



Verein der Eltern und Freunde
der John-F.-Kennedy-Schule zu Berlin e.V.
Society of Parents and Friends
of the John F. Kennedy School Berlin e.V.

John-F.-Kennedy-Schule Teltower Damm 87-93 • 14167 Berlin

Verein Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

Present: Jacqui Bespolka, Robert Erlbaum, Tanja Maka-McGill, Simon Russell, Lia Rigamonti, Eva El-Alfy, Theresa Helou, Kim Douglass, Theresa Helou, Lisa Ward, Jean-Marie Mckinney

Board Members not present: John Mask, Kasia Esteves

Meeting Called to Order: 7:05

1. Approval of Agenda

yes: Unanimous

2. Approval of Minutes of the last meeting

yes: Unanimous

3. Report from the President - Jacqui Bespolka

1. RE: Proxy Voting

JB: reports that the process of proxy voting is not in our Constitution, so we will discontinue using it from this meeting forward. An attorney named Nellie Heidbring recommends we not use the process if it is not specifically allowed by our Constitution.

TM: comments that if the Verein wants to use proxy voting then it has to amend the constitution (Satzung).

EA: comments that proxy voting never sat well with her, as if a person really cares about an issue they will come, and even if they are unable, it is not easy for a person to represent another's concerns accurately.

RE: comments that LSFB (Landesverband der Kita- und Schulfördervereine Berlin-Brandenburg e.V.) provides free legal advice in matters such as these.

2. RE: Teacher Meeting regarding discontinuation of cash reimbursements



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JB: had a somewhat uncomfortable meeting with the Teachers letting them know cash payments will discontinue for legal reasons, as the Verein had to stop handing out cash without a receipt. One teacher however was supportive of discontinuing the cash payments, and was understanding, and two teachers asked that if they provide receipts, that if they could get the funding reimbursed. It was pointed out to the teachers that the management of all of their receipts for such a small reimbursement was a lot of work for volunteers. The teachers were made aware that they still have access to requesting funds just as it has always been, but our tradition of blanket cash payments will stop from this point on.

Furthermore, one of the teachers at the meeting confirmed that all teaching supplies are tax reimbursable, if the teacher does the paperwork it can claim it in the yearly German tax declaration as expenses.

The Verein will continue to evaluate better (legal) ways to support the teachers in cooperation with the Administration.

3. RE Digitization/Tuurio links to past board decisions at the end of this section:

Jacqui comments that she knows we don't like it, but says that if we don't start to use the platform, we will not know what the problems are, and won't be able to fix it. If we know the problem, then we can at least hopefully try to fix it. We all (the Board by a 12 – 0 vote last September) agreed that the organization will go forward with Tuurio. See below links to minutes regarding the Tuurio platform adoption for various uses. Like it or not, we need to make Tuurio work.

The social media application is a secondary priority compared to getting members to register with Tuurio on their own, so that we don't have to deal with their information and the changes that may come. Any mistakes are made by Members and this will help us with the members SEPA. We already have 250 members signed up, lets make it work. Whatever bugs that need to be fixed we can fix, I'm sure it is fixable.

SR: making a point on bugs – there are too many administrators, and accidents happen when there are too many people with admin rights that don't need them, so we will be removing people that don't need to be administrators. There are 14 administrators.



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JB: There are things that we can slowly fix over time, but for now we just need members to register to make our lives easier.

SR: Makes the point that all current members not in Tuurio will need to register for Tuurio, as our bank and bank account information has changed.

LR: Says she cannot open Tuurio on her handy unless it is online.

Others agree they are having difficulty using the application.

TH: Expresses concern about discontinuing the use of WhatsApp for fundraising, says it is easier for fundraising than Tuurio, as the groups are already existing.

SR: comments it will take years to develop Tuurio into a social media platform that can compete with WhatsApp.

JB: We can at least use the Tuurio app to communicate internally. We have found an attorney to help with the diagnostics of Tuurio and Datenschutz.

TM: Christine Danziger (lawyer) will help us with data security compliance. She is a JFK mom and understands the needs of the Verein. Comments that the Board (particularly Ex-Co) is responsible for managing our members information properly.

JB: This is all very new to us as we are going digital, and we are learning on the job. Some requirements are more complicated than originally thought. She will give us an hour consult proBono to discuss next steps regarding our membership information that is hosted by Tuurio, and then give us a proposal for the work going forward. Christine will advise us how to implement the appropriate measures in accordance with the GDPR framework. It is very important that the Board understand and support measures related to keeping the Verein compliant by hiring outside help.

SR: Asks if we should vote on consulting the attorney, but reconsiders, as a vote will be taken once a quote from the attorney is forthcoming. A question is asked if we can get advice gratis, and Simon says we would not want that as we need an attorney who is legally bound to give us proper instructions and liable for their advice.

TM: Adapting the Tuurio platform to both the needs of the Verein and ensuring it is GDPR compliant is a lot of work



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For individuals who don't know how Tuurio became our digital platform of choice, here is some background information that tells some of the story:

RE: Tuurio Application adoption by JFKS Verein Board of Directors in Fall '22
September 2022 section 6c see minutes link here: <https://theverein.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Minutes-2022-09-JM.pdf>

October 2022 meeting minutes section 4c here: <https://theverein.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/JFKS-Verein-Board-Minutes-October-2022-TMM.pdf>
November meeting minutes Section 6c. here: <https://theverein.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Minutes-2022-11-JM-v3.pdf>

January 2023 meeting Section 5b here: <https://theverein.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Minutes-2023-01-JM.pdf>

4. RE: Dropbox

JB: We need to consider once more using the Dropbox application for team document editing. Tuurio does not have the ability to do live document edits.

TH: Dropbox is a high-quality product, and her and John recommended that the Verein adopt Dropbox years ago.

SR: My favorite thing about Dropbox is the permission level access to different users of the account. Simon offers to administrate the account.

Simon calls for the vote for a 200 Euro line item in the budget for annual Dropbox fees.

Discussion:

Some trepidation among board members about using the new system.

Simon offers to do a workshop on Dropbox for the Board and create a Readme file that we can all edit and read how to use the Dropbox file system to suit our needs.

JMckinney: Establish guidelines and ground rules to keep the system organized properly.

RE: says he is strongly opposed to using the system and will not use it.

JB: No pressure, at least by next year we will be all trained up and able to use it.

5. RE: Exam anxiety workshop:



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JB: The workshop was a great success, 2 workshops of 90 minutes each. Special thanks to the councilors who helped around 15 students per class. Comments that this is great to support, but we will have a conversation with the school about paying for these types of classes out of its own budget.

SR: These types of workshops can help stressed our kids from having a mental breakdown.

KM: These types of classes should start in 3-4 grade

JB: This 300-euro program was a trial, and preferably we do not have to pay for this next year.

4. Report from the Treasurer – Robert Erlbaum

a. Finances:

SR: Requests Treasurer's Report from Robert

RE: Roughly 19K in account, some people still paying dues.

RE: Flea Market dues are coming in

LR: 1750 Euro has come in already; Booths are 15 euro plus a cake.

RE: Bookkeeping done thru April

McKinney: Has questions about basic things like what's the Fiscal Year

RE: Jan 1 – Dec. 31, and we don't want to convert to School year.

JM: What is the way we budget?

RE: We take money at the beginning of the school year, usually 70 – 80 K Euros per year, including donations and overhead for events like the Flea Market and Fun Day Raffle.

TH: Fun Day breaks even usually, some profit is gained in the Raffle, it's a community event, not focused on making money. We are still working on a budget for this year's Fun Day, so there will be funds to expend for that coming soon.

RE: We do have enough money (to cover costs) until the new membership funds come in. Comments that Mark Fritzenschaft tells him that the Senat will cover costs of new Promethean Smartboards, so that will not be a cost we need to bear. Our Verein is in a 3 year complete fiscal cycle where we have to spend our income down during that time according to German law governing tax exempt organizations. We just spend out of our bank account, as there



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has not been a necessity of a formal budget. Some years the costs change so much, so having flexibility is very important.

McKinney : for clarity, we do keep financial records correct?

b. Tax Exempt Status

RE: We could not have our tax exempt status without complete record keeping. We do a self audit annually, and then IRS comes every three years to review everything in its entirety. We have just renewed our tax exempt status, and in 2 years will need to renew again.

SR: Can we deduct our membership fee from taxes?

TM: The whole amount of the membership fee is tax deductible. You can claim donations and membership fees up to 20 percent of your yearly income as special expenses (Sonderausgaben) for tax purposes. Is very glad we are having financial discussions, and every member must know what is their responsibility on the Board. Is excited to have the Dropbox, so that information can be easily shared and succession can happen more effectively. Uploading information regularly to the right place will be of great help to the organization.

JB: These are things (Dropbox, Tuurio etc..) that don't need to be accomplished in a short period of time, this is a big task.

TM: Makes the point that contacts are really important for our organizational events (Who is Hausmeister, responsible person etc...) and keep accurate records in Dropbox so that tasks are easier done. Points out that Jean-Marie's line of questioning around what Board members should be doing is a good thing.

SR: Board members should be able to answer questions of interested parties as to what the Verein does with its money.

EA: There are guidelines for the Board members, Buck made Theresa and Eva create them.

JB: Documents need to be current and Dropbox will help us achieve these goals, in the long term.

c. Lockers

RE: A member complained about incorrectly charging for lockers and including the Verein membership in the fee, and comments on the fact that the Verein member has the benefit of using the locker, and it is not a locker rental.

McKinney: Comments that if our communication is not clear and consistent



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there is nothing stopping people claiming that the locker scenario is a racket and that funds are being misused or not handled properly. And this is the last thing we need when we are just a bunch of volunteers trying to do a good thing.

EA: Tells some history of the locker management by Verein. Years ago, the school asked Verein to purchase the lockers, as the jackets were a fire hazard in hallways. We clean the lockers, repair them, and manage the lock turnover. Says she does not like the fact that parents feel obliged to be a member, even though they don't want to be one, they just want to rent a locker.

TH: Fire code has changed and the Senat will pay for lockers in the ES, and the admin has requested Verein to maintain ES lockers, but we do not get any fees from them in the ES.

TM: We should have a story as to why people should be members and why locker usage by members is fair.

EA: It used to be a different fee schedule for Verein, relative to the amount of children a family has and the amount of lockers needed was determinative of the cost. This was difficult to administer, so the 75 euro flat fee became a per family fee. In these times, most funds came from Fun Run and events. When Buck took over and kept saying that with the new fee schedule there would be more funds to manage.

RE: The locker situation is like a library membership, you do not rent the books, they come with your library membership.

TM: German schools do not come with lockers, either the administration hires a company that installs and manages the lockers, or there will be none. Those companies usually charge more than what it costs our members for their membership fee.

5. Report from the JFKS School Shop – Kim Douglass

Water bottles: We have water bottles made of 100% ocean plastic with bamboo water bottles. Made by a company that helps impoverished communities around the world. The fee for the bottle is 8 Euros.

There are 200 bottles.

RE: Comments the bottles should be sold for at least 10 Euros, and wrote an email to Kim about that perspective of charging at least 8,50 euros. Says the shop needs to charge more in order to support the Verein. Says the 8 Euro price will not make enough money.



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KD: Cost of the bottles is 5,10 Euros, so there is profit at the price of 8 euros, because she thinks 8,50 Euros is too much and people won't buy the bottle.

RE: Comments that if people won't pay 8,50 then the base cost of 5,10 is too expensive.

KD: Bottles will be a part of the welcome packages for teachers. Also JFKS event t-shirts are now available for volunteers.

SR: Lets see what happens with bottle sales and then make a pricing decision

KD: Needs volunteers for Flea Market

JB: Will shift volunteers from cake stand to the store stand

KD: On June 23 there will be a need to have a Verein booth for the Annual Graduation Ball.

JB: Lisa has shared the Volunteer list and Jacqui will try to get volunteers online for the upcoming events.

6. Requests

- a. Welcome Baskets for incoming teachers

Cost: 400 Euros

yes: Unanimous

- b. Drama Department Sound Equipment

Cost: 4.972 Euros

Discussion:

SR: Asks why the school would not put such a large line item into its budget.

JB: Replies that the school does not have these items in its budget, and will just use older equipment.

yes: Unanimous

- c. Prosecco for Flea Market to promote the Verein and for Mothers Day

JB: Request for 90 bottles, 6 glasses in each bottle. Request if for 700 Euros

yes: Unanimous

- d. Yearbook advertising – 197 euros for a Verein advertisement



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yes: Unanimous

- e. Cleaning the High School Lockers – 1.913,52 Euros

Discussion: The price has gone up since last year

yes: Unanimous

- f. 400 Euros for food for additional breakfast ES teacher appreciation week

Discussion:

Over 2100 Euros was already been granted for this purpose at our April meeting. The request came in too late (6:00 PM tonight) and we have already donated enough for this event.

yes: 2

no: 7 Motion Fails

abstention: 1

- g. Dropbox for organizational data storage for 200 Euros per Year

yes: 10 Motion Passes

no: 1

abstention: 0

Miscellaneous:

- a. Eva will inform police about the Flea Market, Shana Kennedy is in charge of school security during Flea Market.
- b. The Board needs to make reservations for the meetings in the Aula next year

Meeting adjourned: 8:47