

Gordon Elementary PAC Meeting February 23, 2009, 6:45 PM

In attendance: Ingrid Sulston (chair), Paul Pavlidis (acting Secretary), Z Smith (Renewal Committee Chair), Caz Taylor, Zol Fox, Murray Manson, Elke Porter, Anna Johnson (Treasurer), Margaret Davidson (Principal), Noreen Morris (Vice-principal), Reuben Ford, Jenny Scott, Lisa Chambers, Debra Kopelow, Tricia Wallace, Murray Mason, David Austin.

Meeting called to order at 7 PM.

1. Quick business

Approve last minutes: Motion: Anna; Second: Lisa; Motion carried.

Vote to approve teacher gifts (notice of motion made last month): Motion: Elke; Second: Caz; Motion carried.

Notice of direct donation spending – Treasurer’s report. Need to mail tax receipts to donors. Some of the funds have been spent (\$729.29 on musical instruments).

Movie night discussion – Ingrid is looking for suggestions about this event; Poor attendance last time, and kids are coming unattended which causes problems with discipline. Suggestion to use the class reps more to get the information out. Suggestion to do another type of event or just advertise better. Elke suggested dance night. Casino night suggested. ‘Games night’ was another idea. The lantern festival was liked and is proposed to run again next year, maybe instead of the November movie night. There was a bit of discussion about having the students drive it. Margaret will bring it up to the student council.

Read-A-Thon – Starts Wednesday March 4 Ingrid is organizing this with help from other parents and is enlisting more help. Margaret is working to add some other events the same week, like ‘dress as your favorite character’. Jenny volunteered to set up a pizza lunch for the class that raises the most money.

Spring Fling – Saturday May 9 3-8 PM– start organizing. Students will be asked to help organize activities. We’ll have the usual rides, games, cakewalk, plant sale, silent auction of baskets, and food. Suggestion of wii set up with projector (would have to be in the gym). Suggestion to rent a stage, so that students and others performing were not drowned out by the other events going on.

Other items of quick business:

Body Science - Z moved that PAC “Recognize and thank the nurse for her efforts at teaching body science at Gordon”. Motion seconded and carried.

Food drive – Jenny – to be run in the late fall. We only collected 20 boxes. Make it a “Cans and Cards” drive to simplify it, and maybe get more donations.

Unicef – Margaret reports that our school was one of the most improved in fund raising in all of BC.

2. Seismic update

Z Smith representing the Gordon School Renewal Committee reported. Quickly reviewed the process as it stood – schools will generally be torn down and replaced with a smaller less capable building when they need replacing. Gordon was at the forefront of the effort to revise the process. Just before this Kitchener voted to accept a new school – but they still don't have an approved design, demonstrating that “going with the process” doesn't speed things up. In March 2008 the MLA agreed that we needed a better process, and that Gordon would be part of ‘pilot program’ that would pick schools from around the city, but it ended up being two schools in Campbell's riding. Neighborhoods of Learning (NOL).

The first stage is to figure out what the schools should do for the community, decided by each neighborhood. This was announced in May, but all summer not much happened to involve us. In the fall another announcement was made but not much happened to the school.

In February 2009 a memorandum of understanding between the ministry and the VSB with a steering committee, but basically the same thing. However there are some positive changes. The official policy is no longer to sell off land. Second they are asking schools what they do so that potential losses can be identified (‘functional review’). They also started a mechanism for input, but the steering committees are only seeking input from people directly associated with the school, not the community. We have been pushing hard to allow neighborhood participant, and got Christine Hibbert and Linda Light to come, which was accepted. The process is very narrowly defined: get input about what the school does and what it could do; send form letters to community agencies for input. They are resisting getting the general community involved, because they are concerned about resistance to development. The process is also not open. But after Z and Charlotte French brought in Christine and Linda, the NOL people were positive about the interaction. The meetings are going ahead each month, and in May they will have a list of things each pilot project will be.

The end outcome will be the extra money will be allocated to each pilot program. Divided ‘equitably but not equally’. Feasibility studies over the summer, in fall start with open houses. Lots of questions: governance, how will it be delivered.

Kits high had a ‘visioning session’ – no mailing to the community. Feeder schools were invited.

The PAC should (and will) have a meeting to discuss ideas for Gordon.

Patti Bacchus

We were joined by VSB Trustee (Vision Vancouver) for Gordon and Chair of the VSB, to talk about school renewal and take questions from parents.

Question : How do we know this will be delivered – Patti: they are trying to adjust the process

Question: How will NOL be evaluated – Patti: undefined.

Question: Is it true that that only one trustee voted for closing schools during the Olympics? – Patti: Unions were consulted, virtually all voted to stay open. Only secondary school teachers were opposed. But parents overwhelmingly wanted schools open.

Question: Are there Olympic curriculum items planned? Patti: this is being discussed, there is a curriculum planning group. Kids will get a lot out of it.

Question: How do you want to interact with the PAC? Patti – this is great, board meetings are open. For renewal you can work through the PAC renewal committee.

Question: What about full day kindergarten? Patti – it's on hold but it will happen. According to Gordon Campbell: Not enough teachers, space, \$\$.

Comment (Z): part of issue is school choice: do kids go to schools in their neighborhoods. Patti – Placement needs to be looked at, there are lots of issues. One issue: Enrolment tracks places that have day care. Numbers 20% leakage to private system, used to be 10%.

Question: Lice. Patti – it's a tricky issue. Parents object, there are privacy issues. It's not a health issue, it's an annoyance. Educating the parents was the way to do it at Queen Mary.

Question: In Edmonton there were 8 immersion languages available. Patti – Just approved in principle (in committee 3) a proposal to bring in Mandarin as a language option. Resources and curriculum lacking, startup costs, difficult with budget cuts and deficits.

Question: What is your passion as a new trustee? Patti – believes public education is under attack or at risk. This is a fundamental issue in a democratic society. Education is prevention of drugs, gangs. Special education/special needs; equity and access. Aboriginal education, works closely with Ken Clement. Poor rate of success. Overall, keeping a strong school system.

Question: How many kids losing per year? Patti – Projecting 500 lost this year out of 55,000. About 10k+ going to private schools. I'm fighting to help the system.

Comment: consumerism

Comment (Margaret) – Kids are moving to the burbs, east.

Comment – why people leave: revolving door of teachers; private schools are seen as better. Patti: Range of reasons why people leave. Some valid, some questionable. QM go to WPGA, St. George etc. Expensive but provides lots of extra stuff if you can afford it. Only take kids you want to take. Private schools don't actually perform that much better. Question the value for money.