

Saint Thomas the Apostle Board of Education Minutes from the Regular Meeting of the Board on Thursday, April 12, 2018

The meeting began at 6:00 p.m. and concluded at 7:55 p.m.

Board Packets submitted to members on: April 11, 2018.

Meeting Reminder e-mails on: March 27, 2018 and April 9, 2018

Reminder about Diocesan School Board Summit: March 30, 2018

Board Homework: Make recommendations for potential new Directors for the Board and encourage prospects to attend the May 29th informational session and reception.

Complete both annual diocesan surveys: the Catholic School Board Assessment AND the Office of Catholic Schools Assessment, if you have not already done so.

Read the Diocesan Annual Summary, if you have not already done so. It was sent on March 13, 2018.

CALENDAR ITEMS

Diocesan School Board Summit: Thursday, April 26th, at 6:30 pm.

Next Board Meeting: Tuesday, May 29, 2018 at 6 pm

Meeting Agenda

- I. **Opening Prayer-** Suzi Furtwangler
- II. **Concerns of Visitors-** John Schuring
Several questions and concerns were to the Board's attention by various Directors.
 - a. The Board was asked to consider whether the "Sports Eligibility Policy" and associated "Sports Eligibility Contract" as outlined in the Parent Student Handbook should be revised to become the "Extracurricular Activity Eligibility Policy and Contract". Additionally, clarification of the policy in the Handbook was requested. The Board offered generalized and informal agreement that the proposed changes should be adopted for next year.
 - b. Additionally, clarification and/or a written policy were concerning an absent student's eligibility to attend/participate extracurricular events the day of the absence (and possibly over the weekend for a Friday absence.) There was general agreement that if a student is absent that participation in extracurricular events should be restricted (extenuating circumstances were not discussed- like absences for testing, etc.)and that such a policy should be clearly written and/or communicated.
 - c. The Board was asked if the school tracks and enforces the mandatory Virtus training requirements before permitting teachers, chaperones, and volunteers to attend field trips and/or volunteer in the school. Teachers receive extensive training. The school office tracks chaperone and volunteer eligibility. Chaperones and volunteers currently need to either have completed or have signed up for an upcoming Virtus training in order to participate.
 - d. Concerns about the clarity and enforcement of the healthy snack and allergen policy were raised, particularly with respect to school provided treats such as candy handed out by the school office, ESS, and at events like celebrating Pi Day in class with pie, popsicles during for hot weather, etc. The policy was defended as: promoting healthy eating for better attention/focus and overall health, creating inclusion for children whose food allergens previously repeatedly excluded them from the celebratory treats, limiting economic discrimination (i.e., perhaps not all families can afford

giant Costco cupcakes. However, it was noted that an unintended consequence maybe increasing expenses as families feel pressured to provide treat bags or pressure to afford expensive lasting books instead of homemade food), and as a potentially lifesaving measure. Additionally, the confusion as to whether the policy banned all food treats or whether candy or special treat days were still permitted in special circumstances revealed the need to clarify and refine the policy for better understanding, compliance, and enforcement.

e. The Board was asked whether there was existing school policy regarding whether students are allowed to have cell phones on field trips, particularly on trips outside the metro area. The answer was a resounding “No, cell phones are not permitted. ” Students will not be allowed phones or similar devices on field trips because: a) field trips are extensions of the school day and phones are not permitted at school during the school day, b) students do not need phones because school faculty and staff and the adult chaperones will have phones and/or alternative means of communication available, and c) the potential for abuse of the phone and the access it could provide to distracting and/or inappropriate materials is too high. A suggestion was made to clearly include this prohibition of cell phones during field trips with the rest of the other cell phone policy in the Parent/Student Handbook.

f. A suggestion was made to reduce congestion in the Preschool and Kindergarten hallways by removing or relocating the bulletin boards and increasing the spacing between the hooks so that the students, parents, and in many cases accompanying younger siblings are not creating blocked hallways. This recommendation was favorably received.

III. **Approval of Consent Agenda Items-** John Schuring

a. The minutes from the prior meeting were unanimously approved without amendment.

IV. **Administrator’s Report-** Suzi Furtwangler

a. **Enrollment** is consistent with the Board’s prior projections. Tours of prospective families are continuing.

b. A **new GRPS Shared Time Middle School Spanish teacher** began this week. So far the students appear to like her. The new teacher showed early initiative by reaching out to Catholic Central to see what she can do to better align the curriculum with the high school’s curriculum and expectations.

c. The administration has decided that the **middle school students will not be participating in the offer to attend Catholic Central for Band and Music** as part of a diocese wide group next year. Saint Thomas will try to create its own alternative for music, band, and choral singing. The administration indicated there too many unanswered questions and other uncertainties about the program at the high school and proposed taking a “wait and watch” approach for one year.

d. **Class configurations** for the 2018-2019 school year will be set next Monday. There are thirteen possible classrooms.

e. The **Holland Home** Committee has decided that Saint Thomas has no use for any of the Holland buildings currently on offer, and that its only interests lie in the property/land itself- particularly the parking lot adjacent to the preschool playground and/or the more remote prospect of being able to own/control Grace Street and property up to Grace Street. The committee thinks that the lead buyer has not fairly allocated the proposed cost of the Holland Home parcel. The current proposal would divide cost evenly based on percentage of property acquired in a 3/5 to 2/5 division. The committee would prefer an allocation that takes into consideration that the 2/3rds on offer to Saint Thomas contains the oldest buildings- ones that have no utility and that that would need to be removed. Additionally, the currently plans would limit Saint Thomas to the less commercially desirable portion of the property that lacks

Fulton Street frontage and therefore may be overvalued at the current price suggestion. Accordingly, the Holland Home committee and the parish Finance Council are concerned about the taking on the amount of proposed expense for the least commercially desirable portion of the Holland Home parcel. This reluctance is amplified in light of the Bishop's recent proposal to suspend local parish campaigns in favor of a possible larger Diocesan-wide Development campaign.

Talks continue with the potential interested lead purchaser and some other potential partners the lead purchaser has identified- which may reduce the cost and the amount of land acquired more to the Saint Thomas' economic comfort level.

The process is further complicated by Holland Home unwittingly sending contradictory messages such as offering to extend a possible payment window from 3 to 5 years, yet simultaneously stating that it is actively considering redeveloping the property for its own use and that the land may not be available after all.

The Holland Home committee remains optimistic that the school will be able to acquire the parking lot adjacent to the preschool playground.

V. **Board Deliberations-** John Schuring/ Suzi Furtwangler

a. **Budget Deliberations-** Matt Maczka

Matt Maczka reviewed the changes to the finalized budget for the 2018-2019 school year. Matt noted that the enrollment number had been right sized upwards to reflect the strong enrollment. Matt indicated that the budget included an unavoidable 4.7% increase in health care coverage and allowed for a 3% salary increase for school employees. Matt also indicated that the budget was dedicated to using dedicated funds like those from the 80's Prom, Auction, allocations from the parish capital campaign, and Angel Tuition first to free up less restricted funds for other budgetary needs. Matt detailed the expense associated with the small free and reduced lunch program which was over budget this year (projected expense: \$4,500, actual expense \$6,000) due to additional families qualifying for this assistance. Saint Thomas moved away from the federally funded program because the time and cost associated with the federal filing requirements exceeded the benefit received due to the relatively small number of students who qualify for the aid. Proposals to fund this budgetary need going forward included: making the need know to the larger school community to generate donations, a fundraising 5K race dubbed "feeding the masses" (pun intended) , seeing if Angel Tuition could be applied to these school related expenses under the premise that the meals are a necessary expense to make participation in education at Saint Thomas possible, and seeing if families could be given the option to donate to free and reduced lunches when they place their own hot lunch order on Boonli. The Board approved the budget and recommended it to the Finance Council for approval.

b. **Exit Interview Policy Request-** Jenni Little

Jenni Little proposed that the Board should institute an exit interview policy with the primary goal of affirming to the departing family that they were valued at Saint Thomas with a secondary goal of gaining insights/assessments of the school's strengths and weaknesses from departing families. Exit interviews are standard policy at most other schools. Discussion on the topic of who should conduct the interviews revealed a preference for the Chair of the Board to conduct the interview. Having just one Board member in charge creates uniformity in approach. Having the Chair do the work was thought to affirm the value of the departing family and to create a sense that the Chair would be a discrete and reliable person to speak to regarding the assessments. Jenni circulated a list of seven possible questions she had found during her research on exit interviews and the Board generally affirmed them as valid and useful. During the discussion it was agreed that these exit interviews would be conducted whenever a family

left the school for any reason, including when a last or only child of a family graduated. If an individual student from a family left (for a reason other than graduation), the interview should also be conducted. Interviews as each child graduated were viewed as onerous and overly repetitive. It was proposed that since the Monica Morin conducts similar interviews for departing parishioners, that any departing school family would possibly be interviewed by Monica to avoid frustration at being contacted twice and to reduce work for the Board Chair. The bulk of the interviews would be at the end of the year or as the need arose. Results of the interviews would be compiled and shared with the Board and Administration. Jenni Little offered to write the policy/ procedure for the exit interviews.

VI. Committees and Organizations: Reports and Action Items

a. Reminders from the Board Chair- John Schuring

Due to term limits, additional Board Directors for next year are needed. Please think of possible candidates, especially those with potentially useful skill sets and encourage them to attend the social and informational evening being planned.

b. Outreach & Development Committee- Betsy Edgerton

1) Taste of Saint Thomas will be changing to a curriculum night. Part of the reason for the change is the shift away from multiple lunch vendors to a single vendor. Part of the evening could include a 5k race dubbed "Feeding the Masses" with all the funds from the race being donated to a "free and reduced lunch fund" to meet the growing expense that the school's budget is currently funding.

2) Enrollment is strong. Five prospective families will be touring in the next two weeks. In addition to new students, Saint Thomas has gained transfer students from Forest Hills East, IHM and St. Paul's. The Preschool and Kindergarten classes had only 2 remaining seats.

3) The need for a process to add new Directors to the Board was discussed with an emphasis placed on a) having a more regular process and policy, b) identifying useful skills sets, c) increasing the diversity and numbers on the Board by broadening the call to serve through the Pieces, Bulletin and word of mouth, and d) increasing awareness of the desire for diversity of Directors in terms of: age of Directors, economics, race, as well as physical and cognitive abilities, and the mix of parents/ parishioners/ community members. Erin Schmuker proposed an annual recruiting event at which the Board will host prospective Directors and Committee members to explain what the Board does as well as the duties and expectations of its Directors and Committees. Erin Schmuker and Betsy Edgerton are working together to host the event before the end of the year.

c. Mission Effectiveness- Jessica Poelma

Saint Mary's in Spring Lake has contacted the Mission Effectiveness Committee requesting guidance to copy Saint Thomas' success with the Virtues program and our implementation of Theology of the Body.

d. Curriculum Committee- Jenni Little

The Committee made supportive statements regarding the new GRPS Spanish teacher and improvements to the middle school Spanish curriculum. The Committee is working to improve the Fine Arts curriculum/options for the middle school. The Logo Robotics program has been ordered. The Committee requested targets and direction towards providing more extracurricular clubs next year. One of the anticipated challenges will be securing volunteers. Using a "Volunteers in Partnership" (VIP) method to get leadership for the proposed clubs was considered.

e. Finance Committee- Matt Maczka

The Committee relied upon its presentation during Board deliberations.

f. **Policy & Planning Committee** - Christi Blum

The Committee relied upon its written report.

g. **Building & Grounds Committee** - Tracy Bandlow

The Committee relied upon the earlier report about Holland Home made during the Administrator's briefing. In response to the administrator's request, Tracy Bandlow will work with the maintenance department to secure cost estimates/quotations and recommendations for automated water fountains and report the findings to the administrator and the Auction committee. The Boosters recently purchased one of these fountains for the gym and some of the sought for information should be readily available. Also, the committee agreed to ask the Auction committee if the projected funds for the automated water fountain could be made available in advance of the auction preferably at the start of the new fiscal year on July 1. The rationale for the request is since there is little doubt that the fund for the automated fountains will be raised at Auction, it would be preferable to install the new drinking fountains over the summer rather than during the school year when Auction concludes.

h. **Holland Home**- John Schuring

The Committee relied upon the earlier report made during the Administrator's briefing.

i. **Fundraising/ Development**- John Schuring

Nothing additional to report.

j. **Finance Council**- Nancy Kennedy

The Finance Council is adding two fiscal development minded Board members: Marcy Hillary and Mark Kennedy. The representative also spoke in passing about the upcoming Diocesan Development Campaign and the anticipated limitations on parish level fundraising. The Finance Council is working on reconciling the operating budget and the capital campaign funds. Additionally, the Finance Council is looking into proactively creating policy to safely handle and track funds generated during athletic events.

k. **Education Foundation**- Judi Serba

The March Madness fundraising effort raised \$1,023. The Foundation had two matching fund donors, and so effectively raised \$3,079 to start a scholarship in Fr. Jim Chelich's honor.

l. **Boosters**- Amy Bocian-

The representative requested to be excused from the meeting due to other obligations.

m. **Home and School**- Amy Ziemer-

The representative requested to be excused from the meeting due to other obligations.

VII. **Closing Prayer**- Suzi Furtwangler

ATTENDANCE:

Voting Members

President, Board Effectiveness Committee chair, John Schuring: Present
Vice President, Finance Committee chair, Matt Maczka: Present
Secretary, Policy & Planning Committee, Christi Blum: Present
Development & Outreach co-chair, Bryan Rellinger: Present
Development & Outreach co-chair, George Sharpe: Excused
Mission Effectiveness chair, Jessica Poelma: Present
Curriculum Committee chair, Jenni Little: Present
Curriculum Committee, Stacy Slomski: Excused
Policy & Planning Committee, Joanne Swan Jones: Excused
Building and Grounds Committee chair, Tracy Bandlow: Present
Fiscal Charitable Giving Committee, Erin Schmuker: Excused
Finance Committee, James Leonard: Present
Technology Committee, Chuck Rushmore: Present

Non-Voting Ex Officio Members and/or guests

Additional Attendees: None
Principal, Suzi Furtwangler: Present
Development & Outreach Dir., Betsy Edgerton: Present
Home & School President, Amy Ziemer: Excused
Co-coordinator of Finance, Marie Miller: Absent
Parish Finance Council Chair, Nancy Kennedy: Present
Pastor, Fr. Jim Chelich: Excused
Assistant Principal,
Education Foundation Pres., Judi Serba: Present
Boosters President, Amy Bocian: Excused
Dir. Religious Formation, Patti Reynolds: Absent

Proposed Schedule of Topics for the 2017- 2018 Year

August 30 -Retreat
September 14 -Facilities planning and annual goal setting
October 18(W) -Vote on Adoption of Strategic Plan
November 9 -Diocesan Board Training/ Board Summit at Cathedral Square
December 14(W) -Implications of Holland Home Move discussion
January 11 -Visit from the Superintendent of Catholic Schools
February 8 -Setting the tuition rate for the 2018-2019 school year
- Initial 2018-2019 Budget Discussions
- Ongoing Holland Home Property Discussion
-Continuing Strategic Planning
March 1 - 2018-2019 Budget Planning
- Bullying Policy
- Educational Support Services Overview
April 12 - Budget Finalization
May 29 - Prospective Directors Informational Session
June 19 -Elections and Year-end Wrap Up