

Lamar PTO Board Meeting Minutes

10 August 2015

Location: Ms. Stone's Classroom

Position	Name	Attendance
President	Jennifer Dawson	Present
1st VP of Programs	Ariel Dawson	Present
2nd VP of Membership	Andrea Hayes	Present
3rd VP of Fundraising	Jenny Tessman	Present
Treasurer	(open at start of meeting)	
Secretary	Cathleen Akers	Present
Devotional	Angie Garner	Present
Volunteer Chairman	(open at start of meeting)	Present
Pictures	Christina Blackwell	Present
Parliamentarian	Amanda Davis	Absent
Christmas Store	(Jennifer Dawson)	(Present)
Hospitality	Lindy Meiser	Absent
Reporter	(open at start of meeting)	
Activities Chair	(open)	
Teacher Rep	Amanda Gunter	Present
Principal	Janet Mobley	Present

Prior to the start of the meeting, Mobley noted that due to a term limit clause in the bylaws, Hayes and Garner agreed to switch officer positions to which they were elected to at the end of the 2014-2015 school year. Therefore, Hayes is now serving as 2nd Vice President of Membership and Garner covers the Devotional. Mobley introduced Jennifer Dawson, PTO President 2015-2016.

J. Dawson invited attendees to introduce themselves, which attendees did.

J. Dawson called the meeting to order at approximately 5:05pm.

Norms

J. Dawson read the norms:

- Abide by the by-laws
- One person speaking at a time
- Stay focused
- Stay positive
- Be open to ideas
- Attack the problem not the person
- Smile & have fun!

Devotional

J. Dawson provided the devotional for the first meeting.

Welcome

J. Dawson noted that Davis had contacted her to say she was unwell and could not make the meeting. Blackwell stated that she has spoken with Meiser earlier and learned that she (Meiser) was also unwell and could not attend the meeting.

Treasurer's Report

There was no formal report, in part because the board lost its treasurer due to an unanticipated change in housing. Mobley and Dawson informed attendees that the current balance was \$11,985.80

Old Business

OPEN POSITIONS:

- *Treasurer*—as noted above (under Treasurer's Report), the board needs a Treasurer. Mobley said Stephen Kelling, parent of a first grader, has offered to fill the position. She noted that he was unable to attend the meeting due to a work commitment.
- *Reporter*—Heather Pannell said that she would accept this role again.
- *Activities Chair & Activities Committee*—J. Dawson provided an overview of the activities that this committee coordinates. Mobley said that she has a few interested parents that may wish to help in this area. She and J. Dawson discussed sharing contact information for these people.
- *Volunteer Representative*—J. Dawson explained that this position is a coordinator of volunteer needs for PTO activities and possibly for teacher needs. She emphasized that this position is not expected to work all activities, however. Baca expressed interest in this position.

J. Dawson called for a vote to approve the filling of the positions as noted: Stephen Kelling as Treasurer, Heather Pannell as Reporter, and Kaara Baca as Volunteer Representative. Approval was unanimous.

New Business

Bylaws. J. Dawson stated that the PTO bylaws are being revised and that Akers was coordinating the effort. Akers explained that over the next few meetings, she would circulate proposed changes to different portions of the bylaws for the board to review, discuss, and decide on changes. She indicated that she, J. Dawson, and Mobley hope to have a final draft ready to submit for general membership review, commentary, and voting by the end of the school year. Mobley noted that the current bylaws were last updated about 10 years ago and that she thinks that the bylaws could be streamlined. She and Akers explained that one particular part of the bylaws that seems problematic for the board is the requirements for a quorum; the current bylaws stipulate a large executive board of 15 positions, which consequently requires a quorum of 8 executive board members. Mobley noted that attendance at board meetings over the last year or two sometimes did not meet that requirement.

Budget. J. Dawson drew attention to the handout that contained the 2014-2015 PTO budget. She indicated that the board would start discussion of the budget at this meeting and finalize it at the next board meeting.

J. Dawson noted that Meiser had already expressed a desire to increase the Hospitality budget. J. Dawson said that she advised Meiser to write up a proposal, including options for Hospitality activities and associated costs, but J. Dawson had not yet received the proposal.

J. Dawson explained that it is her intention this year for the board to not only make decisions about PTO projects and activities together, but to better coordinate those projects and activities so that the burden in carrying work out would not fall to one person or the same handful of people. In addition to the Hospitality example, she offered another: she had asked Tessman to research several fundraising ideas—which Tessman would share later in the meeting—on which the board as a whole would vote on to be the PTO's yearly fundraisers.

J. Dawson also said that she intends to better connect the PTO with teachers and parents so that PTO can more effectively help the school. She indicated that she would address some of her ideas along these lines over the course of the meeting.

Returning attention to the budget, Tessman asked what areas of last year's budget were not spent. Mobley indicated there were a few areas, such as "School Supplies," "Frontier Village Field Trip," and "Drug Free Bands/Items," that were not spent, but that the board had voted to reallocate funds due to shortfalls in other areas.

Mobley said that providing last year's budget did not mean that the board had to simply tweak it; she encouraged the board to start from scratch in building the new year's budget, if that was more useful. Mobley said that she would be asking the teachers in the coming week to outline their PTO funding requests for the school year. Baca asked if each grade received a specific percentage of funds. Mobley said no and then outlined budget areas, providing a brief overview of what PTO had done in the past.

Tessman noted that some schools buy T-shirts for all students. Other attendees said that in DISD at least one other school buys T-shirts for the 3rd and 4th graders to wear on track day. Some discussion of track day T-shirts ensued.

J. Dawson said she thinks the PTO budget should have an emergency fund for student families. She gave the example of the student whose family's home burned down shortly before Christmas. She said even a \$50 gift card to the family could make a big difference in such circumstances. Some discussion followed about criteria regarding what constitutes an emergency and how to make sure it is not misused. J. Dawson indicated that the fact that the board has to vote on expenditures serves as a way to ensure the fund is used appropriately. Mobley said that she is privileged to more information about family situations and can serve a good guide for the board in decision-making.

J. Dawson called for a vote to establish an emergency fund in the PTO budget. Approval was unanimous.

J. Dawson said that the Father/Daughter Dance needs a budget, adding that the Mother/Son Activity Night should also be included within that line item. Discussion briefly turned to Mother/Son Activity Night and whether it should be held in the fall instead of spring since the calendar tends to be quite full during the second half of the school year.

Tessman said the festival needs a budget too. She noted that although the last one ended up bringing in money, it still needed funds for set up. Attendees acknowledged the fantastic job Tessman did in coordinating the spring festival. J. Dawson noted that as great as the festival ended up being, it was another example of a PTO activity wherein the burden fell too much on a single person and in too short a time line.

Blackwell said that years ago PTO purchased T-shirts for HeadStart to use on field trips and that those T-shirts are worn-out now. She asked if PTO would consider paying for new HeadStart T-shirts and attendees responded favorably.

J. Dawson called for a vote to include the purchase of HeadStart T-shirts in the PTO budget. Approval was unanimous.

J. Dawson again noted that Meiser would be submitting a proposal to increase the Hospitality budget.

Mobley said that although Meiser was not present, due to the short time frame before the traditional teachers' breakfast, she asked if the board wanted to still do it that Friday before school starts (21 August). She noted that with faculty and staff, there would be approximately 60 people attending. Akers asked the teachers present (Hayes, Garner, and Gunter) if that is what they like instead of a something else, like a gift of school supplies. Hayes said she looks forward to the breakfast and indicated that other teachers do as well. Attendees indicated willingness to pitch in to help with the breakfast. Mobley and/or J. Dawson would be in contact with Meiser to coordinate.

PTO Meetings—J. Dawson stated that PTO meetings would be held on the 2nd Monday of each month at 5:30pm, with some minor exceptions.

Staff & PTO Calendars—J. Dawson noted that these were already ordered, as the deadline predated the meeting. This is a traditional new school year purchase by the PTO. Total cost was \$256.20.

August Events—J. Dawson said "Meet the Teacher Night" will be Thursday, 20 August. Mobley outlined the following times for the evening:

4:30-5:30pm	1 st through 4 th grade open classrooms
4:30-5pm	HeadStart parent orientation (cafeteria)
5:30-6pm	Kindergarten parent orientation (cafeteria)

J. Dawson cited the date of the Teacher Breakfast as 21 August (see discussion above, under last paragraph of *Budget*).

J. Dawson stated that school begins Monday, 24 August.

Fundraising—Tessman drew attention to the handout entitled "PTO Sales/Fundraising laws." She explained that she wanted to know how many fundraisers the PTO could (legally) hold each school year. She learned that nonprofits may hold only "two one-day, tax-free sales" each calendar year. She pointed out that the limit hinged on sales tax exemption; she concluded from her research that catalogue sales do not count as a fundraiser, so long as sales tax is still collected—which is usually is through the catalogue vendor. Mobley pointed out, however, that DISD limits the PTO to only three fundraising projects for the school year.

Tessman said she did not know if Pictures was considered a fundraiser, since it generates some money. J. Dawson and Mobley indicated that Pictures generate between \$600 and \$900 each year. Mobley contacted a colleague during the meeting and learned that DISD does count Pictures as a fundraising project. However, she noted that although Pictures take place twice during the school year, they count as only one fundraiser toward the three allowed by the district.

Tessman outlined her research and ideas for fundraising. She circulated sample catalogues while she spoke.

- *No PJs*—Tessman noted that some board members had expressed interest in selling pajamas, but the fundraising company that did that does not exist. She and J. Dawson indicated that they both searched for alternate companies for a PJ fundraiser, but they found none.
- *Pencil Machine*—Tessman researched a pencil machine, in which change is inserted to buy a pencil (or pen or eraser). There is no cost to use the machine itself. She said the company that operates this fundraiser offers options of what types of pencils and pens can be sold in the machine. She encouraged board members to check out the company's website: www.harcourtoutlines.com J. Dawson asked Tessman to look into what the minimum start-up order would be.
- *Cherrydale Catalogue*—Tessman said that the PTO had used Cherrydale catalogue fundraising last year and in other prior years. She said Cherrydale's average return was 40-50% of sales. She said that the company offers some choice for student prize incentives. She also said that the fall catalogue is larger than the spring, since it includes Christmas wrapping paper. However, Tessman said that more items are available online than in the paper catalogue.
- *Fit & Fresh Catalogue*—Tessman said she found a new company called Fit & Fresh that sells lunchboxes and lunch bags, among some other food and beverage containers. She circulated a sample lunchbox. Fit & Fresh sales return 40% to the fundraising organization. Attendees seemed favorably impressed with the catalogue and the sample. Tessman said that the company does not offer student prize incentives, but she suggested that the PTO could buy a lunchbox to offer, along with the sample, as prizes for the top two sellers.
- *ABC Fundraising*—Tessman said the ABC fundraising offered many options that involved offering discount cards, similar to those sold by the Denison Education Foundation (DEF). ABC can produce custom coupons and even offer scratch-off cards that reveal how much a customer pays for his/her discount card. Attendees were initially interested in the novelty, but most expressed concern that going with ABC would compete unfavorably with DEF's traditional fundraiser.
- *cafepress.com*—Tessman said this company can create various products with school logos on them and sells them online directly to buyer, which would take PTO out of the sales picture. The online "store" stays open all year and PTO just needs to promote it. PTO picks out products like T-shirts, mugs, hats, as well as the prices charged—within a range offered by cafepress. Attendees seemed favorably impressed. Tessman asked if there was a school logo available. A. Dawson and Mobley indicated they had at least one that was used in the past.

Discussion about fundraising options centered on Fit & Fresh and cafepress and the timing (fall or spring) for catalog sales. Attendees leaned toward fall for Fit & Fresh. Mobley noted that the fall fundraiser normally ran from late September to Open House in mid-October, however, she suggested that the fundraising kick-off could be at Open House.

J. Dawson asked about cafepress T-shirts. Tessman indicated that there were different options to choose, especially if PTO had different logos or designs it wanted to offer. J. Dawson suggested that PTO not conduct a separate T-shirt sale if cafepress could produce and sell T-shirts at cost.

J. Dawson called for a vote to cancel a separate T-shirt sale, removing the line items for such from the budget. Approval was unanimous.

Mobley suggested that board members research clip art for logo options.

Mobley also noted that she had learned that Pictures count as one of the three fundraisers that DISD allows PTO to sponsor annually.

Mobley said that she planned to talk to faculty about when to hold the school festival—in fall or spring. Some discussion ensued about how the festival coincided with the library's book fair the last two school years, but prior to that there was a fall festival.

Mobley said that she also planned to talk to faculty about the evening programs that each grade presents, especially since the programs require so much time to prepare and because the performance and audience space (the cafeteria) has gotten so cramped with the enrollment bump from last year. Mobley noted that some of the DISD elementary schools do not do programs at all and that one (Terrell) does not hold night-time programs. Hayes said that there had been some talk of holding a talent show, indicating it as a possible alternative to the by-grade programs. Mobley asked attendees what they thought of the programs in their role as parents. Attendees generally favor the programs, appreciating the chance to witness their children perform in some capacity.

PTO Letters/Notices to Parents—J. Dawson said that there was an issue with a letter that went out from PTO late last school year which lead to the requirement that if anything in writing from PTO is sent home with students, then that written notice must be voted upon by the Board before it is copied and distributed.

PTO Information Outlets—J. Dawson announced that she created a Lamar Elementary PTO Facebook page. Pannell will maintain it. This page would be used to make announcements about events, meetings, and calls for volunteers—not for posting pictures of students (which PTO will not do). There was some discussion about who would be allowed to post to the Facebook page and about the benefits of restricting the settings within Facebook.

J. Dawson said that the PTO website would be reactivated. Pannell will maintain it. Mobley said that Dene Brock, who created the PTO website, will be working with 2nd grade at Lamar this year and could show Pannell about website maintenance.

J. Dawson said that Mobley has allowed PTO the use of one of the bulletin boards in the school entryway. Pannell will also maintain this, starting in September.

In getting the word out to parents and guardians about what PTO does, Tessman suggested holding a couple of extra meetings over the course of the school year and inviting parents/guardians to come learn more. Akers said that board meetings are actually open to the general membership. She also noted that the evening programs of the different grades are designated as general meetings of the PTO for the first few minutes. Akers said that she thinks the PTO could better use those general membership meetings and suggested that more than one board member could present at them to introduce themselves to parents/guardians. J. Dawson noted that the programs/general PTO membership meetings tend to be held on Thursdays and asked if that continued, would it be a problem for anyone. She also asked if it were possible to change the programs to Monday evenings. Some discussion ensued.

J. Dawson called a vote asking if members were open to occasional PTO presence on nights other than regular board meetings. Approval was unanimous.

Teacher/Employee Birthday Celebration—J. Dawson suggested that PTO recognize the birthdays of teachers and staff each month in some way. She noted that summer birthdays could be covered at the beginning and/or end of the year. She said this activity would fall under Hospitality.

J. Dawson called for a vote for PTO to celebrate Lamar teacher and employee birthdays monthly throughout the school year. Approval was unanimous.

Mobley told J. Dawson that administrative assistant Sandy Hoertsch could provide birth dates.

PTO Recognition of Good Behavior—J. Dawson said that like the PAWS tickets that teachers and staff use to recognize good student behavior, she would like PTO to participate in such recognition too. She said it could be wholly different—for a whole class or a whole grade—or it could build on pre-existing rewards. It could be every nine weeks or at the end of the school year. Mobley outlined the current reward options for accumulating PAWS tickets. She explained also that each week there were ten special PAWS tickets that were awarded by teachers and staff to students who exemplified good behavior in the common areas of the school (i.e., not classroom); she suggested that these could become PTO PAWS tickets. Attendees bounced around a few ideas but did not make any final decisions.

Updates from Principal

Mobley said that she is pleased to have some new teachers and staff. She said two people with prior experience at Lamar are teaching this year: Ms. Sharp and Ms. Chrisler. The new PE teacher is the high school baseball coach. Title I monies also made possible the hiring of one more paraprofessional for each grade.

Open Discussion

Pannell asked if there was a “no backpacks” rule only for third grade or the whole school. Garner and Mobley said that storage constraints dictated that 3rd graders not have backpacks, but Garner noted that exceptions are permissible, such as for students who ride bikes to school.

Pannell asked if PTO officers must maintain a notebook or log of what their positions do. J. Dawson and Akers both said officers and committee chairs are encouraged but not required to keep logs of their work. J. Dawson indicated the notes or logs will help people who hold the positions in subsequent years and prevent them from having to “reinvent the wheel.”

A. Dawson moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:50pm. Hayes seconded. Approval was unanimous.

Dates to Remember

August 20 – Meet the Teacher Night @ 4:30-5:30pm

- HeadStart parent orientation 4:30-5pm in cafeteria
- Kindergarten parent orientation 5:30-6pm in cafeteria

August 21 – Teachers’ Breakfast

August 24 – School begins

September 14 – PTO board meeting @ 5:30pm
Mid-October (TBD) – Open House

MINUTES BY CATHLEEN AKERS