

## Parent Committee Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: 12/20/11

Present: Melissa Dana, Mechelle Coppock, Tony Ulses, (Jack Ulses), Jeff Englander, Michael Keays, Julie Griffin, Eric Autor, Alvin Furtner, Steve Valley, Jim Pala, (James Pala), Julie Custer, Chris Cozadd, Andy Gilmour, Kathleen O'Connell, Wally Zampella, Mike Ross, Monique Wong, Kathleen Norman, Jim Custer, Jock Whittlesey

### **Presentation by Founding Scouts of Troop 349:**

#### Introduction – Truman Custer

We are the founding members of this troop, and for the most part, we like this Troop. But in the past few months, we have had some grievances. Tonight we come with ideas for solutions. We've been called "lazy" and "uncommitted to the Troop" by some parents. With our ideas, maybe we can raise this Troop to new levels of awesomeness.

#### Boy-Led Troop vs. Adult-Led Troop – Noah Saberhagen

When we started this Troop, we wanted boys to make the decisions to affect what we would get out of the Troop. Currently, we're afraid it's not as boy-led as it used to be. At the PLC, ideas are presented by adults. At a Reverence Committee meeting and at the Court of Honor, we were ignored. We'd like to be allowed to make our own decisions about meetings, campouts, merit badges, etc. We'd like parents to lead and guide by the Socratic method. This way we can learn leadership skills, and learn from our mistakes.

#### Troop Size and New Scouts – Jonathan Gilmour

This Troop was founded for one reason: to have a more individualized experience. Now we are 32 members, with patrols of 6 – 8 Scouts. We are pushing the upper limit of troop size. One of our ideas is to take in fewer Scouts. We grew by 50% this year, whereas the recommendation in the handbook is to grow by 25%. We should also make new patrols and integrate them. Integrate the Tomahawks and help them advance. We should limit the new Scouts so we don't exceed the size we are prepared for. Also our patrol equipment limits us in size.

#### Reverence Committee – Holden Saberhagen

A while back, we decided to create a Reverence Committee to find a policy that would allow everyone to be comfortable with faith in the Troop. We presented our ideas at a PLC, but we feel our input was ignored and blown off. At a future Parent Committee Meeting (February or March 2012) we would like to re-present our ideas and put it to a final vote.

#### Court of Honor – Preston Custer

When we started the Troop, Courts of Honor were easy and had a relaxed environment. We would get rank advancement where Scouts would feel good about

themselves. At the last COH, we feel it wasn't that way, and wasn't planned by the Scouts. We did not like the script. It is good sometimes to look professional, but it's not what we intended for COH. We want Scouts to be talking freely, not reading monotonously off a page. The seating assignment was too formal and serious. Adults talked too much, and the boys too little. We want an easy feeling at these events.

#### Fundraising -

Our first was a yard sale. The boys and adults got together and made a lot of money. Now adults are just saying this is what we're doing, be there. Now boys don't enjoy it so much. If we have a say, boys will think of ways to fundraise AND have fun.

#### Hands-On Campouts – Ian Griffin

We haven't done much of this in the past few months. We like to learn something in the meetings, and then apply it at a campout. We are not doing merit badge campouts. Summer camp is not enough to earn the Eagle-required merit badges. Scouts need Troop meetings to do that. We prefer less historical stuff. We'd like a specific goal to be set for the campout (e.g. build a trebuchet). Camporees seem to not be liked by the majority of Scouts. Let's do less of those.

#### Specific Activities for Senior Scouts – Noah Saberhagen

Now we have two groups – younger and older Scouts. The meetings seem to be focused on the younger boys. To help them get to Eagle, it is good for the older Scouts to develop leadership skills. But there is no integration of older and younger Scouts. The older are overwhelmed by how much they have to teach. We need a balance between teaching and learning. The older Scouts would like to have their own activities to get to Eagle and have fun together.

#### How We Will Give Back to the Troop – Truman Custer

If we can fix these things, it will be the keystone for us to integrate ourselves back into the Troop. It will give the Troop back the atmosphere that we enjoy. Now it doesn't seem kind, there seems to be tension in the air. We would like an opportunity to teach. That's how it should be. We want our Troop to be a family again. With all this tension, we are not a family.

#### Conclusion – Preston Custer

We want a balance between older and younger Scouts, and adults and boys. We want it all to meld. Older Scouts should have more of a say on the direction in which we are moving for the collective good of our Troop.

#### Post-Presentation Discussion:

Mechelle Coppock – How do you plan to organize patrols?

Jonathan – maybe add a patrol, but we don't have the equipment. Shuffling the patrols is a good immediate solution.

Erik Autor – What troop size do you want? All area troops are dealing with explosive growth. How do we deal with the demand, and how to decide who would join or not?

Truman – Other troops will take them. We have turned away boys before. We have financial and space restrictions.

Erik – so upon what criteria do you base your decisions?

Preston – first come first served? Maybe we don't aggressively recruit; tune it down a bit.

Wally – keep in mind other troops are taking boys because they want to become Scouts. They don't want to turn boys away.

Truman – we want to be a family. Troop 895 has 80 kids. Already in our troop I don't know some of the kids.

Ian – we don't have enough physical space to get much bigger (American Legion).

Holden – we only have patrol equipment to serve 32.

Steve Valley – fundraising – how will you choose fundraisers?

Ian – form a Scout-led committee to choose.

Preston – then Scouts can decide what they will commit to.

Truman – a lot of us liked the mulch. We would do fliers earlier.

Chris Cozadd – how did we get to the point where we need this course correction?

Why didn't you get this input to your leaders earlier?

Preston – we feel we don't have any buy-in anymore. We haven't been asked lately.

Chris – how can we make it more attractive to you?

Truman – wanted to be ASPL, but two SMs talked him out of it, saying they didn't want a dictatorship. Also said the same group of boys shouldn't constantly be the leaders of the troop.

Preston – if an adult presents an idea to the PLC, because the leadership is younger now, they will feel like they have to accept it.

Tony – recruiting is an opportunity. The more younger Scouts, the more opportunities for the older Scouts to engage and mentor.

Preston – we want to have more influence as the founding Scouts.

Tony – the PLC works such that one person gets one vote. How to resolve that?

Melissa – These boys are walking on eggshells here compared to what she heard them discussing before. The boys feel they are being outvoted by adults, not the younger Scouts. They say: "I stopped showing up because no one was listening to me."

Wally – the other alternative is to show up and shout louder.

Mechelle – six boys here are representing the founding Scouts, but others support them as well (Matthew Lowry, Dave McAllister, James Coppock).

Consider how you will get buy-in from Scouts not on a committee (e.g. fundraising).

Jim Pala – we switched to this troop because it was boy-led. It was more boy-led before. What gives you the authority to make these changes now? Why don't you run this within the leadership of Scouts? You don't have special rank just because you are the founders. Organizations change, and you need to get everyone to agree.

Melissa – Senior Scouts are disappearing out of proportion to other activities they have going on that might pull them away. She asked around – why? She got answers about unhappiness. So she said do something about it. She turned to the

founding Scouts because they know what the troop was like, they were the loudest complainers, and there are ten of them. She gathered them and asked them three questions: Why are you unhappy? What can you do about it? How are you going to give back to the troop? So now we should take it to the Parent Committee because they decide what to do.

Jim Pala – why did you take it to the Parent Comm and not the Scoutmasters?

Chris Cozadd and Kathleen Norman – agreed that Parent Committee is the Board of Directors, so it is appropriate to bring a grievance to us.

Jim Custer – do you think this situation was news to the Scoutmasters?

Melissa – they have been trying very hard not to offend anyone. I think I'm the first one that asked them what they want.

Preston – chaos at troop meetings – this is why you can't just go to a big group, but need to present it to the directors, a group of adults who have the ability to do something about it.

Jeff Englander – serious issue involved here is the troop reputation. You have to be careful about turning people away. At Pack 657, most do not have a favorable view of this troop, feel it is exclusive. So they talk more about Troop 895.

Wally – Troop Handbook says troop size can be up to 50 Scouts.

Preston – we didn't write the Troop Handbook, that doesn't have our input.

Melissa – Reverence Committee – make a presentation to the Parent Committee?

Mike Ross – presentation to the PLC would be better.

Truman – we did that and it didn't work. If we present to the PLC, we must keep it to the PLC and not have parents getting involved.

Melissa – can we agree that Scouts should run the Court of Honor?

Jim Custer – speaking for Tony Ulses, he feels adults need to be involved. Jim feels boys can do it themselves.

Melissa – okay, let's skip this because we can't agree. Are we okay on boy-led campouts? All agreed.

Melissa – we also could have some special activities just for the older Scouts. We heard the Bahamas trip was the best, so it is good for them to be able to do this occasionally.

Kathleen Norman – don't forget the middle boys though. Where do they fit between the older and younger?

Melissa – boys role in fundraising?

Steve V – I don't mind their help, but money must be put out. Boys can take part, but important issues must be decided together. The boys must be able to handle give and take.

Jim C – we'll say yes every time we can, every time it is feasible.

Michael Keays – I applaud you for your courage. Your passion is clear. On the record for the COH issue: now you have seen the casual approach vs. the scripted approach. Now you can make the call. Communication is really important. Hope you see that adults really want to listen. Contact me anytime. If you are going to plan something, we need to make decisions, follow through and allow sufficient time.

Melissa – let's take an official vote, leaving out COHs and recruiting.

Jim Pala – let's table the Reverence Committee as well.

Jim Custer – no, let's vote on it.

Melissa – How about we support that the kids can present it to the PLC?

Kathleen – and add to the next Parent Committee meeting for parents only to discuss.

Vote: 10 votes, all in favor.

Boys should tell SMs exactly what they want by the February PCM.

Monique – How will you boys involve the PLC in the process you are discussing here?

Wally – rather, how will the PLC include these issues the founding Scouts raise?

Truman – we elected the PLC to represent us, so we will present to the PLC.

Jim Custer – have PLC with SMs present to show we support them.