

School Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
December 14, 2011, 6:30 p.m.
Room 207

1. Call to Order and Prayer – Lauren Beckmann

Members in attendance: Laura Maly, Lisa Lesjak, Peter Christenson, Lauren Beckmann, Jane Connell, Liz Haas, Nancy Knight, Trish Ognar, Karen Hunt, Marcia Velde, and Catherine Mercuri

Members absent: Fr. Dennis Dirkx, Fr. Kevin McManaman, Michele Weinschrott, and Dan Davis

2. Discussion Item – Budget

Catherine reported on her meeting with the Parish Finance Committee from the previous evening. A lengthy discussion ensued.

Health insurance costs continue to be a concern for the school's budget. Catherine attended a workshop put on by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee about this topic. The health insurance plan used to be a full premium system, now it is a self-funded system. This means that the premiums collected by the members in the insurance pool are used to pay for the claims submitted by those same members. There are approximately 1,300 people throughout the Archdiocese that are part of this pool. Big claims that exceed \$1,000,000 are submitted for reinsurance. The insurance premiums increased by 25% last year. It was felt that the original quote provided to the Archdiocese was artificially low to encourage participation and now penalties are in place for parishes that want to leave the plan. The penalty for St. Robert to leave the plan is the equivalent of two months of premiums or about \$40,000.

Catherine suggested that the Parish obtain some other bids just to use for comparison. The Parish Finance Committee felt that another vendor could simply submit a low bid to get your business and then drastically increase the rates in the following years, thus no vote was called for.

The downside to remaining in the Archdiocese's plan is that you lose control of the components of the plan. Everyone has the same plan and you can't make adjustments, like providing a discount for participation in a wellness program, as an example. Also, everyone in the pool is very similar because it is made up of parish employees throughout the Archdiocese.

The Parish Finance Committee thought we should expect the health insurance premiums to rise at least 10% for next year and recommended that we budget for a 15% increase.

Another topic discussed at the Parish Finance Committee was stewardship. Apparently, only about half (80 out of 159) of the school families have returned their pledge forms for the following calendar year. The due date is January 1st. The covenant signed by school families indicates that they will submit it on time. This has been an ongoing problem and the committee is trying to decide what to do about it. One of their suggestions was to notify these families that they would be charged non-parishioner tuition rates as a result of their non-compliance. The SAB hoped that a positive solution could be developed that would encourage, and not discourage, compliance.

Catherine distributed copies of the budget and various tuition projections for next school year. With a projected enrollment of 360 students, just four more than this year, Catherine calculated that we will need to increase tuition by 5% in order to operate without creating a deficit. This would mean that there would be no salary increases for any staff members, not even for those that are still being paid well below the recommended guidelines of 80% parity with the surrounding public school district. Also, there would be no money available for other program improvements or changes. No member of the SAB wants to eliminate programs or employees.

The SAB considered what else could be done to obtain more funding in order to rectify the salary disparity. One suggestion was to tweak the sibling discount. Currently, the rates for sibling discounts are as follows:

	Parishioner	Non-Parishioner
Number of siblings	% of discount	% of discount
2	10%	5%
3	20%	10%
4	30%	20%

The first suggestion, which basically cuts all of the discounts in half and would generate about \$24,000 would look like this:

	Parishioner	Non-Parishioner
Number of siblings	% of discount	% of discount
2	5%	0%
3	10%	5%
4	15%	10%

But, in order for the school to provide a small increase of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a step toward salary parity with the Shorewood Public Schools, more money is needed. We need to obtain \$44,000-\$54,000. Even with this influx of additional money, 12 employees would not get any raise because they are already over the goal of 80% parity with Shorewood. In addition, we are using Shorewood's 2009-2010 salary scale for comparison. Shorewood has already instituted a 2010-2011 salary scale which puts us further behind. For the sake of comparison,

Lumen Christi does not offer any sibling discounts. Nevertheless, tweaking the sibling discounts again by eliminating the 2nd child discount for parishioners and changing the 4th child non-parishioner rate to half of the parishioner rate, will save us approximately \$30,000 as illustrated in this table:

	Parishioner	Non-Parishioner
Number of siblings		
2	0%	0%
3	10%	5%
4	15%	7.5%

Some other suggestions for improving our finances included beginning to charge employees with single health insurance coverage a portion of their premium costs. At a previous time, Fr. Dennis suggested that during the first year, they pay 7.5% of the cost and the following year increase that to 15%. Employees with family coverage are currently paying 30% of the cost of their premiums. A concern was raised that the lower paid teachers would in essence be taking a pay cut, even with their raise, because of having to pay for their health insurance premiums. It was determined that that was not the case except for possibly one employee, because she is already being paid at over 80% parity with the Shorewood pay scale and is not going to get a raise with this new plan. Another concern was mentioned about the 12 teachers that won't get any raise because they are already paid at over 80% parity with Shorewood and Lauren felt that they would understand our circumstances.

Another suggestion was to consider raising the tuition for the half-day junior and senior kindergarten students. When comparing us to other schools, our half-day tuition rate is much lower than others, so this option will be considered.

The bottom line is that the additional money needed to offer many of our underpaid employees a small raise, after many years of no raises, can be achieved by:

- 1.) Raising the tuition rate by 5%,
- 2.) Lowering the sibling discount rates,
- 3.) Having employees with single coverage contribute 7.5% of their health insurance premiums, and
- 4.) Raising the tuition percentage for half-day kindergarten students.

After discussing the various ways to generate more income, a concern was raised about how these additional costs for our families would impact the requests for tuition scholarships. It was felt that we should expect an increase in requests. St. Robert uses an outside vendor to determine who is eligible for scholarships. The process dictates that families seeking money submit a form along with past tax returns. The school provides the vendor

information about our tuition and the minimum and maximum scholarship amounts that will be awarded. The vendor determines the recommended amount of each scholarship. The school does reserve the right to change that due to unforeseen circumstances or hardships that are not disclosed on past tax returns, for example.

As was discussed last month, St. Robert will be changing vendors for the purpose of tuition collection. One possible choice, Smart Tuition, has options for managing other money collection, too. It also can provide online access to actual school costs as compared to what tuition covers.

3. Technology Committee – Peter Christenson

Their committee met recently to discuss how they could demonstrate/measure the impact of their technology investment in the school. At that meeting, Laurie Yingling suggested that they measure student engagement. The committee is also putting together a budget for needed improvements to the technological resources in the school. They will do an inventory of the technology next week. They thought there may be a conflict of interest for the technology committee to evaluate the impact of the technology in the building. Instead, it was decided that the Education and Formation Committee will conduct that research.

4. Marketing and Recruitment – Trish Ognar

This committee is gearing up for the Open House in January. Trish shared with the SAB a card that Karen Parr designed that will be given to all babies baptized at St. Robert Church. The card depicts crosses made by the second grade students. Also, those same students will sign each of the cards. The newly baptized babies will also receive a onesie with the St. Robert logo. If the child is too old for the size 12 month onesie, then a t-shirt will be given.

They are considering purchasing a mailing list of people to invite to the Open House. Their names would include families on the East side of Milwaukee. This could be a relatively reasonable expense that could generate interest in our school. Besides the cost of the list itself, they would also have to purchase more mailing materials and additional postage.

5. Development – Lisa Lesjak

Lisa emailed the report of Annual Fund contributions to the SAB a few days ago. The committee will meet tomorrow night. At this point, over \$90,000 has been committed, which puts us ahead of last year. About \$6,000 has come in during the past two days. Over \$30,000 was generated at the party hosted by Tom and Patrice Linn.

6. Education and Formation – Liz Haas

The pocket garden will be moved from the fence at the north end of the parking lot to the west side of the school building. Currently, there are some planters in this location that need to be replaced because they are falling apart. Some sort of structure will need to be built to hold the pockets. Also, the color of the pockets may change.

7. Home and School – Karen Hunt

They are still looking for someone to volunteer to chair the Grandparent reception.

The Emerald Auction will be held at the Italian Community Center this year. They are considering changing the vendor for the handheld bidding devices so as to allow for off-site bidding. Also, they are thinking about having a shuttle from St. Robert to the ICC for those people who don't want to drive.

The calendar raffle has surpassed the minimum number of orders in order to make a profit. They have sold about 700 calendars and they needed to sell 600.

Home and School will be awarding Christmas bonuses to employees very soon.

Boswell Books will be the vendor for the book fair that takes place during Open House in January. They are many benefits to this change. They will provide an online site for sales. They will also have a display in their store that promotes the book fair. And, finally, and most surprisingly, they will have an employee on site at St. Robert during the book fair to offer assistance and guidance to families and workers.

8. Old Business

Lauren requested that the people who took notes during the discussion of the School Improvement Plan during the meeting on October 12, 2011, provide her with copies of those notes from each of the various committees.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jane Connell, School Advisory Board Secretary.