**Kent Gardens PTA Meeting Minutes**

January 13, 2016

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Fourteen people were in attendance.

**President’s Report:**

*Events:*

* Academies: For the first time, there is a waiting list for the After School Academies. Morning academies will start soon.
* Super STEM Saturday is a huge success. All classes are filled.
* Odyssey of the Mind: The program is going well but Mr. Hinton needs three volunteer judges. Unless the schools can provide a certain number of volunteers they can't attend and we need a few more to participate. Volunteers need to attend a training session.
* Chess Club: David Mehler has been running Chess Club for 19 years at Kent Gardens. It has been successful over the years. The club has had numerous tournament wins and has gone to Nationals. The club gets about half the students it used to.
* Mr. Mehler is one of only four certified professional chess coaches in the US.

*Fundraising:*

* Square One Art: The school sold almost $19,000. Participation is up a lot over last year with a 45% participation rate.
* One & Done: We are very close to meeting our goal.
* March Madness: Team captains have been picked but we need two volunteers - a ticket master and volunteer coordinator.
* KG Pride on Ice: This is our next fundraiser on January 25. The goal is to have more events for students outside of school.
* Restaurant Rewards: We appreciate Santinni’s allowing us to move our family dinner there at the last minute. Santinni’s had a record fundraiser turnout. Last night was the Pulcinella’s dining fundraiser. Pulcinella’s only supports a few charities during the year and we are one of them. The restaurant thinks we may have broken a record last night because the line was out the door. The owner extended the time of the fundraiser because Kent Gardens also had a strings concert last night.
* Shopping Rewards: The school received $2,000 from Giant, not including the December numbers. Target and Amazon are other ways the PTA is supported.

*Other Activities & Items:*

* KG Teacher Holiday Party/ Cookie Exchange: The teachers sent thank you notes and really appreciated it.
* PTA Dollars at Work:
  + The PTA purchased 95 new books for upper grades and purchased new music for strings concert.
  + First author visit of the year is Jarrett Krosoczka. He will be at Kent Gardens on March 15.
* KG Garden Club: The PTA needs a volunteer to oversee this. Would parents help out with a regular garden cleanup of courtyard (and students could help)? Maybe during STEM Saturday some parents could help clean up the courtyard. The school needs help more than twice a year during courtyard cleanups.
* Spirit Wear: On January 22, there will be a grade-level spirit day competition so have student wear KG Pride shirts.
* The Food Bus is very successful. Rachel Simon thanks everyone who helps and donates. Students are now donating food from their lunch boxes.
* French Interns: Two groups are coming. We still need two host families. It's just a few weeks. They do need transportation to school and can't take the bus.

**Treasurers Report:**

* The December financials were distributed.
* The biggest item is on Academies. Winter academy revenue came in and that's why the dollar amount is so high. Fall academy numbers are not yet finalized.
* Not many changes this month but we expect several changes in January because of the dinners, Child’s Play, and Square One Art as the checks come in.
* We still need to pay the drama program vendor.

**Old Business:**

* The November meeting minutes were adopted.

**Principal’s Update:**

* Reminder: Students need to wear warm clothes. They are going outside. Please label everything.
* There is a special needs sibling workshop coming up.
* ESOL testing is online for the first time and there is a practice link students can use to practice at home.
* AAP: January 15 is the deadline for referrals.
* All CogAT scores have gone out and the Naglieri retakes have gone out.
* Band Practices: There has been a date change. We try not to interrupt instruction but we will interrupt specials one day and instruction one day. Everyone at school got to view the strings.
* The geography and spelling bees are coming up. Geography will be held before the spelling bee. The spelling bee is for grades 3-6 and the geography bee is for grades 4-6.
* A select group of the band will also be playing for the School Board opening.
* French STEAM night is coming up in February.
* There will be a breakfast for the French interns.

**Guest Speaker:  Fabio Zuluaga, Assistant Superintendent of Cluster VIII**

Mr. Zuluaga gave a presentation on the school budget and his thoughts on how parents can get involved. The following points summarize comments he made during this discussion:

* The Superintendent and School Board are taking a gutsy step in not cutting any programs in the budget.
* They have been working with Dr. Garza and realized they can't keep cutting anymore. Mr. Zuluaga supervises 45 schools and sees how hard the teachers are working and the county needs to give the teachers the raise they deserve.
* The budget would give teachers a raise of 2.5 percent and market adjustments. FCPS salaries are not competitive with Arlington and other counties so Fairfax is losing a lot of good teachers.
* They have sent a message to the Board of Supervisors letting them know they have to fund the budget.
* It won't be easy. The School Board needs families to help.
* FCPS opened the school year with 200 vacancies for first time.
* Mr. Zuluaga travels a lot, going to China, South Korea, elsewhere, and nothing compares to Fairfax County public schools. It is one of the ten largest school systems. If we don’t support the teachers they will leave.
* How can people help? Contact the Board of Supervisors and go to FCPS’ website for information.
* If the Board doesn’t give schools the funds being asked for, they will want further cuts to programs, but he believes the programs FCPS have are fundamental and need to be preserved.
* There is a letter on their website that parents can use but parents have to contact the Board of Supervisors.
* FCPS have a lot of trailers at schools and many buses (more than 1,000) are more than 15 years old.
* The personal property tax rate and a meals tax are options to raise revenue.
* The county is starting to see the impact of teachers leaving the county. We started this year with 200 vacancies when we normally have no vacancies.
* This is about the political will of our Board of Supervisors. The community needs to be more direct with them.
* We are spending $1,000 less per child than 10 years ago.
* We have cut half a billion dollars and many positions since 2008. Arlington spends more than Fairfax per child.
* The School Board has already approved budget and he encouraged parents to contact the Board of Supervisors. They need to receive a lot of letters.
* The school will send include a note in the newsletter about how parents can reach out to the Board of Supervisors.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.