

Saint Thomas the Apostle Board of Education Minutes from the Regular Meeting of the Board, on Wednesday, December 13, 2017

The meeting began at 6 p.m. and concluded at approximately 8:16 p.m.

Several members attended by phone due to the snow storm.

Board Packets submitted to members on: December 8, 2017

11/26/17- from John Schuring requesting vote re proposed new Board member, Chuck Rushmore

11/27/17- from Erin Schmuker with a recap of the Strategic Planning special meeting on November 14, 2017. Responses and suggestions in response to the Recap sent on 11/19, 12/2, and 12/7.

11/28/17- from John Schuring forwarding (at the time) confidential communication from the Diocese announcing new school, St. Robert's School in Ada.

11/30/17 and 12/5/17- Reminder for December 13th Meeting and call for materials

12/13/17- Call in number provided for those unable to attend meeting due to snow.

HOMEWORK/TO DO LIST: Submit written questions to Suzi Furtwangler about the Inclusion/Resource Programs for Missy Meighan to answer when she attends the January Board meeting.

CALENDAR ITEMS:

School Events: Christmas Vacation from December 22, 2017 to January 3, 2018

Next Board Meeting: Thursday, January 11, 2018 at 6 pm

Meeting Agenda

- I. **Opening Prayer-** Suzi Furtwangler
- II. **Visitor Communications-**
 - a. As a courtesy to the Board, Judi Serba reported on the status of applications for Education Foundation grants. The Foundation remains opposed to funding items that should be part of the annual and/or recurrent school budget, although it may step in with aid in cases of true emergencies. So far two grants have been approved: one for Holly Lake and the other for the initial spring musical, Peter Pan. Brian Cooper, the Technology Coordinator, has submitted two separate applications: one for 35 Chrome Books (\$9,000) and the other for an interactive light board display monitor (\$3,000). One request for a white board for Spanish instruction was rejected. (Despite discussion of a possible application for \$500 for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, no other applications have been submitted to the Foundation.) The Foundation will send a reminder that the application window for the grants will be closing soon. Discussion segued into a description of the school's technology needs and uses of the proposed items, how the items would affect the Technology curriculum and/or possible robotics curricular offerings and extracurricular programs. Mention was made of the need to replace the server- an expensive need that is transitioning from a recommended expense into one that will soon become an urgent priority. Discussion further touched upon whether the technology expenses would/should be covered by the annual school budget, and/or capital campaign, (and what needs to be done to get capital monies released for the expenditure) and/or the Auction Twist/ Fund-A-Need tables. (The Auction committee turned down some of the technology proposals forwarded by the Board due to the price exceeding the targeted range for the Tables.) **The discussion acknowledged the previous recommendation to develop a general Wish List of school**

needs/ wants that could be referenced: for ideas to be included capital campaigns, for auction tables topics, as the beneficiary of other potential fundraisers, for enticing donations, and/or for ways to use unexpected windfalls and/or budget surpluses.

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

a. The minutes from the October 18, 2017 regular meeting and the special meetings on November 6, 2017 and November 14, 2017 were motioned, seconded, and approved without amendment.

IV. **Principal's Report-** Suzi Furtwangler

a. **MAP testing-** Although parts of this were discussed at a later point in the meeting, all discussions on this topic are included here for coherence. The Administration proposed retaking the reading portions MAP tests in January to see if the growth scores from the fall testing were an aberration and/or to show some other source of inaccuracy in the scores. Possible rationales for the fall scores included: the change in venue (on chrome books in classrooms instead of in the lab on desktops) leading to perhaps a too relaxed testing atmosphere, students not taking the testing seriously, a change in test proctors, and taking the reading portion earlier than normal in the testing schedule therefore creating a short period of instruction. (Of note, it is possible to obtain an adjusted MAP score from NWEA for variances in the amount of instructional time at the period when the testing was administered). Discussion raised both the economic cost of re-administering the reading portion test as well as the cost in instruction time. {This portion of the test takes 60-90 minutes, but reportedly causes widespread disruptions due to how to schedule both proctoring and the availability of the technology (laptops in the lab time and Chrome books) to administer it}.

The Board learned that the faculty has attempted both: to shore up instruction and utilize the test's "drill down" feature to determine if there was a commonly held area of weakness requiring systemic intervention, but learned of diverse individual weaknesses instead. The Administration was informed that some schools had improved scores by dropping student in their Resource/Inclusion programs (i.e. students with IEPs/ 504 plans, etc.) from the MAP testing pool. (From other discussions on the Inclusion/ Resource program, the Saint Thomas Resource program reportedly currently includes approximately 60 students or about 17% of the student population $60/352= 17\%$). The Administration was advised NOT to retest in January (because it could increase student anxiety, could create a false sense of crisis, and not valid set of comparison scores would be available as the school does not typically test in Winter and growth would be anticipated since the point of the fall testing). The Administration was advised to allow the shored up instruction time to work and to continue with the normal spring testing schedule (typically in May.)

b. **Lego Robotics-** Lego Robotics will begin one way or the other. Funding remains an issue. The Administration also proposed including Lego or a similar robotics program as an integrated part of the 6th grade curriculum next year.

c. **Holland Home-** The residents are moving out more quickly than anticipated and therefore the departure date and availability of the property for sale is also advancing. Detailed discussion on this was deferred to later in the meeting.

d. **Ada/ St. Robert School-** The Diocese will be announcing that it will act upon the results of the Feasibility Study and open a new Catholic grade school in Ada. The new school, although located at and named St. Robert, will in fact be an independent (i.e., not parish supported) school. Because of the independent nature of the new school, families who are parishioners at St. Robert have a choice of schools. Those families will

still qualify for parishioner support if their students enroll at Saint Thomas and will not be compelled to switch enrollment to St. Robert to receive this aid. A recommendation was made to communicate with school families about the new school and specifically advise those families who currently qualify for the parishioner rate of tuition (by belonging to a parish, like St. Robert, without its own parish owned Catholic school) will continue to receive this financial support- i.e. nothing changes. Father Jim's opposition to communication about the new school was conveyed. (Fr. Jim feels that communicating about the new school is the job of the Diocese, not Saint Thomas. He has insisted upon banning official mention of the new school by Saint Thomas deeming the mention to constitute unnecessary free advertising for the new school.)

e. **Inclusion Report-** Missy Meighan will come to a future Board meeting to discuss needed resources for the future of the Inclusion Program to be considered while the Board continues its implementation of the Strategic Plan. Missy Meighan is excited to come, but has requested the Board submit its questions in advance to Suzi Furtwangler so that she can better prepare and present the answers at the meeting.

V. **Committee Reports:**

a. **Outreach & Development Committee-** Betsy Edgerton

1. In light of the new St. Robert School, affirmative greeting cards being are sent via US Mail over Christmas to school families who are parishioners at St. Robert and to Lowell families to gently remind them of Saint Thomas' appreciation of their choice to enroll their students at Saint Thomas.

2. An affirmative marketing campaign on Facebook (in light of the new school) will begin over Christmas. It will target zip codes that could be interested in the St. Robert School and utilize black and white photos of students with inspirational phrases such as, "Created in HIS image" to accompany a longer message in the comment section promoting Saint Thomas': Mission, Vision, Legacy, Promises, 92 year history and Unique Programming.

3. The Lap Time outreach at St. Robert for the Mom's Groups will be suspended until a new, neutral location is secured.

4. A Lenten conversation with both Mr. and Mrs. Alfaro is being considered due to the success of Mrs. Alfaro's presentation at Advent by Candlelight.

b. **Mission Effectiveness-** Betsy Edgerton on behalf of Jessica Poelma

1. Technology classes are now starting with a prayer.

2. Catholic Schools Week (CSW) Plans

a. In a similar line to the new Facebook campaign every student has had a black and white photo taken by Julie Balgavy and Katie Morrow (parent professional photographers who have volunteered their time). The photos will have one of about 6 six inspirational messages, like "Created with a plan and a purpose" and be displayed during CSW and then sent home.

b. Rosaries will be handed out during CSW to encourage praying the rosary as a family.

c. Adoration remains successful and beautiful.

c. **Curriculum Committee-** Jenni Little

1. A short school survey paralleling the recent parish survey was proposed. The proposed survey will be sent to the Board for approval in the first week of January and then to school families the following week. Kristy Irwin has offered to tally the results. A recommendation was made to consider including a year over year metric to the survey to measure parent satisfaction. Discussion considered whether the survey was

needed as the Diocese also sends a survey in the spring. As this school survey would be shorter than the Diocesan survey and open ended to allow for comments, the additional survey was recommended.

d. **Finance Committee-** Matt Maczka

1. **2018-2019 Tuition rate-** A proposal for the 2018-2019 Tuition rates will need to be approved at the January Board meeting. The anticipated proposal is for either a 3% to 3.5% increase. Matt reminded the Board that a .5% increase in the tuition rate only generates about \$5,000 total in additional revenues, thus the 3.5% increase would only generate about \$35,000 total in new revenue. This is the same rate of increase as was approved last year (3.5%) and is needed to fund a parallel rate of increase in faculty salaries and for increased technology expenses. The 2018-2019 Budget will be developed and approved at future meetings, but the budget is anticipated to be approximately \$1.4 million and to rely heavily upon the parish offertory collection.

2. The Diocesan Breakout session on Finance was very helpful as beneficial sharing is occurring on the Diocesan Finance group discussion board.

3. **Consideration of participation fees for extracurricular offerings-**

Louis Bandlow and Matt Maczka both spoke during this portion of the meeting. A question initially arose concerning the increased fees being charged by GRACEAC and how to meet these budgetary expenses. The concern over how to best fund sports participation has been extrapolated to consider fair funding of other extracurricular offerings like band, the developing Lego Robotics club, and the spring musical. A side discussion on the confidentiality of Board deliberations was raised at this point.

The GRACEAC sports fees are based upon the total enrollment of each Catholic school (not on the number of athletes per school) participating in GRACEAC sports. Concerns about the operation and fairness of GRACEAC were raised due to: 1) increasing school participation fees and yet having a \$20,000 year end budget surplus, 2) appearing to favor the Christian school participants economically by not charging them the participation fees, as well as 3) allowing Christian to further profit by scheduling more games at the Christian schools' facilities and additionally permitting the Christian schools to keep the gate and concession monies raised from/during GRACEAC games.

One possible way to meet the increased GRACEAC fees and growing extracurricular costs is to consider implementing a participation fee. An informal survey of the 19 Catholic schools who participate in GRACEAC was attempted with 16 responses received. (No mention was made of how many Christian schools participate and whether they charge sports fees despite not being assessed GRACEAC fees.) Currently, 9 schools, including Saint Thomas do not charge students to participate in GRACEAC sports. Of the 5 schools that charge fees, the top fees at Divine Providence where families are charged \$120 per sport, per student. Another aspect of a participation fees is the fact that Saint Thomas parishioners who attend other schools often play on the Saint Thomas teams free of charge.

An alternative proposal to the participation fee inquired whether increasing Booster fundraising, expanding Booster to include other extracurricular offerings, or by creating parallel funding mechanisms like Boosters for the other extracurricular offerings.

4. **Funding Technology Expenses-** Examining what an appropriate annual funding level would be and considering both how and whether to move technology

expenses from being a capital campaign item into operational expenses/the annual budget.

5. **Funding Additional Resources-** A need to find monies apart from tuition to fund resources such as additional teacher and programming was raised.

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

No substantive additions made to the written report.

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

Deferred to the Board-wide discussion on Holland Home. Nothing additional was reported.

g. **Holland Home-** John Schuring

Holland Home would like to work with Saint Thomas. However, Saint Thomas' proposal for the Fulton property needs to be "put on the table" if Saint Thomas is serious in its interest in the property. Holland Home residents are transferring move to other Holland Home facilities faster than anticipated, increasing the urgency identify and transfer the property to the next user/owner. Current proposals being considering by Holland Home include: selling a portion of the property Care Resources, and/or offering at least some of the property to another entity on a two year lease. Mike Lown, the Diocesan CFO, has been participating in the discussions informing Bishop Walkowiak on the discussion status. A Saint Thomas team is meeting weekly and conducting ongoing meetings with Holland Home leadership.

Questions being considered are:

1) How much money will be needed and how is it to be raised? (Estimates to acquire the whole 5.5 acre parcel are estimated in the \$6.5 million range and do not include the costs of possible renovation (figures unknown) or of demolition, estimated to be \$750,000.)

2) Are a land contract, other payments over time, or a reverse offer viable financial possibilities?

3) Does Saint Thomas want the whole parcel and if so, what will it do with such a large parcel of land? If the whole parcel is taken, what would an innovative corner full of partnerships look like?

4) Do other entities want to partner with Saint Thomas? Who are they? Would a partnership with a land developer work?

5) If the whole parcel is not wanted, what portions are most desirable to Saint Thomas? How likely is it to meet those wants with the wants of the other players involved?

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

The discussions about the Holland Home move and opportunity to consider acquiring the property (as well as other recent discussions on how to fund curricular and extracurricular growth) emphasize the school's need to develop its own school wide fund raising and development program. Attempts are being made to get it started, but identification of candidates to help is critical.

VI. **Board Deliberations and Committee Action Items-** John Schuring/ Suzi Furtwangler

a. **Strategic Planning-** Erin Schmuker

Strategic Planning deferred due to time constraints and weather.

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, by phone
Development & Outreach co-chair, Bryan Rellinger: Present
Development & Outreach co-chair, George Sharpe: Present
Fiscal Development Committee, Erin Schmuker: Present
Mission Effectiveness chair, Jessica Poelma: Excused
Curriculum Committee chair, Jenni Little: Present, by phone
Curriculum Committee, Stacy Slomski:
Policy & Planning Committee, Joanne Swan Jones: Present
Building and Grounds Committee chair, Tracy Bandlow: Present
Finance Committee, James Leonard: Present
, Chuck Rushmore: Present, by phone

Non-Voting Ex Officio Members and/or guests:

Additional Attendees: Louis Bandlow	Pastor, Fr. Jim Chelich: Excused
Principal, Suzi Furtwangler: Present	Assistant Principal, Liz Peters: Present
Development & Outreach Dir., Betsy Edgerton: Present	Education Foundation Pres., Judi Serba: Present
Home & School President, Amy Ziemer: Excused	Boosters President, Amy Bocian : Excused
Co-coordinator of Finance, Marie Miller: Absent	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
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March 1	-
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April 12	-
May 10	-
June 14	-Year-end wrap up