

**West High School PTSA
Regular Meeting
January 9th, 2014
The Cove**

Call to Order:

Celia Rozen called the meeting to order at 5:31; a quorum was presented.

Additions to Agenda:

The agenda was approved as presented.

Present:

Celia Rozen, Tracie Pierce, Vivienne Murray, Greg Monrad, Jennifer Fink, Mary Geddes, Andy Holleman, Brenda Bowles, Rick Stone, Denna Mitchell, Elise Moore, Barb Clark, Adrienne Reed, Elana Fortsen, Gail French, Cindy Mans, Dawn Danner, and Bonnie York.

Approval of Minutes: December 12th, 2013

Tracie moved that the December minutes be approved as corrected, seconded by Deena. The motion passed.

Guest Speaker: Greg Monrad

Greg Monrad introduced himself; he is a member of the Alaska Post-Secondary Education Commission. He talked about the Alaska Performance Scholarship, which is based on academic performance and test scores. He also explained the Alaska Education Grant, which is granted after students enroll in school. Both of these scholarships come from the same funding pool. The APSEC just decided on five target careers, and students going into these fields are eligible for up to \$25,000 more in grants. Greg is responsible for the Alaska College & Career Advising Corps, which puts advisors in the schools. These advisors work with all students in the school to which they are assigned, and help students work on scholarships, college admissions, and helping underclassmen work on their goals. There will be no new staff positions funded through the state for the next two years. Currently, there are 12 staff members, which are working to the benefit of 19 schools. All of the staff members who work as advisors stay in the program for two years. In the Anchorage School District there are advisors at East, Bartlett, and Service. At the Dimond Mall there is a Success Center that works with students on financial aid. They take walk-ins, and are open Monday to Friday 9am-5pm. There are two full-time and one part-time staff members at the Dimond Mall.

Guest Speakers: Andy Holleman and Barb Clark

Rick Stone introduced Andy Holleman, who is the Alaska Education Association President. He also introduced Barb Clark, a teacher at West High School. Rick introduced the topic of how to deal with the statewide education budget cuts and advocate for the education system. Rick said that some of the cuts could potentially have effects including higher teacher-student ratios, more classes taught each day

by teachers, returning to the junior high model rather than the middle school model. Andy said that the Base Student Allocation is the recurring money that is typically held flat or raised, partially due to inflation pressures. Over the last four years the BSA has been held flat, which pinches schools because of inflation. The schools have been pushed to cut, which has led to 200 positions being cut, including through removing school support staff and removing teachers through attrition. Rick explained that this has already impacted West High School, with about 7 positions lost over the last year. Andy said that 120-150 positions will be cut from the Anchorage School District next year, which may translate to about 5 teachers at West. The cuts could also lead to the middle schools becoming junior high schools. Andy said that the Alaska Legislature does not have an ear to the AEA, because they don't feel any political pressure. Andy said that the staff cuts that will occur next year are likely to be replicated the year after that. The cuts are not as drastic, because the inflation rate is lower right now, but if inflation increases the cuts could become worse in the future. To put pressure on legislators to fund education at higher levels, Andy asked that parents show up at the Anchorage Legislative Caucus, where there will be legislators in Anchorage to meet with constituents. Rick commented that there are many valuable programs in West and the Anchorage School District, and cuts will force good programs to be reduced in scope or eliminated. Barb mentioned the elimination of a single graduation counselor has drastically hurt the school. She also spoke to the attitude of teachers, explaining how one in particular has said that the cuts have made teaching in the Anchorage School District less appealing. Andy commented that a transition to a seven-class day rather than a six-class day will made teachers see about 160 students each day, rather than the about 120 students that they currently see. Deena asked if the school day would be extended based on an extra class each day, and Rick answered by explaining that it would not, and he will have a staff meeting to decide how to organize the school day within the same time constraints. Andy responded to a question from Mary, saying that the political goal of the AEA is to make the BSA inflation-proofed, which would allow the ratio of students and staff to remain constant. The cuts will force the school district to make the budget decisions during this current school year, which makes principals name the teachers whose positions will be cut, which strongly hurts teacher moral. Adrienne asked if grant money can be secured to protect teacher positions, and Andy reported that the school district is able to, and does, seek grant money but it can only be put towards special programs. Andy asked parents to come to the Anchorage Legislative Caucus meeting on January 11th at the Loussac Library, and to ask the legislators to adjust the BSA to match inflation.

Reports

Principal's Report:

Rick updated the group on the CTE project, which is going to the School Board for approval with a plan to break ground in the fall. Anchorage School District is designating February as Visit Your School Month, during which parents can come to school. Rick will be leading school tours each Friday, and on the 25th of February there will be an open house. Rick said that conferences and Supreme Court Live are

coming up. There will also be Engineering “Speed Dating” for females, which provides an opportunity for potential engineering students to speak to engineering professionals. Celia asked when the Freshman Fair will be, and Rick responded that it will be in April.

Treasurer’s Report:

Deena presented the financial report for December. She confirmed that the December report was completed in full at the last meeting. Tracie moved to approve the December treasurer’s report, seconded by Rick. The motion passed. The January report was tabled due to a number being wrong in the Eagle’s Cache section.

Eagle’s Cache Report:

Gail French introduced Dawn Danner, who will be the new eScrip coordinator as of the January meeting, with Gail remaining involved as an advisor. They have the same philosophy. They will work to build a bulletin board of things that have been funded by the PTSA, which will be posted in the Eagle’s Cache.

Fundraising Report:

Tracie reported that we received the September eScrip deposit of \$1,374.61 on January 2nd. The number of supports has increased to 1966, a gain of 11 supporters since last month. There was, surprisingly, not a decrease in funding level due to the new eScrip credit card policy.

Teacher Appreciation Report:

Mary reported on the upcoming parent-teacher conferences. There will be an email invitation that will be sent out requesting volunteers to donate food.

Membership Report:

Brenda reported that there are currently 293 members. This total is 7 members more than the previous month, and 23 members greater than last year.

Communications Report:

Jennifer reported that the December and January newsletters will be sent together. She asked parents to send in information that they would like to be included in the newsletter.

CRC Report:

Adrienne reported that there will be a volunteer training meeting at Jennifer Fink’s house to prepare parents to work in the CRC.

President’s Report:

Celia said, that as a former Fundraiser Chair, she feels some of the grants from last month’s meeting did not benefit West High School, as the funds were intended. She also suggested that the grant guidelines be more strictly followed in the future.

Member Concerns:

Eli asked about the West Update, commenting that many students aren't informed about what is happening in the school because teachers don't show the news. There was discussion on how to best keep students informed through the West Update.

New Business

Grants:

Deena moved that the grant be approved for travel, hotel, and registration costs for \$2,237.30, which was seconded by Tracie. Tracie requested a friendly amendment to clarify that the amount spent cannot exceed \$2,237.30. There was discussion on if the hotel cost is higher than it should be, as well as discussion on whether the grant's approval should be tabled until the finals numbers are available. The motion was voted on as amended, and was passed.

Adjournment:

Deena moved to adjourn at 7:03pm.