

**Janney Elementary School  
PTA Executive Board  
Special Meeting  
Sunday, October 26, 2008  
8:00 pm**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Rennie Anderson, Jonathan McHugh, Leslie Dembinski, Lucy Smiles, Melissa Torgovitsky, Elizabeth Vaden, Karen Kalat, Scott Cheney, Kirk Rankin, Dan Rosenthal, Gerry Gretschel, Elizabeth Levenson, Allison Feeney, Sczerina Perot, Sharon Masling

**Purpose of the Meeting:** The Executive Board convened a special meeting to determine whether the Janney PTA should accept a possible donation by LCOR to the “Janney’s Wild!” fundraising event. The Executive Board invited the past presidents of the PTA who had been involved in the drafting of the Janney PTA Donation Policy, as well as the chair of the SIT, to provide background information important to the discussion.

Rennie presented the **key background facts:**

- The PTA supports the educational curriculum at Janney, as well as offering programs and activities that enhance the school and contribute to its sense of community. This is supported primarily through fundraising.
- The most important fundraiser for this year is “Janney’s Wild!” The goal of “Janney’s Wild!” is twofold: to bring the community together and to raise money and support for Janney.
- LCOR’s donation was solicited by a member of the “Janney’s Wild!” team who was unfamiliar with the potential for conflict.
- LCOR expressed an interest in sponsoring the event, but had not committed to any particular level of sponsorship or to making any donation at all. A sponsorship in the range of \$1500-\$5000 had been discussed.
- A sponsorship at this level comes with opportunities for promotion on Janney’s website and at the event itself, as well as the opportunity to distribute promotional materials at the event.
- Janney PTA has a written Donation Policy, which allows donations to the PTA “to the extent that they are not in conflict with the mission and direct interests of the school.”

- The District of Columbia has selected LCOR as its development partner for the proposed Public Private Partnership (PPP) on the Janney-Tenley Library site.
- The Janney SIT's current position on the PPP is as follows (per September 2008 letter to the Janney community): "After careful consideration of the needs of the school and the sentiments of the Janney community, the SIT is withdrawing previously stated conditional support for this initiative. We are optimistic that the necessary modernization and urgently needed expansion of Janney can be completed through an effective Master Facilities Plan process without ceding land to a private developer." The PTA supported the SIT's position in an email to the Mayor's office.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Discussion of Existing Donation Policy:**

It was explained that the development of the existing PTA Donation Policy began in the Spring of 2006, when Akridge was developing plans for 5200 Wisconsin Avenue and offered to include Janney in its amenities package and make a significant donation to the Janney PTA. *[confirm]*

This raised a number of issues: Who could commit the PTA? What should the PTA do in such situations? What is the role of the SIT? Scott Cartland raised the issue with the SIT, but the SIT said it was the PTA's decision, and it turned the issue over to the new PTA chairs in June 2006.

Another former PTA president explained that there was extensive conversation amongst the PTA Executive Board over repeated months and meetings to craft a donation policy – which, while driven by the Akridge issue, was intended to address any future similar issues. The goal of crafting a policy was to set a standard so that board members would not have to make individual decisions regarding each potential gift. To date, the PTA has never turned down a potential donation under the policy.

The first former PTA president explained that the donation policy only applies to donations that are more than \$10,000, so that the Board does not have to analyze every auction donation.

### **Application of the donation policy to the proposed LCOR donation**

Meeting participants discussed whether accepting the donation from LCOR would, per the donation policy, "conflict with the mission and direct interests of the school."

In particular, participants discussed:

- Whether the policy should govern even though the proposed LCOR donation was significantly less than \$10,000 (Board members agreed that the standards set forth in the policy should govern);
- Whether accepting the donation would divide the Janney community;
- Whether accepting the donation constituted an endorsement of LCOR and/or the PPP;
- Whether the PTA should apply the standard that if a company has business with the school, it can not promote that specific business in PTA materials;
- Whether accepting the donation would adversely impact the success of “Janney’s Wild!”;
- Whether turning the donation down would adversely impact the PTA’s future fundraising efforts;
- Whether it would be easier (or harder) to turn the donation down if it was for a significantly higher dollar amount;
- What the rationale would be for turning down the donation;
- Whether the PTA should ask LCOR to donate less than they proposed;
- Whether the PTA should ask LCOR to make an anonymous donation; and
- Whether it would make any difference if LCOR made a donation to the PTA directly rather than to the “Janney’s Wild!” fundraiser.

A lengthy and vigorous discussion ensued regarding the various options and what the Board members believed they could or could not defend.

Meeting participants also discussed:

- whether a perceived conflict is not in the direct interests of the school;
- whether and to what extent the mission of the PTA and the interests of the school differ;
- whether the PTA should judge whether a company is a “bad” company;
- what precedent would be set if the PTA turned down the money; and
- what the PTA would need to do to educate the community about its ultimate decision.

Sczerina moved that the PTA accept LCOR’s donation to “Janney’s Wild!” Dan seconded the motion. 9 Executive Board members voted in favor of the motion; 1 member voted against.

After further discussion, the Board member said that while she did not agree with accepting the donation, she felt comfortable defending that the PTA had made that decision.

Board members agreed that Rennie would contact LCOR and explain that, pursuant to the PTA’s donation policy, the PTA would accept LCOR’s donation.

Rennie and Lucy thanked everyone for participating in the meeting, and for making a consensus-based decision that the Board could support as a group.

The meeting was adjourned.