

ECS PCO Meeting Minutes May 20, 2013

Moderator's Report

Nikki welcomed everyone and read the PCO mission statement.

Secretary's Report

Marla reminded everyone that the polo shirt order deadline is coming up. We will also be taking orders for t-shirts with the new logo soon. You can order now or in the fall. Dr. P. pointed out that we are keeping costs low to make sure every student can get a shirt. If anyone cannot purchase one, the PCO will cover the cost of one shirt per student. We should offer the opportunity for families to make a donation or purchase an extra shirt for students in need. The PCO recently purchased recess equipment for the Upper School. One of the 6th grade classes took the time to write thank-you notes to the PCO, so these were passed around the meeting. Lastly, the next comPOST issue will be coming out in the last week of school and will include an update on construction at the Upper School.

Living Laboratory Proposal

The PCO has earmarked the plant sale profits for the garden at the Upper School. Laura Micco sent a proposal for upcoming expenses:

"The Living Laboratory is in need of a tune up. This summer the Upper School will undergo a number of renovations to make our space more beautiful and conducive to learning and I'd love to see the Living Lab have the same changes. There are a number of projects which could be completed to transform and enhance the Living Lab. Firstly, I'd like to see the gardens professionally edged and lined with stone. This will improve the appearance of the garden and eliminate the need to edge by hand multiple times a year. I'd like to add more raised beds to the edible side of the garden to provide more growing space for classroom teachers and students. This will provide us the opportunity to engage in some community service projects as well as possibly provide snacks/food for the cafeteria. A number of plants need to be added to the pollinator side of the garden to fill out empty space and provide more habitat for pollinators. Lastly I'd like to add some student garden art to the space! A mosaic mural, tile plant markers and creative planters are just a few ideas to make the garden more beautiful! We also need money for routine maintenance such as fall mulching and spring fertilizing. All of these ideas would help make our space more inviting and useful for classrooms at the Upper School and match the renovations that will take place for next year."

Professional Edging and Stone: \$700.00-\$900.00

Compost/Mulch: \$300.00

Plants: \$200.00

4 Wooden Raised Beds: \$100.00

Art Projects: \$300.00

Mantis Tiller: \$300.00

Total Estimated Cost: \$2100.00

Christy moved that we cover the entire expense, and the vote was unanimous.

Treasurer's Report

EXPENSES:

Uniform Reuse bins: \$38.39
Uniform Reuse: \$50 (April report showed \$50 too much earned on this)
PCO childcare: \$80.00
Pizza for April PCO meeting: \$28.49
Plant Sale: \$5120.95
Kennywood tickets: \$10,125
Blooming Bash: \$276.91
Bowling Party: \$81
Room parent expenses: \$198.68
Total: \$15999.42

INCOME:

Blooming Bash: \$180.00
Box Tops: \$283.20
Label Fundraiser: \$19.37
Plant Sale: \$7688.24
Compost: \$35.00
Marketplace: \$14.85
Cash return: \$500.00
Earth Night bake sale: \$300.25
Uniform Reuse : \$96.00
Total: \$9032.91

BALANCE: \$23831.26

PROFIT:

Plant Sale: \$2567.29
Blooming Bash: \$13689.22 (updated from last month)

Fundraising Ideas For Next Year

Car magnets are now for sale as a new fundraiser. We've talked in the past about selling reusable sandwich bags, and Kerry is looking into this. We don't want to inundate people, but we are always looking for fundraisers that fit with our mission and that yield a nice profit. Jodi offered to write a letter asking for donations at the beginning of the year. Jennifer and others concurred with this idea. Lenore suggested another idea: box of handmade greeting cards/box of greeting cards for kids to decorate and give. Christy thinks we should open up the annual plant sale to the neighborhood. The plant sale pick-up day is very visible to the neighborhood; we could get the students involved with wagons to deliver plants to neighbors. Have we identified companies who are willing to make grants? For example, PPG offers \$1000 for school projects. We could ask families in the donation letter. What about an autumn plant sale? Bulbs, mums, poinsettias, possibly in conjunction with the Fall Festival?

On another note, we need to space out the dates of the Blooming Bash and staff appreciation -- it was too much to ask from volunteers/donors in a short time.

ECS Administrative Update

Dr. P. spoke about transitions in the school, big and small. He would like some thoughts on this from parents. Specifically 3rd --> 4th grade, 5th --> 6th grade/middle school, 8th graders --> high school. How is looping working as new staff are hired? A new 6th grade team will be hired. The administration is trying to do a better job of communicating with parents, trying to be transparent. It seems that parents would appreciate an info session for each transitional grade. Ms. Cook has been working with the counselor and staff to plan a day for 3rd graders to visit the school, meet teachers, talk with 4th graders, and a ceremonial/graduation-type event with refreshments. Suggestions for all transitions are very welcome - contact Steve and Tawana with any questions and concerns. Jennifer suggested a buddy system for transitional grades, to make more connections with other grades. Erin would like some expectation for students to know what the culture of older grades are (behavioral, reward systems, etc.). Steve agreed that this is an area we need to grow. Solid instructional model is in place, but development overlay needs to be in place. Lower School is better at this, Upper School needs to work on it. What is normal for each age developmentally, at older grades? Dave said the admin is doing a great job on many aspects in the current principals' first year here. For families with students in both schools, how is the dynamic working, specifically after school? Sonia said that it's not a problem at all - pick-up is easy. It's age-appropriate for some students to walk to lower school independently. Christy said it happened spontaneously and should be arranged by parents, not the school. Sonia suggested that parents need another opportunity to gather at the upper school because most pick-ups are happening at the lower school. No morning meeting and no Java with Jon is another gap in the opportunity to connect with school staff and other parents. No morning meeting also means that grades are more segregated. Dave: Disciplinary review committee needs to stay in place as we enter the new year. Tawana suggested that she and Steve can work on more things like that, now that they are seeing the needs of the families. Tawana wants to thank the PCO for support throughout the year in so many ways, for being kind parents, in financial ways, for staff appreciation. It has made the year much easier for new staff at ECS. Steve reiterated the thank you message. He wants to know if we can get feedback from other parents about the topic of transitions. He will use the feedback to generate some events for families and parents. When will a guidance counselor be available for students to help them choose options for high schools? End of 7th, beginning of 8th grade. Now is the time. Is ECS looking at math curriculum compared to high schools for HS prep? Good topic to address at a meeting. Will algebra and geometry be offered to 8th grade? Definitely algebra, but more decisions to be made. Jennifer: Spirit Week could be a good week to have meetings when there is less homework. Dave: Solicit questions via Wed Word to prepare for meetings.

PCO Board of Trustees Representative Report

Lya was unable to attend, but sent the following report:

1. The budget was approved.

2. The administration spoke about how they were holding up to their guiding principles. It was great to see how they were including students and teachers in the decision making processes.
3. The bids for the construction were put out and we had, as of the meeting, responses for all but the plumbing. They were going to advertise the bid again this weekend.
4. We have a slate of very impressive individuals as prospective board members.

Nominating Committee

Sonia thanked four individuals who have stepped down for next year: Nikki Amole, Lisa Knight, Michelle Morrow, Lisa Smith-Butts. Three people need to step down each year according to the by-laws. Nine people have agreed to be considered for next year's Executive Committee.

Chosen at random, the names pulled out of the hat in order were:

New Executive Committee members:

1. Sarah Stanton
2. Cindy Reppe
3. Maria Cohen
4. Jacqui Wolynn

Waiting list:

5. Melissa Rychener
6. Ilona Weyers
7. Beverley Chapman
8. Jodi Weisfield
9. Michael Sobkowiak

Those on the waiting will move into a spot if anyone steps down between now and the end of next year. They can choose to be nominated again next year if they don't move up during the year.

Mini-Grants

Erin presented 5 mini-grant proposals. The committee recommends that we fund all of these:

1. \$250 for Lower School Gym (Megan Gregory) - gym equipment for the lower school
2. \$199 for Lower School Thinking Lab (Young and Merenstein) - discovery microscope kit including different lenses etc.
3. \$100 for Kim Wilson - reimbursement for food allergy awareness week materials in May
4. \$207 for Upper School Garden (Chelsea Young) - materials for students to create mosaics in the garden. The garden project already received funding from the plant sale

and part of the budget included art materials, so we will only approve this if it's not already funded.

5. \$150 for Health & Wellness (Jennifer Kulick) - stability balls for active sitting for all Upper School teachers. Many questions arose about this: Do the teachers want these? How will the students benefit? Where will they be stored? Erin will follow up with Jennifer to get some answers.

Dave moved that we approve all, with conditional approval for the two in question (#4 and #5). Unanimous vote.

Additional PCO Business

Nikki asked for feedback about the following topics:

- when to hold meetings for the 2013-2014 school year? (same evening each month, rotate through different days of the week?)
- preferences on PCO meeting style (business meeting, town hall, rotate?)
- ideas for future ECS PCO "guest speakers"

If you have thoughts on any of these topics, please contact Nikki at parents@ecspco.org.

Staff Appreciation Week

Beth reported that staff appreciation went well - thanks to all room parents and all volunteers! Several teachers emailed Nikki with thanks to the staff appreciation committee and volunteers. Beth suggested that we make some adjustments to work with two campuses - it was challenging this year with a small but dedicated group of volunteers. Thanks to Sonia who has offered to chair this committee next year.

Volunteering

Marla and Beth made a list of all committees for next year. We will put together an online sign-up form, but a paper form was distributed at the meeting. Committees that we REALLY need help on, or we will have to cancel these events/projects:

1. Fall Festival - Betsy volunteered, but we need more help
 2. Summer Event/Kick-off Party - uniform exchange, clearances, welcome new families, children's activities. Need a core group of volunteers to plan this. We could do a casual email to new kindergarten families, before or after the start of the school, but other than that we decided not to plan an ECS Playground Party.
 3. Fundraising needs a chair. Jodi will be happy to guide the fundraising efforts, but can't do the nitty gritty, which Kerry is willing to continue doing. Lenore will help as well.
 4. School Directory - need new chair
 5. Newsletter - Felicia and Melissa cannot be co-chairs, but are willing to be involved.
- There is an ad in comPOST with more details.

Nikki suggested highlighting these in the Wed Word.

Dave asked about the disciplinary committee/task force. The task force was a school thing. The Parent Liaison committee is active. This can fall under Service on the committee list.

Welcome Committee

Christy said email address was listed wrong in the letter, so she only got one response from someone who figured out the correct address. Maybe the approach is not to get people to sign up, but to have color-coded name tags at the summer event to connect people in similar grades.

Community Energy, Inc.

Greg spoke about the school's partnership with Community Energy, a renewable energy developer/supplier based in PA. They have been in existence since 1999, building renewable energy and wind farms in PA and other states. They are a choice for Duquesne Light customers in western PA. They offer tools to help engage public/school community regarding renewables. The ECS Solar Challenge: ECS has a goal of getting 200 new customers to make the commitment for renewable energy. The result will be a four-panel solar array for ECS plus software for the students to use as an educational tool. We had a great start at Earth Night, but we need more sign-ups. We have 38 so far. We can get family/friends to sign up who live in any neighborhood. There is a pizza party prize for the top class in Upper and Lower school. You can put the students' names in the referral field on the website so classes get credit - all siblings in a family will count. Customers will receive one bill from Duquesne Light -- all that changes is where your energy is sourced. The generation company is listed on the bill. On Tues, May 28, Greg will lead an educational conversation about renewable energy at Biddle's Escape. Encourage all parents, friends to attend. Anyone who signs up there will give credit to ECS for the challenge. Sign up here: communityenergyinc.com/ecs