

## CVMS Minutes - April 23, 2014

**Present:** See Attached Attendance List

1. **Call to Order** - 6:38

2. **Introductions** – Board members introduced themselves

3. **Adoption of the Agenda** – Carmen made a motion to adopt the agenda and Sherry seconded it. Agenda adopted.

4. **Review and Adoption of March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014 Minutes** - Erin made a motion to adopt March 12 minutes and Carmen seconded it. The minutes were adopted.

### 5.0 Reports

#### 5.1 President's Report - Sarah Ritchie

- Thank you to Korina and Ryan for doing the **Tea Invitations**.
- Thank you to Ocean and Korina for doing Tea **Etiquette Lessons** in each of the classes. Bouquets from Anne Buchanan. They did a fabulous job!
- **PAC**
  - No PAC meeting this month because there was no quorum, but there were some things on their agenda:
  - **Security locks** on doors now. There are special emergency procedures. Every door in every school has one.
  - The **Usborne fundraiser** raised about \$3000 with 18 children participating. The kids get half of that. It was a great fundraiser and one that they will do again next year.
  - **Jumprope for heart** is May 20th - all funds going to YANA this year.
  - **PAC is at risk of dissolving** because there are no volunteers, which means possibly no fundraising. If we lose PAC our gaming grant will be gone. It also means no field trips or extras, no hot lunch. PAC needs a president and treasurer. Also needs a Hot lunch coordinator. The next PAC meeting is May 21<sup>st</sup>.
  - **Teacher Appreciation Day** will be June 3 from 11:30-1:30 in project room. We need people to sign up to bring food.
- **CVMS nominations** are on-going. Our AGM is May 21st. There are 6 positions up; 6 directors at large, secretary and Vice President.  
-**Question:** Can someone be on CVMS and on PAC? The answer is yes.

#### 5.2 Vice President's Report - Erin Walsh

- Constitution and Bylaws on hold until after the Program Review submits its recommendations
- Erin has been working on getting sponsorship for the tea with The Eagle radio station.

### **5.3 - Treasurer's Report - Michelle Burry**

- Our budget is from June 1st to May 31<sup>st</sup>. Michelle's financial reports are always available if anyone wants to see them.
- Bank - \$28,900
- Parent donations since June 1<sup>st</sup> – almost \$17,000 including post-dated cheques
- Fundraising - \$2,410
  - Fundscrip - \$363
  - Photo Shoot - \$530
  - Coffee - \$726
  - Shake it Up - \$100
  - Pi Day - \$690
    - 3 Students participated – one recited 260 digits – they would like to do this Montessori-wide next year, as it is the big day: 3/14/15
- Expenses since June 1<sup>st</sup> - \$14,481
  - Includes Inventory Materials - \$9,220
- Michelle has a copy of the income statement and balance sheet if anyone would like to see it.

### **5.4 Secretary's Report - Rosanne Gerritsen**

- Rosanne has been compiling emails from volunteers for the Tea and actively recruiting for many volunteer positions.

## **6. Old Business**

### **6.1 Tea Update - Sarah Ritchie**

- We've been planning since January
- It is our biggest fundraiser of the year and includes a silent auction, music, and complimentary tea, desserts and sandwiches. David Somers and Pamela Tessman are performing. Nicolas and Greta will be mc-ing,

## **7.0 New Business**

### **7.1 Montessori Program Review – Allan Douglas, Director of Instruction and Russell Horswill, Secretary Treasurer**

- Allan Douglas recently conducted a Montessori Program Review. In attendance for the Review Meetings were Carmen, Michelle, Anne Buchanan, Nicole Rippel, Dan Costain and Christine Vander Ree.
- Before Allan and Russell arrived, there was some general discussion about the Review:

**\*\* Please Note: Questions and answers have been edited and paraphrased. They are not direct quotes.**

- Michelle Burry explained a few things about our society: We have charity status. Sometimes parents ask what is the fee for our program. We tell them that there is no fee. When CVMS began, the school board said that they were not open to supplying materials to the classrooms so CVMS said okay we will fundraise. In an ideal world we would raise all money through fundraising, however, even in our best year we raised 10,000. We also fund other things like practical life, PD for teachers, etc. We let parents know that it is okay to donate because they may not want to volunteer or be available to fundraise.
  - Q: Is this the same as with other Montessori schools? A: There are 13 schools that operate on same principles since 1989 in Coquitlam. We are not doing anything different than any other school district that hosts a Montessori program.
- Carmen stated that we don't know for sure when the recommendations will be given to us. Dan Costain said that they have been submitted to Sherry Elwood and then they will make recommendations.
- Michelle Burry submitted a letter on behalf of CVMS and she read it aloud.
- Thank you Michelle for taking the time to write such an eloquent, passionate letter on behalf of us all!
- Dan said the board wants to know why do people leave our program at the higher grades. He feels there are a number of reasons. A parent may want their child to go to their neighbourhood school so that they're integrated into a peer group before going to high school. Some parents decided that they didn't want to commute to Queneesh and decided to return to their neighbourhood school. Dan can give out the exit survey information, minus the names
- Dan told us that the district is advertising for a new Montessori teacher.
- Michelle's idea: Try to get a meeting of parents gr. 3-6 - with teachers to address the issues. What are you looking for in a 4-7 program? We would like to make a better program at the upper levels.
- Question: why aren't the classrooms organized better in the school? A: Dan says that they're reluctant to completely separate Montessori from the neighbourhood programs because they don't want to create a This School/That School mentality. He wonders if the teachers actually want to move?
- Allan Douglas thanked us for the opportunity to come. They acknowledge that Britta was "ruthless" in getting a Montessori program into our public school system. They are happy to say that we started as a small program and now it has grown to about 150 students.
- The point of the review: We were **concerned with numbers at the upper end**. When we started the program we made a motion to do periodic reviews. However, the reviews never happened for one reason or another. When we noticed the numbers being down, we **felt it was a good time to do the review**. We were looking for: What are we doing right? as well as What changes do we need to make?
  - We recognize that there are fairly strong numbers at the mid grades.
  - The school board **would never abruptly cut the grades without notice**.
  - Through the course of the review a few things gave us concern: **The way we raise**

**money: It feels like there is a fee** to be in Montessori. In the original arrangement, we agreed that we'll provide the room and the teacher and CVMS would provide the materials. Now we think **we shouldn't have been doing it like that. We think WE should have been providing for the materials.**

- Russell Horswill – There is a definition of student fees that causes districts to question what and how we're raising and generating money. When you request donations, does it conform to school district policies on fees? We wonder: if parents stopped making their donation, would it cause the program to stop? Probably. So if that's the case, if we're operating a program, how much financial resources does it take to support the program? What would that amount be? As a board, why would we be expecting parents to fund the necessary things like materials. Unfortunately, with recent BC court cases, it makes things difficult. We feel that we should provide the funds to set up the classroom.
- If we compare how much it costs to set up a neighbourhood classroom vs a Montessori classroom it is about \$5000 vs \$30,000. We've been working with Dan and Christine to establish what a reasonable amount would be for the District to fund the materials and set up a new class instead of the CVMS being responsible for that.
- The Teacher ProD money is a big concern for us.
- Point from the floor: 13 school districts in BC all operate on the same way as us. We based our model on Coquitlam. The partnership entered with the district was between parents and the district. The Society owns the materials, maintains them, replaces them.
- Russell: Would these programs stand up if they went to court now? We question whether it is a structure that is sustainable. We're not saying we want your society to disappear. We want a partnership with you as you grow. This is public education. It's either public, free to attend or it's something else.
- Russell: In looking at our budget, we came up with money to support the Montessori program - \$15,000. If the program is seen as public education we need to resource it.
- We want to work with the society on how the money flows into the society

Question from the floor: **Have you consulted with other school districts?** Are you going to?

- A: No.
- Q: **Is there a "lawyer" on the board?**
- A: We consulted lawyers on our student fees policy when it was drafted.

Question: Are you **looking at defining non-profit?** CVMS is a separate society. **Are you worried you're going to get sued?**

Russell: We're concerned with how cash is getting into the school and under what authority? Money coming into the school needs to be in communication with the school district.

Point from the floor: I scrubbed cars all day to bring in just \$150. If the donations stop tomorrow, yes the program can run. We make donations to try to create the best program we can.

Russell: It seems like the size of the game is bigger - it's not about power and control. The district is standing up, saying **we need to step up with responsibility - we're trying to fund and provide resources for the Montessori Program under very difficult fiscal conditions. To me this seems like a great opportunity!**

Point: After 11 years in the program, are we successful in fundraising? Yes! Are all children treated equally? Yes! It makes no difference if one parent donates and another does not. I have two points: 1) My time is more valuable than fundraising. I want to donate instead of fundraise. The program would be missing out on a big resource if you don't let that happen. 2) My son left the program b/c he went to the ENTER program, where there is a \$300 fee!

Russell: Core services that we deem "necessary" are something that WE are responsible for.

Point: Trying to balance the budget is good – there is only so much pie to go around. What I'm worried about is that the money will be given over to the administration.

Russell: We WANT to put money into the program. The board wants to support the program. **It's our business** if you want to use money **in our building**.

- Earthquake!! 8:10 p.m. General exclamations of disbelief!

Question: Can **parents write cheques and have the money be designated for specific uses?**

Russell: Money can go through the society and then the society would "donate" this to Queneesh School for a specific purpose. **Yes, we can do that.**

Question: **If I donate money to Montessori, will it go to Montessori?**

Russell: **Yes**, we would make sure because we accept money for a certain purpose.

Point: It sounds convoluted. Can't we just get **someone to audit our books** to make sure we are spending our money properly?

Russell: The principal is in charge of the school and these decisions need to be made through the principal. Think of it as **necessary "controls" not "control"**. Dan needs to continue to work in conjunction with the society. It's about accounting flows - Right now the money flows into a classroom without administration and that needs to change. We're changing the flow, not changing how the money is used.

Question: Do we have to **hand over CVMS materials** that we currently own?

Allan Douglas: in the event of a fire, would you not expect us to replace it?

Point: No, you told us we had to have insurance.

Russell: **We would have an agreement** so there is no misunderstanding of who owns what.

Question: My concern is: What if **there are things we want to spend money** on and you don't agree?

Russell: **No one has the right** to do that.

Question: What if we need to **open up a new classroom?** Where will the money be then?

Russell: The maintenance piece will be covered. If the program wants to grow, it will trigger additional divisions and then we will have a discussion. If there is support to grow the program, then **we have a discussion about "start up" and New program money**. I see dialogue happening.

Question: Will this **continue to be a K-7 program**?

Allan: There is a strong cohort that is holding tight. We're rolling numbers ...

Russell: If the **Recommendations Report is tabled and you don't like it, you can still discuss it.**

Allan: We've been able to **collect a lot more data tonight.**

Point: 13 other districts **not** having this conversation. Why are we?

How much of this is union driven?

Russell: This came up from the review. Things were realized that central office didn't know about. That was the catalyst. It was not union driven whatsoever. Our discovery in terms of things happening outside of collective agreement is problematic.

Question: If the money decisions are going through the principal, **what commitment is there from Admin?** What can we do to ensure that Administration is dedicated to our Montessori philosophy? I believe the school district should make a commitment to hire principals with Montessori background or training. We need admin to speak up for Montessori and for what Montessori requires.

Answer: It's **very difficult to find administration with any Montessori background** let alone training. Dan, do you have concerns about how Montessori spends their money? "No" but I think there is a fear of control being taken away.

Question: Could **gr. 4 be a logical entry for Montessori** to help with numbers at higher end?

Answer: The teachers themselves say **that is a problem** because they are not trained with the materials.

Point from the floor: It would be **detrimental if you cut the older grades**. Many parents would remove an upper grade child as well as their younger siblings because we wouldn't want to drive to two separate schools.

Allan: The numbers are going down which is concerning.

Point from floor: I don't see the support you give other programs. For example, Navigate got an email about their info night. However, our info night was not public knowledge. It wasn't made public. We **weren't allowed to publicize our program.**

Allan: **I can't see why we couldn't do that.**

**8. Meeting Adjourned: 9:18**