District Council Meeting Minutes

Date: March 13
Time: 8:45 AM – 10:15 AM
Location: MPCSD TERC, 181 Encinal Ave. Atherton, CA

District Council Business (8:45 – 9:10 AM)

Call to Order & Welcome

Jennifer Baskin called the meeting to order at 8:50 am.

Approval of January 9 Meeting Minutes

Presenter: Laura Wiggs

The January 9 meeting minutes were presented for approval.
Status: Approved.

DC Nominating Update

Presenters: Laura Wiggs and Jennifer Baskin

- Eleanor de Jong and Julie Hartstein were voted in as representatives for the OCC Communications Committee for 2026-2027..

Treasurer's Update

Presenter: Andrew Fong

- Current bank balance: **$**6,400
- Projected end-of-year balance: ~$300

Budget Discussion

- In prior years (2023–2025), a financial buffer existed and the council ended with approximately $1,000.
- The group had previously chosen to spend down the surplus.
- With the current annual PTO contribution of $1,350 and existing expenses, next year's budget would result in a deficit of a few hundred dollars.

Proposal: Increase the PTO contribution request by $250 (to $1,600) to maintain a ~$600 year-end buffer.

Discussion Points

- **Service Awards Costs:**
  - Costs have increased in recent years.
  - It is becoming difficult to find meaningful yet affordable recognition items for retirees and long-serving staff.
- **Speaker Series Costs:**
  - Currently one of the largest expenses.
  - Participation levels may not justify the cost.
- **Ideas Raised**
  - Consider reducing the number of speakers (possibly to one).
  - Explore alternative programming instead of the Speaker Series.
  - If speakers are expensive, consider recording sessions for broader community access.
  - Consider whether physical service awards are necessary.
- **Historical Context**
  - The PTO contribution amount has remained unchanged for several years.
  - Some Speaker Series costs are subsidized by the District.

Bylaws:
No bylaw changes are required for adjusting the PTO contribution amount. Will clarify at the May meeting whether or not PTOs agree to this for next year.

Speaker Series Update

Presenter: Jessica Winkler

- Current programming includes the "Take It Personally" parenting course led by Project Cornerstone.
- The course includes six sessions, with 25 participants attending the first session.
- No cost to District Council; the program is covered under the District's YMCA contract.

Future Plans

- Continue programming next year with a theme around:

    - Childhood independence
    - Student wellness
- Outreach has begun with potential speakers.

Service Awards Update

Presenter: Meredith Nonnenberg

- District Council recently recognized Superintendent Gracia with flowers for her Superintendent award.
- Award season preparations are underway.
- Schools should submit awardee names by mid-April.
- Schools should provide event dates so District Council awards can be prepared in time.

One Community Campaign (OCC) Update

Presenters: Sarah Sobel, Lennard Hachmann, Eleanor de Jong

Fundraising Status

- Campaign is currently 99% of the fundraising goal.
- Approximately $15,000 short of the total goal.
- Most schools are well into the 90% participation range.
- Continued follow-up from foundation volunteers is helping close remaining pledges.

MOU and Funding Update

- A revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for next year's campaign is under discussion.
- The current $2,000 per student suggested donation has remained unchanged for seven years. Adjusted for inflation, $2,000 in 2020 ≈ $2,600 today.

Proposed Update

- Suggested donation increases to $3,000 per student.
- $300 per student allocated to PTOs.
- All PTOs have agreed to the proposed structure.
- Final MOU expected after Spring Break.
- Messaging about the increase will begin before summer.

Other Notes

- PTO financial impact may not be fully visible until year 2, as families adjust from the previous $2,000 expectation.
- Eleanor de Jong emphasized that this is a suggested donation, not a required contribution.

Updates (9:10 – 10:10 AM)

Superintendent Update & Q&A

Presenter: Kristen Gracia

Environmental Recognition

- MPCSD was recognized as a 2026 California Green Ribbon School (Bronze) by the California Department of Education.
- Recognition reflects District efforts including:
    - Measure U sustainability initiatives
    - Electrification projects
    - Environmental grants
    - Board sustainability resolution

Student Well-Being and Safety

- Maintaining routine, comfort, and safe environments for students remains a priority.
- District leaders participated in the California Department of Education's "Ending Hate and Inspiring Courage" Conference.
- Key message: schools should remain open and supportive spaces where communities can discuss difficult topics together.

Community Engagement

- District leadership attended the Menlo Park–Atherton Ramadan Iftar dinner, hosted by local community members and attended by town leaders.

School Board Update

Presenter: Board President Scolnick

MPCSD Budget

- Extensive work is underway to address district budget challenges.

- Early retirement incentives helped avoid layoffs. No teachers will be laid off due to budget reductions.

Labor Negotiations

- Ongoing negotiations with CSEA and MPEA
- Salary remains the primary negotiation topic.
    - Multi-year contracts were discussed; they provide planning stability but also come with trade-offs.
    - Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) are publicly available on the district website and are often used as models by other districts.

MPAEF Update

Presenters: Sally Loverro and Laura Low Ah Kee

Upcoming Events

- MPAEF Auction – March 21
    - Limited tickets remain available.
    - Appreciation expressed to schools and staff who donated parties.
- MPAEF 5K Run, Fun Run and Festival – May 17
    - Organized by Lennard Hachmann.
    - Early bird registration is currently available.
    - Schools are encouraged to send school mascots to participate.
    - Principals will send messaging to school communities.
    - PTOs will also share event promotions.

Principals & PTO Presidents Discussion

Topic: Hot Lunch Program & Volunteer Challenges

Key Issues

- Difficulty recruiting enough volunteers for hot lunch service and managing behaviors in the lunch lines.
- Lunch shifts are typically only one hour, making recruitment challenging.
- Some sites have paid staff but it's not enough time to cover all lunch services at all sites.
- Jackie Chen and Debi Rice from the DO, along with PTO leads and site admin are in communications about these challenges.

- The LunchMaster contract is expiring, prompting a Request for Proposals (RFP) from vendors..
- 5 additional vendors may respond to the RFP.

Upcoming Vendor Tasting Event

- Date: April 15
- Participants: 4–6 vendors
- Attendees: school administrators, staff, and parents
- Format: invitation-only tasting and evaluation panel.

Potential Solutions Discussed

- Adding more lunch helpers.
- Exploring community service organizations to help staff lunches.
- Positioning yard duty staff near the lunch program (successful at Oak Knoll). At Hillview, administrators currently assist with lunch supervision daily.
- Evaluating whether additional funding could support lunch supervision.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Wiggs
