



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

## Agenda

April 16, 2024 in the Large Aula

Present: Jacqui Bispoka, Lia Rigamonti, Haley Scribner, Ben Bowers, Theresa Luss, Carsten Casper, Robert Lenk, Candice Martin-O'Connor, Eva El-Afy, John Mask,  
Guests: Antonio Gonzales, Christine White, Beate Neumann,

Moderating: Ben

1. Approval of agenda

Amended to include the president's report and the treasurer's report.

Approval: 9

Disapproval: 0

Abstentions: 0

2. Approval of minutes of last meeting

Approval: 9

Disapproval: 0

Abstentions: 0

3. Report of the Admin

Jacqui: you're trying to coordinate with the elementary school?

Candice: We have accomplished a lot in the last few months. We're working hard on the goals of our strategic plan. The priority now is looking at our bilingual model and how we can improve upon the good thing and make it better. We've had a professional development day in February about best practices in bilingual instruction. We have an administrator's retreat coming up soon. We want to clarify what we think needs to happen next in terms of bring ideas to the staff and bringing their input to solidly the plan of the next years. We have fourth graders out of the building at Schloss Altenhausen. It's amazing that teachers in Germany are willing to go off for weeks at a time! We have a new cleaning company as well, and so far I haven't heard anything negative; the sinks have never been so clean. We don't know the name of the company. We had the lottery last week for entrance class and we're beginning to schedule language tests.

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Fax 030-90299-6377, www.theverein.com, email: info@theverein.com President: Tracey Tober, Vice President: Katrin Drakulic, Treasurer: Buck Chisolm, Secretary: Eva El-Alfy **Bankverbindung: JFKS Verein, Sparkasse, IBAN: DE78 1005 0000 0190 8829 13, BIC/SWIFT: BELADEBEXX**

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Jacqui: Have the families been notified?

Candice: not yet. We're working with the attorney to make sure we're doing it correctly. The Vera 3 was today, for the third-graders. Those are my main topics.

J: How was the teacher's development day in February?

C: That was the expert who came in. She came for the entire staff and then she stayed for another four days to meet with smaller groups in different ages to answer questions and talk them through how to plan bilingual instructional practices. I think it was really helpful for staff to ask questions and also to give feedback.

Theresa: Who was it?

C: Linsey Mozer.

J: About having the Verein sponsor the funding, where did it come from?

C: It came from the trust fund. J: We have many requests from teachers, so we require it to get a signature form from the administration. Do they go through the requests before the requests come to us?

C: I just talked with Robert Barts about that yesterday. My signature requires me to check that I've looked into other funding before sending it to the Verein. He liked that, because then he doesn't have to say whether he supports it, just that he has looked at the funding options.

J: That makes it much easier for us.

Lia: Do you know who we've hired as teachers for next year?

C: You're asking me to think. We have three teachers coming from the USA. We have a couple coming from elsewhere in Europe, at least one who will be teaching at elementary and the high school who taught here before and is returning, plus some German teachers as well. I'm not sure how many the high school has hired.

#### 4. Report of the Student Council

\*nobody present\*

#### 5. Report from the President

Robert: Thanks for the welcome! We took the first steps in the last weeks, which is sometimes quick. It hasn't been boring in our chats, but it's a complex thing. It's in good hands! We attended the PCB and said hello, which was virtual. We took from the chat some important complaints/issues. Some rooms are heating up and everybody's suffering. Kids want to go home,

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and parents have to pick up kids early. We've decided to follow up, and we've found out some points which haven't been considered. It's all about a badly-working shade system. The motors are broken. The surface which reflects the UV light is worn out, and the windows have no reflection foil. These are quick fixed and we'll stay on that before the sun arrives. We have two more weeks like today and we'll do a sprint in that time to avoid issues if possible. What we can't ensure is a new contract for the shutters. There was a frame contract for a contractor to do all shutters and motors, but it was canceled by the local municipality; now it's broken. We can't change that and we can't make a big contract, but for these special rooms, we can look into that. Maybe there's a work-around with BIM. We've set them on fire to do this because of the consequences which they don't want to face.

C: I believe we need to get Robert Bartz in this conversation: I believe there is some work planned for the summer, and we have a half-finished kitchen so I don't hold a great deal of faith that things will happen in a timely fashion. We've had this conversation, but it didn't move forward.

J: Can we set a date with both Roberts and possibly Carsten and move today's meeting along? We need action, and maybe we can help.

T: We were able to put foil on the windows in our school because it's a non-permanent solution.

Beate: I have one of those rooms. When the windows are closed, there is no air and there are 25 adolescent bodies making heat. It's sticky!

T: I put the foil up and that helps. Carsten: I'd like to repeat: the idea is to focus on the urgent rooms, and that overall helps with the main problem. Correct? So two options: go big and it takes ages or we can just pay for the foil and fill out forms and focus on these five rooms.

Candice: It's accurate, but we're talking about rooms in the elementary school and the high school has many rooms.

John: It's more than 10 together. We talked about it in September.

J: This is a preliminary idea, so we need to look into this.

T: Anything we can do is good. Carsten: Is there a group who figures out the details and we join instead of pushing this directly?

Beate: What about alternatives like a wind channel or showers or foot baths?

John: It's inconvenient to the parents, but grades also suffer based on a Harvard study.

Robert: Thanks for that convo; we have potential to act, and we'll look into it in the future. We took part in the funding competition and they fund projects which enable students and engage and connect them. We filed the application, and let's see how it goes. The virtual and physical

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hand-overs are done from our side, but we still need a Notary procedure and it's in the pipeline. Today we are looking into the committees. I took over some topics from Jacqui about the AMIS music festival, which is an orchestra which the verein co-supports in terms of hosting our guests from all over Europe; you're all invited at the Paulus Kirche on April 25-27. We're catering, and very proud. The campus is part of a big get-together. That reminds me of the Odyssey of the Mind, which went great. We got a lot of positive feedback. Summary: the school shop is owed 8000 EUR as tax withholding from a company in Ireland. We know who the four people are who owe us this, and we'll pursue it legally.

## 6. Report from the Treasurer

Carsten: I'll do it as a Q&A, ask me what you want. I think things are running properly, it's just hard to understand what and why and when and how. When I trace things back, I spend a lot of time figuring it out and then give up. I'm happy to explain things, but I'm trying to get the info. I'm an IT guy so for me it has to do with linking things together. When I look back, if I'm lucky I can link it, but I don't know who or why. It doesn't seem to be wrong, just that the information is often incomplete. It's time-consuming; 10-60 mins each request. I went over last year and wanted to see what and why; it took me 12 hours for 2022 and then I gave up. For some I couldn't find anything of the 60 requests of that year. I can't prove things either way. My plan for the future is to change that! It'll be less work than you think it is, because I'm thinking of it in IT terms. Poke me if you think I'm too slow or doing it wrong, but I'm trying to create transparency. We spend about 10% of our yearly budget on insurance. Lots of work ahead, but I'm doing it. My plea is: help me clarify things. My plans and ideas are with this in mind.

Eva: Thanks for putting so much time and energy into it! We've been trying to do this for a long time.

Carsten: I'm tracking now and the future, but I won't track the past. I just use it to learn.

Jacqui: Do you have the USA account number?

Carsten: We have one with Interactive Brokers where we have American Dollars.

John: What about taxes?

Carsten: We can discuss that soon. When you know an answer to a question I ask, please tell me. Then I can be more effective.

## 9. Miscellaneous

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Christine: my question: with a new board, is voting still going to be done in private?

Theresa: the reason is that we're parents. If we vote and teachers see, there's a chance for retribution against your kids. I don't feel most teachers are like that, but it's a concern.

C: I hear you, and that's a fair point. Is there a way to put that out there?

Ben: Carsten and I have already discussed creating a FAQ and that can be included into it.

Eva: we ask the person requestion to leave because we might have to deny a request because it's against the constitution and we wouldn't want them to get negative feelings.

Jacqui: Sometimes we have heated discussions and with others around they might get involved; that doesn't help.

Carsten: it could be something else not connected, but we prefer to have our conversations in closed doors.

Christine: The election was fascinating, but I will say I arrived and was immediately told I wasn't on the list and wouldn't be voting; it was unceremoniously done to many people by Nancy Folk. It was abrupt; others were left scrambling to show bank statements. I went back into Tuurio, tried to pay, and emailed the verein.

Ben: let's add payment methods to the FAQ.

Christine: please make sure the reminder says that you should make sure you've paid.

Carsten: there's a long list, and it'll take a while to get through it.

Christine: how do I pay?

John: That typically goes in the fall.

Ben: let's figure out how to pay, then put up a FAQ, and then we'll notify people.

## 7. Proposal of Committees

(postponed for future meeting)

## 8. Report from the school Shop

(nobody present)

## 10. Requests

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Jacqui: Beate is here for her sixth grade level class project. She's asking for 2500 EUR and she's here to explain it.

Beate: I'm also the art department chair. 15 years ago we reduced art from 2 hours/week to 1 hour/week so kids could have a library hour. Kids need art. It makes them happy and connects to other subjects. That's why we're trying to make up field trips and workshops and projects. Every other year we invite artists to come to our school and do cool projects. We've had different artists, but usually parents would pay. This year is the first time that three classes the parents will pay for this but two classes won't.

Haley: We had a vote, and they said no.

Beate: I feel art is underrepresented and we need to give the kids art. <open conversation while showing pictures of the artist and kids using this laptop>

Eva: I think we should vote on it but with a clause that we ask the parents again first.

T: What if we fund it and then ask for more parental support in return?

Ben: this is taking a long time. Let's make a determination and move on. Final thoughts?

John: When is it planned?

B: June

J: When did the request go out?

B: January.

J: When was it clear that two classes wouldn't be able to take part?

B: February.

Haley: Do we have any idea if the other teacher would do this too? Can we reach out to the parent reps?

Ben: let's reach out to parents, try to get funding, then we'll vote about the requests later.

John: it took too long to get the request. It's too late.

Haley: I want to look at when it came into an email.

Eva: She sent it to her class and then forwarded it to her colleagues. I suggest we fund it as an exception but we try the parents first. We should support this. She's right; we've given money to the music department.

Jacqui: I suggest we fund but show her that she can't do this last-minute.

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Request 1: Art project 6<sup>th</sup> grade: yes: 9 no: 0 abstain: 0 (conditional: we tell her no more last-minute, and we pressure teachers)  
Request 2: bike repair club: yes: 9 no: 0 abstain: 0  
Request 7: Donation of proceeds from sale: yes: no: abstain:  
Request 9: Gifts for Leaving Teachers: yes: 8 no: 0 abstain:1 (not sabbatical)  
Request 3: Library Donation: Mental Health Issues: yes: no: abstain:  
Request 4: Locker Cleaning Ehrler: yes: 0 no: 9 abstain: 0  
Request 5a: Locker Cleaning Geithner: yes: 9 no: 0 abstain: 0  
Request 6: New Teacher Welcome Baskets: yes:8 no:0 abstain: 1 (can we add to budget?)  
Request 8: Teacher Week Luncheon: yes: 7no: 0abstain:2 (condition: require admin to give us credit and lable this vereिन teacher appreciation)

Antonio: My wife wanted to know if the teacher appreciation luncheon will be voted on?

J: We will tonight.

A: Thanks for the garden committee financial support starting two years ago.

C: I've seen the bill.

A: It's surrounded by wildflowers now. I will be leaving next year, so hopefully Ace Phillip from the library will have more time in the garden. I haven't had luck in the high school getting teachers for help. Many groups are helping already though. What is your vision for the school garden?

Robert: Schrebergartens are big in German culture, and it has positive health effects. Gardens have always been a place of recreation, but I'd like to see a salad party.

Carsten: It's a long-term event so it needs long-term commitment. From the treasurer's perspective, it could be part of the budget within a range. It's a discussion to be had with the board and larger community. As a board member, it's also about putting work into it.

Antonio: Teachers often say the same thing; it's good to do but I often find I don't have enough time to do it and ask for help.

Eva: There used to be a garden day by the PCB.

Ben: yearly or monthly?

Eva: yearly.

Ben: that's not enough for a garden.

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Haley: Is a teacher able to facilitate or organize people coming?

Ben: So to summarize, you're hoping for a budget and maybe help, but possibly the PCB is the right group to ask?

Antonio: I'll find another teacher to overtake the project, but I'm very thankful for your support.

Pre-decided:

- monthly, second Weds general meeting, third Weds board meeting, fourth Weds ExCo meeting, then next month.
- Team-building day: April 28<sup>th</sup>

(nothing follows)

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