

Atlanta International School  
Parents Organization Meeting Minutes 5/15/2008

Chi Colberg, President 2007-08, opened the meeting at 8:35 AM. She acknowledged the past contributions of Claire Watkins, Secretary/Communication 2006-2007 and President Elect 2007-2008, and expressed how much she was missed by the AIS community.

Chi also gave a brief summary of the PO's accomplishments this school year:

- We have achieved financial stability.
- We effectively shared best practices.
- There was an increase in best practices.
- We contributed \$34K to the school.
- We unified the cultural clubs and achieved greater diversity within each club.

Chi introduced the new 2008-09 PO Board: Adrienne Poulard, President, Tom Schwartz, President-Elect, deLille Anthony, Communications/Secretary, and Claire Doyle, Treasurer. Adrienne then thanked the current PO Board and volunteers.

Carrie and Theone Rutledge, Communications/Secretary 2007-08, gave a presentation of the options the PO has for managing the PO budget and finances going forward. The presentation can be found at this link: [PO Funds Presentation May 2008](#)

### Financial Options

AIS has informed the PO that for accounting oversight reasons, we can no longer operate as a separate entity whereby we control our own disbursements and receipts while having AIS collect the PO dues for us during enrollment. The dues that AIS collects pay for hospitality events, parent education programs, room parent stipends, culture club support, cultural library stipends and administrative expenses. Revenue from PO events are earmarked as donations for specific programs that are supported by the specific clubs and groups who raised the funds, such as the art department, the sports program and the individual language tracks. AIS also covers all PO events under its own insurance policy. Options: We can have our own 501(c)3 or we can be absorbed into the AIS budget.

What does this mean?

- Absorbed: The school continues to collect the PO dues, guaranteeing a stream of income for the PO. However, the PO no longer controls its own expenses and is completely dependent on the school for all reimbursements and financial reporting.
- Separate 501(c)3: AIS no longer collects PO dues, which means that the PO is completely responsible for generating its own revenue. However, the PO maintains its independence and control over its expenses, reimbursements and financial reporting.

There was some discussion about have the parents mark a check box, allowing the PO to collect \$50 per family via the tuition payment process. Plus, the PO may have to provide its own insurance, but this is still unclear and is in the process of being worked out.

Detailed pros and cons were presented for each option, details which can be found in the presentation. In a nutshell, pursuing a 501(c)3 would require more money and volunteer time initially, but would enable to the PO to retain its autonomy. Being absorbed is the

simplest solution in that our finances would be turned over the AIS Business Office; however, the PO's prior experiences with working with the Business Office has led some parents to question if this option would not be more time consuming in the long run. Carrie explained that if the PO was absorbed by the school that the PO would not be allowed to pursue additional funding for the PO events if so desired. And if the PO loses its ability to raise its own money, the PO won't be able to fund anything that AIS doesn't approve. Additionally, AIS will not give tax receipts for any in-kind or cash donations to specific school events.

Dr. Brindley said that his preference was for the PO to become part of the AIS budget and that prior deficiencies in the Business Office had been corrected. He said that AIS and the PO should act as one community and work together to determine how to spend the PO budget. He did not feel that there would be a situation in which AIS and the PO would not be able to come to a consensus on how the PO money should be spent.

Carrie explained that because of the PO's prior history of working with the Business Office that the PO would be executing a service agreement that would specify 1) service levels and 2) that the PO has the authority to decide how PO money is spent. This agreement would outline the roles and responsibilities of both the PO and AIS so that there is common understanding of how business will be conducted between the two entities. If the financial arrangement does not go well, the specific commitments made by both sides in this agreement should help to identify and resolve the issues. If things continued to go poorly (which hopefully would not happen), this agreement would also provide a clear basis for considering other financial arrangements in the future.

Carrie talked about what the other private schools do: two private schools – Pace and Galloway -- have a 501(c)3, and Westminster's PO is part of the school's budget with a separate Arts and Sports Booster program that is not part of the school.

The parents were told that they would be able to vote on what financial model they would like the PO to pursue for the next school year. The PO Board explained that while the PO Bylaws do not require a vote on this, they wanted to act on the general consensus of the parents. The vote, therefore, is considered an "advisory" vote.

#### Parent Feedback

Most of the feedback to the presentation was in support of being absorbed by the school, but some was against:

#### Summary of comments from those who are in favor of absorption:

1. A 501(c)3 would require greater commitment from the parents to run the operation
2. There is a loss of funds if we do not have AIS collecting the funds.
3. Rather than fractionalizing, we should work with the school in a collaborative fashion.
4. Being absorbed by the school represents a shared vision.
5. It is unclear how the 501(c)3 would raise money to offset the loss in dues.
6. A 501(c)3 will put further demands on the already stressed volunteer organization.
7. There are greater risks with a 501(c)3.
8. Practically, we could not get the 501(c)3 organized by the coming school year, so what is the downside of letting ourselves to be absorbed by the school? We can always choose to become a 501(c)3 later.

### Summary of comments from those who are in favor of becoming a 501(c)3:

1. The actual PO dues and revenue from events sponsored by the school must be returned to the school at the end of the school year and will not be available to the PO the following year. Therefore, we cannot use money raised one year to offset the expenses of something we want to do the following year.
2. A 501(c)3 allows the PO to “store funds” to insure itself against weather risks associated with outdoor events like WorldFest. Revenue from WorldFest in one year may be needed to offset the loss incurred the next year due to bad weather.
3. If absorbed, AIS will be paying someone in the Business Office to handle the financial administrative affairs that the PO Treasurer has been doing voluntarily. How is this administrative task now funded? Will the PO be billed?
4. Based on the PO Board’s prior experience in working with AIS, unless the service agreement if adhered to, being absorbed will take more PO volunteer time than a 501(c)3.
5. Dr. Brindley is leaving next year; his successor may not have the same relationship with us. “Do we want to be the umbrella or stand under the umbrella?”
6. Initially setting up the 501(c)3 will take more work but on an on-going basis a 501(c)3 will be easier to maintain. Being absorbed also requires a great deal of administrative changes and new reporting mechanisms.

### PO vs. PVA

There was some discussion over who we wanted to be: A Parent Organization (PO) or a Parent Volunteer Association (PVA). We have been a PO, but with absorption into AIS we move closer to being a PVA.

What’s the difference?

PO: A Parent Organization acts as a liaison between parents and school. The PO talks with parents and gathers their feedback and provides information to the school. The PO also provides volunteers to support the school.

PVA: A Parent Volunteer Association focus on volunteer activities alone. It does not act as a sounding board for parents.

### PO Board Feedback

The PO Board was asked their opinion regarding the two options. Here are their responses:

- Carrie explained that she has never been a Treasurer of a PO that was a part of the school. However, in her experience, she has seen fund-raising become the goal of a PO, so being able to raise one’s own money is not always a good thing. Since the 501(c)3 would require money and resources we don’t currently have, she suggested that we try the absorption model with clear cut guidelines with what we will do if things don’t happen as expected. One parent suggested that we set a goal for how long we will give this option a try.
- Tom said that there was great resistance from the GPA to be absorbed by the PO, but they did, and the Deutschvergnügen just had its best Christmas Market ever.
- Chi said she believed in the parents and felt that the parents could make a meaningful contribution to the school regardless of the structure.

- deLille said that parents have different philosophies on how they like to run their affairs – some want to be self-governing and some prefer to take direction from others – however, all are caring and committed parents. Desiring to retain autonomy does not mean one is promoting fractionalization. Philosophically, she supports a 501(c)3, but recognizes that the absorption model is the most logistically efficient course of action to take at this time.
- Ginger Gidden, Treasurer 2007-08, said that there is a possible risk of parents being unhappy with the decisions that are made under each model.

#### Business Office Relationship History

A parent asked if the PO would have to work with the same person in the Business Office that we did last year, and Ginger said “yes”. Theone explained it took four and a half months to get our PO dues money last year, and that the school had withheld it from the PO because the school wanted to talk about folding the PO into the AIS budget and the PO was not ready to do that. Tom explained that he felt that the Business Office was reorganizing, and therefore, was unable to provide the funds. Ginger explained that in order to get the reimbursement for WorldFest, she had to give an ultimatum to the Business Office to not pay CASE.

Theone explained that since they had so many difficulties dealing with the school last year, the PO would be seeking a service level agreement that would specify 1) reporting 2) timely distributions 3) the PO’s right to manage the details of how they spend their money, and 4) that the PO will get the money remaining in the budget at the end of next year if the PO determines at that time to not remain a part of the school. Carrie said that before she entered into any binding arrangement with the school, she would insist that a detailed agreement be in place so that we would have a specific course of action to pursue should things not go as promised.

One parent wanted to know why we have had issues with the Business Office. Tom acknowledged that the Business Office had new people last year, and commented on how the Business Office has been much more cooperative in working with the PO ever since they realized that we might pursue a 501c3.

Ginger stressed that many details about being absorbed have not been made totally clear – we may be assessed a fee from the school to manage the PO finances. Ginger estimated that we would have \$15K - \$20K left in our budget at year end, which is money that the PO cannot spend or decide how to spend if we are absorbed by the school. If we are not absorbed, we could determine what we wanted to do with that money.

There was a question as to how the “agency checking account” would work, and it was explained that this is basically an accounting mechanism to earmark certain funds for certain clubs or committees. Having an agency checking account is not something that is separate from the AIS budget.

#### The Vote

The vote was taken by pen and paper. 39 voted in favor of being absorbed; 10 voted in favor of the 501(c)3.

#### Adjournment

Chi adjourned the meeting at 11 AM.

Submitted by  
deLille Anthony

Parents Organization Secretary  
2008-2009