Lee. Please note, any displacements will not be known until later in the year when it's too late to voice concerns to our school board or legislature.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.