

Victor Elementary Teachers' Association

Representative Council and General Meeting

November 13, 2007

Nisqualli Building

(Pending Approval 11/13/07)

President Nancée Fine called the Rep. Council meeting to order at 4:20

Minutes and Reports

- Minutes for September, 2007 meeting were submitted by Penny Edmiston, Secretary. Corrections were made for the spelling of Nanceé Fine's name as well as to clarify that Karen Bossi did attend the WHO award ceremony last spring, yet received her trophy in October as the trophy was not available in time for the awards ceremony. Penny D. Smith moved to accept, Brenda Sanchez seconded, and the Minutes were approved with corrections.
- President's Report was submitted by Nancée Fine.
- Treasurer's Report was submitted by Linda Smith.
- Negotiation's Team Report was given orally by Penny D. Smith.
- Chamber of Commerce Report was submitted by Nancée Fine.
- County Coalition Report for October was submitted by Nancée Fine.
- High Desert & Inland Employee/Employer Trust Report was submitted by Nancée Fine.

Site Reports

- 6th Street Prep. was not represented; therefore that site gave no report. All other sites gave reports.
- **Concerns discussed within Site Reports:**
 - **Dissemination of Information** – Reps were asked how they disseminate information in a situation when no staff meeting is held. Responses included: e-mails, distribute information to grade level clusters, use the PA system for all-calls, availability of the Rep. before and after school, postings on VETA boards and other places of notice, place information in teachers' boxes, distribute flyers of information and meet with members one on one.
 - **Retirement and Observations** – Nanceé asked all Reps to make sure that their staffs are notified that if a member is considering retirement, and this is an observation year, the member will be exempt from an observation if they declare their intent to retire in a letter received by the district by February 1, 2008.
 - **Association Dues** – Why do certificated employees pay a much higher rate than classified employees? Nanceé explained that dues amounts would be detailed later in the meeting.
 - **Alternative Evaluations** – Teachers concerned over receiving late notifications about their options for observations or alternative evaluation projects. Tenured teachers who are not on an improvement plan were told by principal that they must do the observation and did not have the option of an alternative evaluation. Penny D. Smith commented that our agreement is currently worded in such a way that this could occur. The Negotiation Team will work on revising so this situation does not occur.
 - **Electronic Grade Book** – Is the district requiring teachers to use this, or is it optional? Nanceé researched this issue from our October meeting and assured Reps that the electronic grade book is optional. The district has no intention to require teachers to use it. Currently, only the individual teacher and Mark Staggs have access to the information

- entered. Mark needs to be able to access information as this program is new and may have “bugs to work out”.
- **E-Mail for VETA business** – A question was asked if it is permissible to use the district e-mail address for VETA business. Nanceé reminded Reps to please give an alternative e-mail address to use, however, it is acceptable to use district e-mail addresses as long as the material is not of a political nature.
 - **Increase Compensation** – The Negotiation team worked last year to provide the compensation, and raise that we already received for 2007 - 2008. Currently they will be negotiating for 2008 – 2009.
 - **VETA Tuesdays** – Tuesdays should be reserved for Association business. It was reported that new teachers have been asked to attend meetings and additional trainings on Tuesdays. Reps should encourage principals to hold meetings on other days.
 - **Speech Teachers** – Reps reported there is still a shortage of teachers and there are concerns that Speech teachers may have too large of a caseload. It was reported that the district is still in the process of resolving this issue and would be meeting this Friday with Special Ed. teachers. Another concern is whether speech screenings can be given to kindergarteners.
 - **Micromanagement of Principals** – A concern was shared that Site Based agreement may be overlooked if the principal has a style of micromanaging their site.
 - **Traffic Issues** – Student safety is still a concern when neighboring schools have the same start and end time.
 - **Teacher Accountability for Safety Drills** – Members are concerned because their SAM has not scheduled regular Safety Drills to prepare for emergencies. Nanceé stated that this was a site and district concern, but not in the realm of VETA.
 - **Vice Presidential Election** – Members reported not being notified in a timely manner between the time candidates were announced and the election held. Reps were given notice late October 24 of the candidates and election date, October 30. Elsbeth, Election Chair, noted that this was acceptable as this was a “Special Election”.

Old Business

- **Elections** – Elsbeth Roach, Election Chair, reported that with the help of Shelley Wong, the notifications were sent and the special election for Vice President was held on October 30. 27 members voted, which is a typical turn out for a special election. Beth Fehrs won the election. Nanceé clarified the responsibilities of Vice President: attend all meetings, keep membership records and accept additional responsibilities from the President. Beth’s position will expire February, 2009. Beth will be attending the Fall Leadership Conference in Las Vegas, November 17 – 18.
- **TAC** – Rep’s reported that the recent meeting included valuable information that will help in School to Career programs.
- **Friday E-mail** – Nanceé asked all Rep’s to please reply to each e-mail so she knows it was received. A simple “I got it” is sufficient.
- **NCLB** – Nanceé urged members to continue to make phone calls and send letters to local Representatives.
- **Social Security Offset** – Nanceé explained her use of the district-wide e-mail to send out this important notification. She has made a policy to **not** use the district wide e-mail for political

purposes, yet this Social Security issues effects many and was extremely important. She urged members to respond as their letters will become part of the Congressional Record.

- **VETA Expenditures for Presidential Release** – Nanceé clarified that VETA is currently contributing 25% of her salary and benefits, approximately \$26,000, for her new position with release time for Association business. The district pays the remaining costs while Nanceé serves in the capacity as a substitute teacher for our sites.
- **High Desert Service Center Council Charity** – The HDSCC would like to collect donations of toiletries for the women’s shelters in the high desert. Members are encouraged to contribute small hotel toiletries to this campaign. Additionally, save the pink tops from Yoplait yogurt to contribute to breast cancer fundraising. Nanceé has boxes outside her office for drop off.
- **Fall Leadership Conference** – Treasurer Linda Smith announced that members who are attending should have received e-mail confirmation about the room reservations. If not, see her as she also has information. If a member is unable to attend the conference for which they have registered, their \$100 deposit check will be cashed to defray the cost of registration. If an emergency occurs and a member can not attend, notify the hotel ASAP so our Association may receive a credit for the room charges, if possible. Members’ rooms are reserved for Friday, November 16. An optional welcome meeting will be held Friday night. The first session will begin Saturday morning. Members asked about carpooling and were encouraged to network to arrange this.
- **5th Grade Writing Test** – A concern was expressed that the 5th Grade writing test is to cover Science standards, yet will be scored for Writing standards. Additionally, teachers were confused why other district writing tests are given with release time for scoring, yet this test is not. Nanceé reported that she inquired about this and was told that teachers should grade their student’s tests as this would be a grade to include on the report cards and teachers would need this information. She encouraged teachers to discuss all of their concerns regarding this test at the next grade level council meeting.

New Business

- **High Desert & Inland Employee/Employer Trust** – Jason Riley from HDIET discussed our health insurance policy and benefits. Specifically, he mentioned:
 - **Best Doctors** - allows members and dependents to have a review of their medical diagnosis and treatment from a team of doctors and specialists to help determine the appropriate action.
 - **Healthy Roads** - a motivational program with financial incentives available to employees on the Blue Shield plan only. Employees are assigned a coach who will work together, via telephone, on a weekly basis to set and review healthy lifestyle goals.
 - **Cost containment** – members are advised to use the emergency room only in need of actual emergencies. He encourages members to utilize the Life Path Advisors (nurse calling line) by calling 1-866-543-3728, visiting doctors during office hours, and using approved urgent cares. Member Services can be reached at 1-800-642-6155.
 - **Contact Mr. Riley** – jason.riley@hubinternational.com
- **Donation** – VETA Executive Board followed past practice and donated \$100 on behalf of a member’s unique medical situation. The donation was made to Trisomy18.Org.

- **Health Insurance** –
 - **Referrals** are taking about one week to process. If time is an issue, be sure to call the member services number on your insurance card: 1-800-642-6155.
 - **Mail Order Prescriptions** may be encouraged by your doctor, but the only company covered by our insurance is Express Scripts. Applications are available at the District office, or on the Blue Shield web site.

- **Dues** – Currently members pay approximately: \$153 to NEA, \$621 to CTA, and \$145 to VETA. 2007 – 2008 is the last year that members are to pay CTA the \$60.00 assessment, used in the litigation against Governor Schwarzenegger. Beginning 2008 – 2009, however, CTA will raise their dues by \$8.00. This leaves a net balance of \$52.00 savings towards each member. At the same time, considerations need to be made to accommodate a likely NEA dues increase which has yet to be announced, as well as the CTA recommendation that each local Association charge 30% of CTA dues as their local dues. CTA requires this to be in compliance in need of crisis. An example of crisis would be if an Association could not reach agreement with negotiations and wanted to use chapter funds for advertisement costs. CTA would likely refund the money spent for a crisis situation back to the local Association, if that local Association was in compliance. Therefore, to meet this recommendation, VETA dues would be raised \$41.30. The resulting net savings to each member would be \$10.70 (minus the NEA dues increase, when announced). The decision to possibly raise VETA dues to meet CTA compliance needs to be made before 2008- 2009 school year, but finalizing by March 2008 is recommended. VETA Reps are authorized to approve dues increases, as well as take information to their sites for member discussion. This topic will be revisited and discussed at our next Rep. Council meeting. If all recommendations are met, members will not pay any additional money for dues, and may, in fact, have an approximate \$10.70 decrease in dues. Reps asked about how local dues are spent, and Elsbeth, former Treasurer, announced that most of our local dues typically go towards sending members to the Good Teacher Conference. Additional money is spent providing refreshments and meals at Rep. Council and Ex. Board meetings, VETA contribution toward President Release position, and miscellaneous expenses, listed within the monthly Treasurer's Report.

- **Good Teaching Conference** – Reps were asked to share with members that this conference will be held March 7 – 9 at the Marriott Hotel in Irvine. Reps should discuss with their members to see who would be interested in attending.

- **Human Rights** – Joe Hodges is our Representative who works with the Human Rights Committee. They ensure equality in the workplace regardless of race, creed, or sexual orientation. Additionally they sponsor the Martin Luther King, Jr. scholarship. Joe made a motion to attend the annual conference, if it is held in Southern California. Penny D. Smith seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Joe will use the CTA web site to download the registration forms and communicate with Treasurer, Linda Smith about costs.

- **Negotiation Report** – Penny D. Smith announced that the Negotiation Team and Executive Board recently met with CTA Representative, Dawn Murray, for intensive negotiation training and all involved felt it was very effective. Steve Dinise commented that the examples Dawn gave for district expenditures were completely accurate for VESD, verifying the ease of our Negotiation team to get accurate and timely data from our district office personnel. Penny announced a sub-committee has been formed to handle Special Education concerns. She will take given comments about Special Ed (consider additional compensation for the extra paperwork needed, consider a smaller student – teacher ratio) to the meeting. Additionally, the

Negotiations team will be meeting tomorrow to finalize the Sunshine list. This is a list of items that both parties give public notice to for items under consideration.

- **Substitute Issues** – Reps are concerned that we still have a shortage of substitute teachers and classes are often split. Additionally, the quality of substitute teachers varies considerably. Often many do not have strong classroom management skills, but are also reluctant to call the administration for help. Questions arise about how substitutes are distributed within the district. Nanceé informed the council that subs are given the opportunity to choose the sites and grade level that fit their expertise. She also informed the council that substitutes are offered paid training, however attending this training is optional. Our district has raised compensation to substitute teachers to \$120, however so did the High School and Adelanto districts, (\$130 and \$150 respectively). There is an additional need for roving subs, a particularly challenging assignment. A concern was raised because often roving subs are not scheduled a lunch or restroom break. Nanceé will continue to work on this issue. Another concern happened today when teachers attended an RTI training meeting that was cancelled at the last minute. The teachers were told that they could “go home” for the day. However, their colleagues were left at the sites, often in the situation of an overloaded classroom, due to the substitute shortage. Nanceé reaffirmed that it is the responsibility of teachers to return to their sites in a situation like this. For example, many teachers may be released early in the day from jury duty; again, teachers need to return to their sites when this occurs. If a training/meeting/duty lasts 6.5 hours, then teachers no longer have the obligation to return to the sites.
- **Raffle** – \$10.00 gift certificates were won by Elsbeth Roach, Penny D. Smith and Steve Dinise.
- **5 / 10 Minute Meeting Items:**
 - Membership dues
 - Toiletries Drive
 - Insurance issues
 - Good Teaching Conference
- **Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 6:15.