Avondale Parent Council Meeting

October 29, 2012

Attendees: Michel LeBlanc, Mindy Noble, Jesse, Felicia, Alissa Abay, Anderson, Stephanie, Jana, June Leung, Cheri, Mark Ho, Sam Mathi, Ece Yilmat

Meeting Commenced at 6:45 pm

Introductions

Mindy and Stephanie introduced themselves to all present as the co-chairs of Parent Council. Everyone else then followed suit by way of further introductions.

Mindy called for last month’s minute approval.
Jesse motions to approve.
Alissa seconded the motion.
Minutes approved.

Michel informed members of Council meeting dates for the remainder of the school year. Mindy will put these dates on the Avondale website. There is no meeting in December. Meeting dates are as follows:
- November 26
- January 16
- February 27
- March 20
- April 22
- May 27

Childcare is available every meeting and there is no need to call ahead to book. The meeting agenda will be posted a week in advance. Should you wish to raise additional agenda items, please contact the Council parentcouncil@avondaleschools.ca

Michel advised members of the need for Council insurance. We need it to run anything under the auspice of the Council - such as events (Spring Fair, Family Night), after school programs, and the like. June advised that the cost for the insurance was $85, however Mindy informed members that it has since been increased to $140 (from November to November).

Jesse inquired as to whether or not other groups utilizing school facilities to run programs require insurance. Michel informed him that yes, insurance is required. Mark stated that more information is available on the TDSB website.

Activities & Events

Mindy advised that even with the postponement of all extra curricular events, it is still important to Council that we maintain a community feel within our school. The discussion centered around what events Council could run. Michel said once we have insurance in place, we can run events as we see fit. Mindy was concerned that teachers would think in doing so, our actions may imply we do not support them (this is not the case). Michel said that the teachers’ contracts are up on December 31st, so he recommends waiting until the new year for any decisions on parent-run events. He also recommended we continue lots of two-way communication between teachers and parents as we move forward.

Mark brought up Family Fun Night that we had two years ago. It was a parent-run event and a huge success. Mindy mentioned Coffee Morning may also be a nice idea to have again in the Spring. Michel said he would like to consider future Fall Fairs be held earlier in the season, as October weather can be iffy.

Insofar as current donations that we have received, Mindy is in the process of contacting the companies, explaining the situation of the cancelled Fall Fair, and asking if they would like their donations returned.
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Cayne’s Housewares has said to keep theirs. The AGO passes expire in January, so we are hoping they will donate one with a later date that can be used at the Spring Fair. Mark suggested fund raising by way of a silent auction, however Mindy maintained that could be problematic due to the limited audience (not everyone is in the school). She would prefer to wait for the Spring Fair to have the auction.

School Pictures

Mark advised Council that annual school photos will be taken on Monday, November 5th. This year will be a little different from previous years as it will be run by Major on a volunteer basis. We will offer one package, which will consist of a CD with 5 poses, a class photo, and one 8x10 print of your pose of choice. The cost will be $25/student and all profits will go to Council. Retakes will take place on Monday November 12th.

Sam inquired about putting the pictures online rather putting them on individual CDs (more environmentally friendly & cost effective to be online). Michel responded that several micro issues come up when putting student information online - including the need to be housed on Canadian servers, the need for secure sites, file sizes, etc. Sam suggested it could be a consideration for next year. All agreed that we would look into for this year if it’s feasible.

Felicia suggested paying Major something to thank him for his efforts as Council will be generating a large profit due to his efforts. Council will decide after the proceeds are calculated.

Budget

June worked very hard on cleaning up Council’s budget and Mindy thanked her profusely. The fiscal year runs from August thru July, and at present the ending balance as of July 31, 2012 is $11,665.09. The available funds are currently $9,721.72. This number does not take into account the after school program, insurance, child care costs, and permits.

Michel’s Updates

Michel advised Council that further to the Ward meeting last month, there has been no additional updates concerning the new school. To date, the Ministry has put all future updates on hold as the Nelson Mandela project went $10 million over budget. That project was TDSB’s first infill project.

Mindy caught Council up on the new school issue, and briefly went over the design team meetings that took place, said how it was Board-approved, but then the Ministry had questions, and then subsequently put all future builds on hold. Mari Rutka, our Trustee, is very supportive of Avondale and sends out email updates.

Mindy and June will be meeting with David Zimmer on Friday, November 2nd at 10:30 to discuss the need of a new school. The main points are:

- keeping the three schools together
- child care
- our huge and growing population

Sam questioned why it is so imperative that the alternative be housed in our current building (should we not get a new one in a timely fashion), as the school would not be meeting the needs of the public school students. He said that the alternative students are not as affected as it is not their neighbourhood school. Mindy responded that Avondale is the only alternative school in this quadrant, and all other quadrants in Toronto have their own alternative options. As well, many of the alternative students absolutely live in close proximity to Avondale even if it is not the school in their particular catchment.

Michel told Council that Professional Learning Communities were continuing to support kids through EQAO testing.
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Discussion turned toward the issues plaguing our parking lot. Cheri inquired about repainting the lines. Mark suggested that teachers park on the left side of the lot, next to the playground, to stop other parents from parking there as it is very dangerous. Michel replied that teachers cannot park there as it is a fire and safety zone, and strictly no parking.

Felicia suggested a Bike Train. It is done in Oregon, and is quite successful. There is more information here - [http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resourcecenter/SRAM-Bicycling-Webinars/bike-trains](http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/resourcecenter/SRAM-Bicycling-Webinars/bike-trains). Felicia is wondering if any parents are interested in doing this, or setting up a walking group to go to school safely together. Mindy suggested a break away meeting to discuss ideas and see who is interested. Kindly contact Parent Council if you are interested.

The realignment of the public school elementary students is completed. It was quite traumatic for the kids, what with being relocated so late in the school year. Very poor student census planning beyond the school level, and we had to wait too long to get the new portable. It is the fifth year in a row that the public kids had to be realigned. A pizza lunch was served in an attempt to ease the students through the transition. There also continues to be no co-curricular activities in the elementary schools, however the secondary alternative students are going ahead with their out of class events. They recently saw “Big Boys Gone Bananas” at the Hot Docs Film Festival, and attended the World Press Photography Gallery.

Ece asked Michel about the muddy, dirty condition of the portable entrance. Michel said we are waiting on asphalt and it will be cleaned up as soon as we are able.

Jana talked about some of the secondary school students hanging out at the end of the laneway that leads from Avondale Avenue to the school, huddled in groups, smoking. She said she has asked them to move, and sometimes they have, but sometimes they’ve ignored her. She is concerned about their negative influence on the younger children, as well as the possible intimidation factor toward parents and children who do not necessarily speak English and are not comfortable asking them to move elsewhere. Jana asked if teachers or Michel could perhaps remind them that they are role models for the younger students, and Avondale is a community whereby everyone should feel comfortable. Michel said he has talked to them at Town Hall meetings, however he cannot demand them to do anything. Students are well aware of their rights. Michel said he will continue to ask them to be respectful of the other people at Avondale.

**New Business**

Jesse said he would like to see more parent involvement in the Council. Mindy said she has been trying to accomplish this since she signed on as co-chair last year. She said that was the reason behind getting the grant for translations for minutes, newsletters, etc... so all parents could be kept up to date with current school events and happenings. Any new ideas for improving attendance are welcome.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.