

MRPS PIE Board meeting

January 4, 2024, 5:30pm, MHS room 101

Attendees: Victor Guadagno, Eileen Shine, Chris Dorer, Caitlin Drechsler, Mary Mello, Ena Backus

Approve minutes from last meeting 11/2/23 - Approved by Vic, Chris and Caitlin

Vic's introduction - set priorities: Create a full board (8-12 members), and invite others to join.

Reports from 4 School Caregivers Groups:

UES: (Caitlin) Main focus now is the upcoming Lip Sync battle (January 19) - CA will purchase props, organize pizza, and give general support. 2 teachers help to organize the event. They fundraise with donations only, but last year raised a good amount for their treasury. (They have a policy to organize nothing that requires any purchases) Meetings are not regular. They currently pay for an email newsletter service, and would like to switch over to use PIE's Squarespace account. Vic is looking into it.

RVS: (Chris) They held a successful Cookie Love cookie dough sale. Their group is small (4 main members.) They try to meet every month, but often have only 2 or 3 show up. Fundraisers get more participants. They may sell High Mowing seeds in the spring as another fundraiser. They purchased sleds, gave holiday gift certs for staff with handmade cards. Their goal is to get more caregivers involved.

MSMS: (Eileen) Echoed the point that it's harder to get people to come to meetings than to participate in projects. The MSMS CA is in a transition phase with a group of new parents with new energy taking the lead. They have reached out to teachers to be sure there is awareness of the resource. Sustainability is an example, where MSMS CA helps them to sell their school-made syrup and the \$ filters back into their program. They also are working to make sure all students are able to participate in the 8th grade trip. They are planning an "Adult Prom" to raise funds for this purpose. And Popcorn Friday is back and running strong again after COVID hiatus.

MHS: (VIC) There is a nascent group who receives requests from MHS staff. The group is not very active right now, but Edisa and Emma Bay-Hanson are planning to start up a transition. Fundraising at the high school can be more active with the possibility of selling concessions at sporting events. The question has been raised whether the High School needs a group, Vic believes it can be useful. High school teachers do have requests, so an active group could be an asset.

ENA asked about how to get contact information (emails). There are many strategies to do so, but people need to “opt-in” to allow the schools to share contact info. PowerSchool is one option that UES uses, other schools use packets at the start of the school year. Some CA’s have used surveys or asked the school administrator to send an invitation on their behalf.

MARY asked what is the relationship to the school district? There is a new group formed this year school board for the purpose of connecting parents to the school board, but there are pros and cons to being more connected or to remain more independent as PIE is now. MARY suggested that using the idea that “you have a voice in the school” could be a powerful strategy to invite more members to join PIE. PIE members could meet with the superintendent (or board members, or principals) to convey that voice to the leaders of our schools. Vic has done some of this already - meeting with Libby Bonesteel and the 4 principals. Maybe a regular meeting with Libby would be doable.

PIE Update: 3 main activities - Fall Festival, Family Giving Fund, and May Teacher Appreciation breakfasts.

Vic has reached out for fundraising:

Barr Hill (said no to anything to do with minors)

Darn Tough: Do not give cash donations, but will donate 24 pairs of socks! 6 pairs will be given to each school (nurses?) to be used for emergencies, or whatever they deem appropriate.

TREASURER’S REPORT (CAITLIN) The Giving Fund (Caitlin) Was a huge success in a tough year. Despite Red Hen not giving any this year (they gave \$4K last year), we raised \$12,800. VISA cards were distributed at the holidays, and \$5,000 still remains - this will be distributed as decided by social workers. Caitlin attributes this success to frequent Front Porch Forum posts, also highlighting that 100% of funds goes to gifts. She suggests that next year we

start earlier. CHRIS: Mentioned that at RVS, there are no social workers, and that Tina (RVS administrator) took care of finding local recipients, and expressed concern about who might be responsible for this task in the future. Reminder that district social workers need to remember RVS when making these payments.

CAITLIN: VISA cards are very expensive, so maybe there's a better way to distribute in the future to avoid these fees. Maybe Walmart or Amazon cards would be better in future fund drives?

PIE HISTORY: (VIC) Historically there's been times when many members are active and there's lots of activity, but people move on and there are times when numbers drop and there was no support to start anew. Also, groups were all doing their own fundraising which overlapped and were limited since they didn't have nonprofit status.

In 2019 PIE was created. Their mission is to come together to be heard and supported. Fiduciary assistance was the secondary purpose. Each school formed an independent group, but PIE manages the money and can pick up when membership wanes. Each group has autonomy. PIE is there to offer support.

PIE's Board of Directors is meant to be 8-12 people, representing as much of our community as possible. VIC offered his personal vision of ecological design for our community. Resilient, sustainable systems. 2023's flood has started that conversation locally. Perhaps there are educational opportunities within the region? Where we are now is fine, but creating a broader vision may help with future fundraising. Vic would like the board to eventually create a vision to build towards the future. Build the community. Example: one request by Tom Sabo at MHS was a food truck - this idea has many possibilities outside merely selling concessions, or building a new concession stand outside H.S. In other words, can we think bigger for everyone? CAITLIN: Would like to see the board include community outside of just school families. Retirees? Grandparents? Mentors? Reach out to the broader community. MARY mentioned the possibility of having a Senior chair seat on the Board.

VIC: In general, he's been considering the word "invitation," to be more inclusive to the broader community. Everyone pays taxes to support the schools, so all have a vested interest. ENA: Mentioned how a school can be a community hub. (CVUH as an example) Building facilities can be used as meeting centers (this very meeting is an example of this!) Evening classes, adult education, dance

classes, basketball leagues, etc. This has happened in Montpelier in the past - the Rec dept used to set up classes at UES.

MARY: Has been thinking about the transition year of 4th grade when kids move up to MSMS - to communicate to the parents that your kid moves on, but you don't have to step back - you can stay involved, and PIE may be a way to keep that status. Mary offered to help compose a letter to send to 4th grade families in the late spring.

Action item: The current PIE Board is Caitlin, Will, Mary, Ena and Chris. Need to recruit more people to be on the board. Mary suggested Cheryl Ecklind as someone who might be invited to join PIE.

Next PIE board meeting - March 7, 2024