

Parent Committee Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: 2/14/12

Present: Erik Autor, Mechelle Coppock, Chris Cozadd, Jim Custer, Julie Custer, Melissa Dana, Andy Gilmour, Elizabeth Hilton, Kathleen Norman, Kathleen O'Connell, Colleen Parker, Chris Roussey, Millie Sjoberg, Tony Ulses, Steve Valley, Jock Whittlesey, Monique Wong

I. Approval of 12/20/11 and 1/10/12 Meeting Notes:

Approved.

II. Treasurer's Report: Kathleen O'Connell

2012 budget proposal from Budget Committee approved.

Current account balance is \$10,640.

III. Merit Badge Coordinator's Report – Mechelle Coppock

There is a lot going on right now. She is working on a two-sided graphic, to show Scouts which leaders sign for what. Mechelle will present it to the PLC first.

We have a Scout interested in the Dog Care Merit Badge. Do we have someone qualified to volunteer to do this? See Mechelle if you are interested.

She also thought the Traffic Safety Merit Badge would be useful for the boys approaching driving age. Family Life finishes next week.

This spring we will offer: Communications, Physical Fitness, and Citizenship in the Community.

IV. Old Business:

1. Patrol Formations – Chris Cozadd

Chris has reservations about there being a patrol solely comprised of new Scouts. This may be contributing to divisions in the troop. Better to integrate the boys into diverse patrols. She understands that current system may be a plan to get the boys to First Class in the first year. But at a recent Board of Review, she had a Scout tell her that he was in the "Crossbreeds" Patrol. One idea she discussed with Michael Keays was that maybe Scoutmasters shouldn't form the patrols, and instead the boys should do this.

Mechelle Coppock: What is the decision-making process on this? Who forms patrols – ASMs? Parent Committee?

Tony: having kids together when young is good – start as a unit for the first year. But then move them around. He sees it as a Scoutmaster decision. There is not a right way – it depends on the kids, who they are bonding with. We have a middle-age gap. High school kids are busy with school and sports. Sometimes in troops the older boys become "Troop Guides," who are just there when they can be.

Erik: was surprised that boys were divided by age. When he was a Scout, it wasn't that way. Mixed-age patrols have benefits, especially mentoring by the older boys. Then you pull the younger boys out to work on their things. Perhaps we could make

a hybrid of the two systems. The current system doesn't lend itself to good troop cohesion.

Elizabeth: the other troop had a good mix and mentoring.

Chris R: It is a good idea to spread them out. For First Class work, just pull the younger boys out. Have older kids in one patrol do lashing, another do cooking, etc.

Melissa: Older boys feel overwhelmed by the younger Scouts, as they are such a large group and are their own force of nature. So they want multi-age patrols. At last campout, they split the Tomahawks into two, and there was one patrol of older boys. The older boys would help out the younger, but then quickly go back to their patrol. There just was a natural tendency for them not to mix.

Erik: younger boys think the older boys are not interested in helping them.

Chris R: But the younger boys like the older boys.

Melissa: They could do well together.

Chris C: She saw in the Troop Handbook that there is a section on Patrol Advisors, attached to a Patrol, who give guidance, and sign off on their progress at the end of six months. It seems we haven't implemented this.

Monique: We have implemented this.

Tony: It is still in its infancy, and it hasn't go well. We let the Tomahawks get too big. Best to still have younger boys together at first, but after a year, we will integrate. Tony will take this idea of a Patrol Advisor or ASM Advisor to the next SM meeting.

Mechelle: Boys who are Den Chiefs enjoy that because they know what their roles and responsibilities are.

Tony: This leads back to the fact that we need to have a better way of running the PLC, and to mentor the boys to be leaders.

2. Mulch Fundraiser – Steve

Just handed out packets to boys tonight. Each boy is responsible for selling 113 bags. They have 8 weeks.

3. Joe Bridge – Steve

Has just stepped down as the District Executive. He would like to come volunteer with our troop. This would be great for us. Parent Committee needs to vote to let him in. All voted in favor.

V. New Business

1. Policy for Spending Decisions – Kathleen O'Connell

Melissa – we will have the Budget Committee meet on this, due to lack of time tonight.

2. Discussion of Troop Philosophy and Scoutmaster Requirements – Melissa

Melissa: It has been kind of tense and discouraging lately. But at the Wilderness Survival Campout, it was peaceful and harmonious. We can get past this.

This is not about whether our SM is a good and dedicated person. It is about the big picture, not any one person at all. It is about our troop philosophy and how to best

teach our boys. And once we have determined that, will we insist that our SM deliver our program in that way. There have been several misunderstandings. Misunderstanding #1: Jim Custer and I unilaterally decided they would meet with Michael Keays and fire him. Actually, we held a meeting in response to an e-mail from MK that was disturbing to us. I was representing a group of Scouts and Harry Shovlin, our Charter Org Rep. To review our Troop hierarchy: Harry is our immediate and direct boss. Next is the Parent Committee. Then the Scoutmaster. The Parent Committee is in charge of policy, policy implementation and appointing a SM. I would even argue that the boys come above the SM in the hierarchy. So contrary to popular belief, the SM is not running the troop. JC and I discussed this with Harry, and he said he had seen problems with MK.

Jim: Harry said he had seen a shift from mentoring the boys. He wanted it rectified because the American Legion didn't agree with this shift.

Erik: Am I correct that the Parent Committee is responsible for picking the SM? I am concerned because this process was initiated without the Parent Committee.

Melissa: This leads to Misunderstanding #2: This issue came out of the blue and that Michael was railroaded. Actually, these problems have been going on for many months.

Erik: Were these issues discussed by the Parent Committee?

Melissa: Yes, at the 12/20 meeting.

Erik: But that was the "Founding Scouts" presenting their opinions. What about the Parent Committee?

Melissa: The boys were talking about Michael at that meeting even though they were too polite to name him.

Jim: The boys said this is what we want.

Erik: This should have been vetted with the Parent Committee before the meeting with Michael was held.

Melissa: Let me just explain from the beginning to the end and you'll see. In October I noticed that the Senior Scouts were not participating any more. I talked with them and heard discontent re: implementation of the philosophy of the boy-led troop. A bunch of boys came over – I didn't do this the right way, but it's done – and I asked them three questions. Why are you unhappy? What can you do about it? How are you going to give back? My mistake, if it was one, was to have the boys go to the Parent Committee. In retrospect, they should have gone to the PLC first. They presented six ideas, five of which were specific to MK. I left the meeting thinking the parents supported the boys and that Michael understood. But then I started receiving messages from Michael in direct contradiction to what we had voted to support at the PCM. At the meeting on 1/24, Michael addressed the issues to me as head of the Parent Committee and Jim in his capacity as liaison with Harry Shovlin. So we met with Michael to address the problems.

Jim: Harry asked us to talk with Michael.

Melissa: We said to Michael that you are either choosing to ignore what is requested of you, or you are not hearing it. He stated that he had not connected with the boys. That he was who he was and couldn't change that. I then said that perhaps the role of SM was not for him. And he said he would step down.

Jim: We have never had a problem like this where we had to take someone to task.

Erik: We must move forward, but to learn from this we must know the role of the Parent Committee. To go from the December meeting where some Scouts were airing general grievances with Parent Committee support for general ideas, to this situation...

Steve: Michael stepped down himself.

Tony: This issue comes back to me. I made the decision to step down and to have Michael be SM without anyone in the wings. There was no training. I should have provided this to Michael, mentoring him. We had a communication issue perhaps. Now we need solutions.

Mechelle: I've heard specific grievances from parents and troop leaders, valid grievances. We need a procedure for grievances to be brought to the Parent Committee when good communication attempts fail.

Erik: We need more communication on these policy and leadership issues.

Chris R: We need transparency.

Tony: The Tuesday meeting happened because I asked Melissa to pull it off. We weren't ready to have it and it was a mistake.

Chris C: The boys need to take responsibility if they are unhappy.

Melissa: If Michael stepped down, then we need to proceed from there.

Erik: What are our options?

Jim: My red line is that we fulfill the mandate of our charter, which is the three pages of Troop Philosophy Melissa has circulated. Whoever is the Scoutmaster needs to be aligned with that.

(Secretary received a phone call here, and misses a comment by Elizabeth – sorry!)

Melissa: We need to be more transparent. Bottom line is Michael has said he'll step down.

Jock: Call for a vote.

Melissa: We need a committee to spearhead a grievance policy. She suggests Mechelle and Erik.

Melissa then distributed a secret ballot.

Result: Michael should stay – 3

Michael should step down – 5

Three ballots with comments but no votes were not counted.

Erik: Language on ballot should have been to "accept his resignation."

Melissa: Michael said he would remain in SM position until a replacement is found.

Melissa will check on this with him. When to announce this?

Mike Ross (arrived at end of meeting): We should announce this at the time that we do the change of SPL.