

School Advisory Board Meeting Minutes  
May 14, 2014, 6:30 p.m.  
Room 207

1. Call to Order and Prayer

Members in attendance: Lisa Lesjak, Lauren Beckmann, Jane Connell, Laura Maly, Marion Gottschalk, John Dulmes, Tom Dean, Matt Hietpas, Kelly Schmidt, Molly Gallagher, Kathy Wyatt, and Fr. Dennis Dirx

Members absent: Fr. Kevin McManaman, Marcia Velde, and Kristen Reynolds

Guest: none

2. Guest Comments

No guest comments were provided.

3. SAB Membership

There will be two vacancies on the SAB next year due to the departures of Marcia Velde and Jane Connell, who have finished their terms. The Archdiocese has recommended that we form our board in an intentional manner, choose candidates with specific skills and/or expertise. There will be a request placed in Family Matters for people to volunteer, but we should also think of possible candidates. Kathy Wyatt stated that she would be willing to take over Marcia's job as Chair of the Development Committee if no other candidate is found.

4. Parish/Pastor Report – Fr. Dennis Dirx

A new associate pastor has been assigned to St. Robert. His name is Peter Patrick Kinani and he will start on June 17, 2014. He will be ordained this Saturday and then he will travel to Kenya, his homeland, before he begins his new position in June. Fr. Kevin will be moving to another Parish soon.

Last week, the Finance Committee approved a new Parish budget. There are some issues with this adoption that will be addressed later in the meeting.

Later this month, discernment will take place for positions on the Pastoral Council. Fr. Dennis is “tapping people on the shoulder” to ask them to serve because there are still a few spots to fill, three at St. Robert and two at Holy Family. The Parish Council is responsible for the business side of running the Parish, while the Pastoral Council has other responsibilities. Those include overseeing the following three areas: Catholic identity, evangelization, and stewardship.

Molly mentioned the need for the Parish and school to work together on marketing issues. Apparently, the Parish does not have its own marketing committee. Both sides need each other and depend upon each other.

Fr. Dennis will be unable to attend the June meeting because he has to prepare a couple for marriage.

5. Final Budget School/Parish

An *extremely lengthy* discussion ensued concerning the budget. The 2014-2015 parish non-restricted (before investments) budget reflects a shortfall of \$300,000. In this fiscal year (2013-2014), parish contributions have fallen short of budget by \$200,000. The overall parish budget shortfall for the coming 2014-2015 year will essentially be covered by selling investments in school designated investments. The justification for this is that the parish finance committee has begun allocating a portion of the parish building and grounds expenses to the school. The allocation of these expenses began in the 2013-2014 school year. The parish finance committee voted to not withdraw any of the parish's \$300,000 in reserves to pay for any of the budget shortfall. After comments were shared from both sides of this issue, it was stated that the bottom line is that a deficit exists, and the deficit cannot continue. At one point, the Parish Finance Committee wanted the school to release \$300,000 at the beginning of the 2014-2015 year, but now has lowered that to \$150,000 now and a reassessment later in the year to determine how much more will be needed. The board of the School Society has approved a release of \$100,000 to start. Additional funds will be released as necessary. If the Parish will not be financially supporting the school as they have been in the past, it will be hard to sell the idea of "parishioner tuition", and the language may need to be adjusted in the future.

A challenge has been laid at our doorstep to find a way to cover this shortfall. But, the Archdiocese has stated that Parishes **must** support their schools, and they suggest that it be done by setting aside a percentage of their income to support the school ministry. People need to be educated about the dollars, and where they come from and how they are spent. The Parish is budgeting \$710,000 for parishioner contributions. We were assured that any money the Parish receives that exceeds this amount will be used to offset the school's deficit.

The Parish Finance Council sent letters to about 50 school families that haven't made contributions to the Parish. They were also sent copies of the covenants they signed, with lines highlighted, etc. These letters were perceived to be offensive by many recipients. Shockingly, some families received these letters in error because there were mistakes in the data system. Some of these people called or came into the school and showed the printout from the Parish that indicated their contributions they made thus far this year, yet they received letters indicating they had failed to give anything! The hurt and anger caused by these letters may never be erased. One parent came in and asked that they be labeled as a non-

parishioner for tuition purposes and they will no long give another penny to the school, after being very generous in the past.

Some positive action steps were mentioned that should help communicate to and educate families about the finances of the school. First of all, a tuition letter is going home tomorrow that will illustrate the new tuition rates for next year, along with the reasons for the 5% increase in tuition. They will also receive an invitation to the next Coffee with the Principal to be held next Tuesday. The topic will be school finances. Secondly, we should begin to hold small group meetings with school families to explain our financial picture. These informal meetings should begin in about three weeks. And, thirdly, we can address this topic again in the fall at the State of the School meeting. By then, everyone should have had an opportunity to learn more about this topic by attending one of the small group sessions.

A second major method to help alleviate our financial problems is to increase enrollment. A new idea brought forth is a program called the Catholic Urban Scholars Program. This program is intended to work with four inner city parishes to enroll some of their students in St. Robert in grades K-3 only. These students would come from stable and supportive families that are involved in their parishes. Their tuition would be paid by sponsors that would be willing to contribute the cost of their tuition for up to ten years. But, St. Robert would commit to covering their tuition through eighth grade, if necessary. These families would be full members of the St. Robert community and be expected to fulfill volunteer commitments, for example. There are about six potential donors that are interested in sponsoring a student. However, it was mentioned that maybe some of our current religious education students may be choosing to attend a public school for financial reasons and would benefit from such a scholarship.

A third area that could be used to improve our financial picture deals with creating a sustainable future. A major part of this is marketing our school. Tomorrow, a film crew will be at St. Robert to get some footage for the new marketing materials. About 5,000 postcards will be mailed out soon to households in selected zipcodes. There will be a few radio spots to promote our school, too. The Education and Formation Committee will follow-up with a phone call to those families that came to the Open House in January, but haven't yet enrolled in St. Robert. We are also looking into making sure that our website is found by people searching the internet. They will ensure that certain search terms are connected to our school. Another idea mentioned is to develop an alternative tuition policy. Instead of parishioner and non-parishioner categories, we would have a standard tuition rate and a contributing member rate of tuition. We have to see if this option is legal. In order to maintain our non-profit status, we can't have a massive punitive punishment for people that do not comply.

The topic of how to address the school families that are not fulfilling their covenants to support the Parish came up again. Because these families are not

fulfilling their covenants, should they automatically be changed to non-parishioner status for tuition purposes? The Parish will be sending a letter to all of the families to explain the previous letter and problems that arose from the errors in the database. Should the Parish call these families and discuss their willingness to fulfill their covenant and/or their option to move to non-parishioner status? It was suggested that Rosemary Murphy would do this.

A draft copy of a new covenant was shared with the SAB. Some new changes include listing the tuition/cost differential of educating a student at St. Robert. But, it no longer states a suggested amount to contribute to the Parish. Also included was a new section on the obligations and responsibilities of Catholic parents. At first it was stated this new covenant would be sent to all families that have already signed one for next year. But, then it was decided that this may cause confusion among families. We decided that this is a perfect item to include in the small group meetings that will be held to discuss financial information. After making some changes to this new version, such as stating the actual cost of educating a student at St. Robert, it was decided that the revised covenant will be used next year instead of being sent out this year.

## 6. Committee Reports

### a. Education and Formation Committee – Kelly Schmidt

The next Coffee with the Principal will held next Tuesday. They are still getting statistics from high schools concerning how our graduates fare in their buildings. Camp Invention has about 40 students enrolled, and not all are from St. Robert.

### b. Home and School Association – Laura Maly

The auction was fantastic, but she was not authorized to reveal any definite numbers.

### c. Technology Committee – Marion Gottschalk

They are putting together an online repository that is a technology plan, a comprehensive view of technology. Laurie Yingling created a web site view of that same information. The end of the year goal is to have the long view of technology issues mapped out.

### d. Development Committee – Lisa Lesjak

Lisa distributed the spreadsheet for contributions and stated that we are about \$15,000 ahead of last year at this point for the Annual Fund. On the backside were the enrollment numbers for next year. As of now, 16 of our current students have not re-enrolled for next year. If these students were

added to our total registered with probable or incomplete applications, then we would be at 325 students.

e. Policy Committee – Lauren Beckmann for Kristen Reynolds

They are still working on alternatives to the current hot lunch program. After eating lunch at Holy Family last month, the group reported that they were disappointed in that option. The food served did not appear or taste significantly better than what we have with Taher. Plus, we would lose the ability to have the fresh fruit/veggie bar. Taher can do whatever we want them to do, if we dropped the government subsidy program. It would cost us about \$8,500 to absorb the cost of the meals for the 18 students that currently are eligible to receive the subsidized meals. That means we would have to pass that cost onto other students at about \$.40 per meal. In addition, we would lose the lower cost of food items on the menu. Thus, we have hit a dead end on this issue and will wait to see the results of the Parent Survey to decide how to move forward.

Lauren sent the new Parish social media policy to Kristen to compare it to the Archdiocese's policy.

f. Environmental Committee – John Dulmes

This committee is awaiting approval from the Archdiocese about the bids for the three security projects. These include: key access for doors, security cameras installed in various locations, and a new phone/PA system. This work should be able to be completed this summer. The Finance Council has approved the release of funds to pay for this.

g. Parish – Kathy Wyatt

There was no report given at this time.

7. Parent Survey

Lisa is compiling the results and will send us the information soon. We will discuss it at the next meeting.

8. New Business

The school calendar for the 2014-15 school years was posted on the website recently. A question was raised about the staggered pick-up times for students on Wednesdays and why middle school students will no longer be dismissed early. Mrs. Beckman explained that DPI requires more minutes of instruction time for 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders, so this was a way to add 37 hours to their time. The younger grades will still be dismissed early because their teachers need that time for

planning purposes. The middle school teachers have other time during their day for this responsibility.

It was reported that middle school boys were using the Tot Lot this past Saturday while at school for Peter Pan and were using very foul language. In the future, these students need to be better supervised while on school property.

9. Remaining Meeting Dates

The SAB will continue to meet on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m., with the exception of July, when no meeting is held. Therefore, the remaining meeting date is:

- June 11, 2014 – Tom will provide snacks and prayer

10. Tot Lot

- Parent Survey
- Bench Buddies

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.

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