

St. Luke School Commission Meeting Minutes

Tuesday November 3, 2015, 7:00 PM

The meeting was called to order with a prayer at 7:00 PM.

In attendance: Andy Bauer, Vernon Back, Beth Borland, Dan Heslin, Anne Horton, Sue MacGill, Wendy Mehringer, Tim O'Brien, Phil Poirier, Jenn Rotz, Msgr. Schaedel, Teresa Schutzman, Suzanne Sherby, Rob Shumaker, Steve Weber.

Jenn Rotz was introduced as the new Pastoral Council liaison. Kate Bruner, 6th grade teacher attended the meeting as part of her preparation for an Administrative license.

Policy Manual – Tim O'Brien

Tim offered the final edit to section 3103 of the Policy Manual for approval. The final version was unanimously approved. The relevant section is copied below:

- No. 3103 Withdrawal from the School
1. A family who withdraws their child (children) after April 30 will be responsible for 25% of the tuition;
 2. A family who withdraws their child (children) after May 31 will be responsible for 50% of the tuition;
 3. A family who withdraws their child (children) after June 30 will be responsible for 100% of the tuition.

Emergency or out of area transfer issues need to be put into writing and will be addressed by the Principal and/or the Pastor.

The October 6, 2015 meeting minutes were approved.

Principal's Report – Steve Weber

Open House Notes: Twenty families came to our October 30 Open House. They represented **18** kindergarten students, **3** third grade students, **2** fifth grade students and **2** seventh grade students. **Five** are current parish families; **nine** indicated a desire to transfer from their current parish to St. Luke; and **six** said that they were non-Catholic.

After an overview of St. Luke Catholic School mission, goals, curriculum, and admissions process, Student Council members took the parents on a tour of the school. Mrs. Borland, Mr. Duggins and I met the parents as they completed the tour to answer any questions they may have. The parents responded positively to the way the students gave the tour and answered their questions.

Saint Luke has been invited to attend a "Kindergarten Round-up" at St Luke Methodist Church for prospective Kindergarten families. Steve and Beth are making plans for a presentation at that event. Several Saint Luke Catholic families utilize the pre-school at St. Luke Methodist.

2016-17 Admission Dates: Current families of K-7 students will be asked to respond to a letter of intent and to apply for any new siblings in December.

December 11, 2015: letter of intent, early admission and sibling applications

January 15 & 29: Kindergarten readiness screening dates

January 31: Sunday Open House 10:30-12:00

February 1: Open classroom visitation 9-11 & 1-3

February 1: New Parent Information 7PM

February 5: Applications Due

February 16-19: Visitation week for Gr. 1-8 Applications

February 26: Final kindergarten readiness screening

March 1: Admission letters sent

School Counselor: Mrs. Adrian Kim, who was our school counselor resigned after her husband lost his job and she needed a full time job. Catholic Charities did find a new counselor who will start on November 17. The new counselor is Amanda Johnson. She has experience both in schools, clinic, hospital and private practice. This will be communicated to parents in this week's Quick Note.

SC Agenda: I have also attached our November school newsletter for your review. I did note that the key topic on the agenda was tuition and fees for 2016-17.

Strategic Planning Notes: The school technology committee did a survey of the teachers to determine the types of professional development they needed. Grades 5 & 6 are meeting on Wednesday to review implementation of the iPads and determine next steps. There are two workshops scheduled for November 11 and 13 on pod casts and using QR codes for student projects. BCHS has hired a new CIO, Tom Groot, who would also be a good resource for tech improvement.

The academic excellence committee is scheduling meetings with the special area teachers and resource team.

Calendar: Monsignor asked that the group briefly discuss the school calendar. He was seeking a sense of whether people are in agreement with his belief that the school year should never begin prior to August 15th. His feeling is that there is a "creep" to school calendars which, if un-checked would soon have us starting school the first week of August. Tim O'Brien offered strong support of a later start date, and reported that he has studied the school calendar in some depth and believes that we could start as late as August 31st and still finish in the first week of June with minimal tweaking. He and Suzanne Sherby like the later start date and believe it offers more family time. Andy Bauer, Vernon Back and Jenn Rotz stated concerns with regard to dual income families having trouble with daycare and day camp schedules as both tend to be arranged around the high school and college schedules. The discussion also touched on the need to try and synchronize spring break with high schools. Otherwise, many parents will pull kids from elementary school during high school breaks. Most seem in favor of August 15th as the earliest possible start date. Steve Weber mentioned that placing the first day on a Wednesday has proved very helpful as a mechanism for letting kids and families ease in to a new school year, and said that we need to consider that in any discussions of calendar as well. It was agreed that Steve would work on calendar options for the next school year with these things in mind.

Business Items

Budget – Wendy Mehringer

Wendy stated that the primary purpose of the budget discussion tonight is to set the Book and Supply fee and schedule for payment and to discuss the 2016/2017 tuition in anticipation of a vote to finalize in December.

Current Year to date: Tuition and salary are the biggest drivers of income and expense, as expected. At this time, we are running at \$30,000 deficit from budget projections for this school year, with a projected

total miss of \$37,000. This is mostly due to salary expenses not anticipated, including the addition of a two day LA aide, the ½ time admissions staff, a kindergarten maternity leave and hourly admin staff working more hours than anticipated in the budget. At this time, we are waiting until January to hear reports from other church ministries as to where they stand with regard to budget to decide how aggressively we will attack the problem of the shortfall. Options might include delaying some planned spending. Regardless, Beth and Steve will be trying to more tightly control salary expense in the interim.

Wendy thanked Patrick Jendraszak for pulling together all the numbers and information needed for the budget discussion. Total expenses are projected at \$3.6 million and include increases in salary and benefits expense with an assumed parish subsidy of \$460,000. These assumptions place the tuition revenue needed at \$2.5 million. These numbers led to contemplation of tuition models which include a 2.5% increase (\$100/child), a 5% increase (\$200/child), and a 7.5% increase (\$300/child).

Tim O'Brien had to leave the meeting early, but shared several thoughts with regard to budget before leaving. Tim is not in favor of large increases and believes that we should be aiming to keep tuition low. He expressed his belief that our budget decisions should be made from a zero base model rather than baseline budgeting with a % increase model to encourage reallocation rather than new expenditures and to ensure responsible spending.

The following potential expenditures identified in the Strategic Planning process were discussed:

- Adding 2 full time aides to staff each 1st grade room - \$30,000. Funding this through a first grade surcharge in a manner similar to the Kgtn structure optional
- Dean of Students - \$20,000 – proposed structure converts part time contracted counselor to full time plus benefits
- Additional Resource staff person - \$55,000. Plus benefits, for both low and high ability kids, ESL kids
- Curriculum mapping consultant – estimate \$3000.
- Technology support - \$60,000. Considering consultant vs hiring staff

The following comments were made with regard to the tuition discussion:

- The number for the Technology hire/consultant was derived from conversations with IHM. They contract for 30 hours/week all of which is split between the parish and school.
- It was noted that parishioner enrollment has declined while non-parishioner enrollment has risen. In 2008, there were 569 parish children and 21 non-parishioners. For the 15/16 school year, there are 520 parish children and 64 non-parishioners. Steve noted that this coincides with the advent of state choice scholarships.
- Historically our increases have been small and consistent – in the 1-2% range. This has been intentional, to keep families from worrying that the tuition will trend up quickly during their school years.
- The possibility of a 12 month payment model was discussed as a way to help families lower their monthly payment to offset whatever increase is approved. Andy Bauer said that he would be happy with the 12 month model only if the 10 month option remains available. He believes families use the off months of June and July to pay for day care expense when school is out. Steve said he believes the 12 month option should not be a problem for FACTS, but will check to be sure. He will also check whether we can offer both options. He noted that the 12 month model does have the downside of spreading revenue for the school out further.

- Suzanne said she believes families would support the pass thru model for providing full time aides in each 1st grade classroom, particularly as it would help to support the differentiation needed due to the wide variance in ability at these ages. Vernon and Andy agreed that people generally see a need for more help at the 1st grade level. It was noted that the smaller child to adult ratio might be attractive to many families. The fact that families are already used to the surcharge as they come out of kindergarten was mentioned. Rob then propose that the pass through model be used to support aides in 2nd and 3rd grade. He said he thinks it would be hard to draw the line and that at some point, we would essentially have approved a massive tuition hike.
- Teresa noted that we currently have 16 instructional aides and at least 7 resource personnel. She asked if we have taken an in depth look at how their time is utilized and whether something could be re-organized so that we could take better advantage of them and possibly meet the needs identified without hiring. Steve clarified that some of the resource staff are part time. Teresa said this is something the Academic committee would like to dig into. Steve and Beth said that they have discussed this. Monsignor noted that he would very much like to see an evaluation of all auxiliary personnel and would like to understand how many children they encounter each day and how much time is spent in an average interaction. The idea of passing through some of the cost for resource and enrichment to families whose children utilize the services was briefly mentioned, and rejected due to the over-riding commitment we have to provide for the needs of all our students within reason.
- Andy Bauer noted that a “deep dive” look into the specifics of the budget was completed about 5 years ago. At the time, the findings were that there really isn’t any fat in the budget. Vernon agreed, and said that he has perused the proposed budget carefully and feels it is pretty lean.
- It was noted that traditionally our non-parishioner tuition has essentially been just a pass through of the actual cost. (non-parishioner pays the portion that parish subsidy would pay for a parishioner) The possibility of raising the non-parishioner rate was mentioned.
- Vernon expressed his strong belief that a larger increase is needed to adequately fund the school. He noted that the \$100 increase under consideration would not even cover the mandatory 3% increase in salary and healthcare costs. He noted that many private schools in our area are charging upwards of 16-17K in tuition, and that even preschools are often more costly than a year at Saint Luke, some as high as \$9500/year.
- Sue MacGill asked Steve which tuition model he prefers. He said that he prefers the \$100 increase because it seems the most reasonable. He believes that an increase much higher than that will have too big an impact on some families. He noted that you also have to remember that the \$100 is not really a per child increase as the tuition discount will be applied to the increase for siblings. Sue wondered if a \$150 increase could be contemplated as a compromise number. The idea that perhaps the increase be exempted from the sibling discount was briefly floated, but not really seized upon.

Monsignor stated that in all scenarios, nothing would make as big a difference as expanding enrollment. He noted that the budget numbers are based on an enrollment of 580, when our capacity is closer to 620. He does not believe we have done as exhaustive effort at recruitment and is hopeful that the ramp up of the Development committee will help to advance the school in this area so that in future we are considering a budget based on an enrollment number of 600. Steve confirmed that most of the expense side of the equation is fixed costs that do not increase with enrollment so that each student adds almost directly to the bottom line which would enable us to fund more of the wish list items. Monsignor considers recruitment a parent to parent, neighbor to neighbor mission that we must all be conscious of. Vernon and Teresa both noted that the work that the Academic Excellence

Committee is undertaking should go a long way to making the school extremely attractive to prospective parents. He also noted that the admissions people at Cathedral High School have told him that they are seeing increasing amounts of students who have not received a Catholic grade school education because parents are calculating the total cost and believe, in some cases, that they have to choose one or the other. He said that we must keep that in mind as we debate tuition cost.

Rob motioned that the 12 month fee structure be offered as long as the 10 month structure can be offered simultaneously. The motion was seconded and approved, with none opposed.

The following discussion took place regarding the Book and Supply fee:

- The Book and Supply fee remains at \$200/student. The proposed structure is as follows:
 - \$275 discounted \$50 to \$225 from 12/1/15 to 2/19/16,
 - \$275 discounted \$25 to \$250 from 2/20/16 to 5/31/16
 - \$275 from 6/1/16 on... will be rolled into FACTS tuition payment.
- The idea of extending the discount timeframe was discussed as it is felt that the timing may be difficult for families in the months just after Christmas.
- Teresa asked why the fee can't be included in the tuition amount so that it could be one up front package in which it's easy for parents to see all the components. Steve said that the Book and Supply fee, in addition to being needed to cover actual expenses serves as a deposit for the coming year, a placeholder for the student's spot. Sue MacGill said that it could be thought of as part of the tuition, but that it is a piece that must be paid ahead as a deposit, and won't come off the total. Perhaps the way it is stated could be changed, but all in all, it wouldn't affect the reality that it needs to be paid separately for reasons discussed.
- Teresa questioned whether the book and supply fee is a hidden source of revenue or is a legitimate pass through cost. She would like to see a smarter way to cover these expenses so that families are not burdened by these fees. She is especially concerned with families with multiple children and thinks maybe the sibling discount should apply. She would also like to know if these are actual costs or estimates and believes it must be difficult to track in the midst of instruction, and believes that a closer look at what's included in the expense should be taken.
- Steve said that the fee does capture the actual expense, but that it does vary by grade, so it is an average. For instance, the lower grades tend to use more craft materials, etc. He mentioned that some schools do charge the actual fee by grade. He noted that there has been no increase in the amount of the book and supply fee, but that we are considering extending the discount timeframes in order to help families absorb the cost over more time.
- With regard to the discount timing, Steve noted that in the past, about 60% of families have taken advantage of the full discount offered and paid by the February deadline.
- Monsignor noted in response to Teresa's concerns that when he was Vicar general the Archdiocesan policy was that tuition at all the high schools had to be the same and in response, the book and supply fee did become the vehicle for schools to upcharge to the total tuition amount their parents would bear. For instance Scecina high school, in its area might be able to charge a fee of \$250, whereas Roncalli might set their fee at \$800 because they knew their parents would pay it. He recognized the concern, but by all accounts our proposed fee is an actual pass through.

Rob motioned that the discount schedule Steve proposed be approved. The motion was seconded and approved with none opposed.

Strategic Planning Committee Reports:

The following reports submitted via email, but not discussed at this meeting due to time constraints.

Academic Excellence: From Teresa Schutzman

Steve Weber and Beth Borland have been very supportive of the efforts of this committee. We thank them!!

The immediate focus of our committee is grades K-3, the academic foundation of our school. Following the completion of K-3, we will be evaluating grades 4, 5, and 6. The middle school will be the final piece of the project.

Current overview:

1. With regard to standards, we intend that the stated academic standards for each grade will be one grade up from the state, national, and archdiocesan standards. It is worth noting that currently, the archdiocese aligns exactly with state and national standards. The move to formally go beyond this is reflective of what the most successful of our peer schools are doing, and serves to formalize our stated intention of teaching at a higher level than the public schools. All changes in this area will include the necessary support for students who excel in a core subject or who need additional support to meet the standards.
2. Differentiation (grouping) in Math and Reading will be established in grades K-3. Placement will be based on multiple means of evaluation, including appropriate testing. Groups will be fluid, allowing students to move into a different group when appropriate. Several grades are working with Beth to move toward a model which allows this for in reading in the very near term. There are some constraints preventing an immediate change in the way we approach math, including staffing and schedules.
3. We will further evaluate K-3 class time spent in core versus special classes to support the differentiation effort.
4. The committee is working to bring curriculum and best practice information from many areas to Beth for evaluation. This information will form the basis of the curriculum map Beth is working toward. Beth is continuing efforts to map what we are currently doing in all grades as it has been a helpful process in many ways and has allowed for quick response when items of overlap or omission are identified.
5. The committee is deeply grateful for the energy and effort Beth Borland has dedicated to this project, and still believes that the scope of the mapping project is such that a consultant should be brought in to assist her in the effort.

Development: From Vernon Back

The development committee is working to develop surveys to help us better understand why some parish families choose schools other than Saint Luke for their children. The intent is to target two primary groups with this survey:

- SMRE families
- Families who have remained local, but pulled a child out of Saint Luke in the past 5 years.

The survey will be crafted with a positive spin which seeks to gain understanding of both how Saint Luke is perceived in the parish community and the qualities which have attracted parish members to other schools. The committee plans to work with Beth and Steve to finalize the draft we are working on, with the goal of sending the surveys in early January and having results by mid to late February. Beth has confirmed that she can access all the current SMRE families through the Fellowship One system. We will be seeking a method of accessing the data for families who have pulled children from Saint Luke School.

The committee would also like to work on a well-constructed parent survey for school families for the 2015/2016 school year and a survey of parents of 3 year old children that may be considering Saint Luke School in the future, but has not yet begun discussion in that area.

Facilities: From Andy Bauer

Actions taken since last School Commission Meeting:

Created condensed “To Do” List version of this year’s Action Plan (next page)

Sue attended October Buildings & Grounds meeting

Next Steps:

Divide up tasks in “To Do” List and start getting them done

Follow up with Patrick and Buildings & Grounds on space utilization study started in the spring

Technology: From Dan Heslin

The Technology Committee members interviewed Prescott Sanders, the President of the Technology Commission at IHM, about IHM’s experience in technology support. IHM had an employee IT support specialist that left, and they attempted to backfill the IT support services via a contractor that proved unsatisfactory, with teachers and volunteers filling in support gaps. IHM then advertised to fill an IT support position, but were unable to attract a sufficiently skilled person at the salary offered (\$35-40,000). IHM interviewed a number of contractors and eventually settled on K&J, who were willing to work with the school and parish to craft a contract that met the needs of both. Under that contract, a technician is onsite for 30 hours/week, 11 months per year, and is available for either school or parish needs. The technician also has a support team available for issues that are outside of his immediate competence. Currently the school takes much more of the technician’s time, but that is expected to even out over time. We discussed the possibility of joining in with IHM, possibly taking the technician’s other 10 hours per week to see if this is a model that could work for us.

We also interviewed Mrs. Eckert. She manages most of the day-to-day IT support and ordering, along with training the teachers on how to integrate technology into their classrooms. The only areas she appears not to have responsibility for are Rediker, which is managed by Katrina, and the library computer systems. She continues to be the front-line IT support person, but this year her teaching load has almost doubled and she accordingly has less time available for support issues. She enjoys the teacher training much more than the IT support. She is reasonably confident about her ability to solve many issues, but admits that she gets out of her depth rapidly when network or email issues crop up. She thought that having a service available on call to deal with such issues would be very helpful.

The committee members are meeting tomorrow with Patrick Jendraszak and Rick Davis (from Buildings & Grounds) to discuss IT needs and responsibilities. We also plan to meet separately with others who manage aspects of technology, such as Katrina, to get their input.

Pastors Comments – Monsignor made the following comments:

Monsignor reiterated his belief that word of mouth is the best form of promoting and advertising our school. He further commented that he really wishes that people would be mindful that the best method of resolving problems is always to go directly to the people involved rather than escalating to people who are not directly involved. He encouraged all to practice talking to one another before involving people outside the conflict.

- Teresa Schutzman politely requested that all committee leaders try to get their email reports out at least 24 hours in advance of meetings in order to give all a chance to review.
- Sue MacGill mentioned that her daughter who is now living and working in D.C., went out of her way to meet Mr. Weber and the 8th grade class during their dinner at Union Station, which all believe to be a testament to the deep and lasting bond created by 9 years at Saint Luke School.

A closing prayer was said, and the meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Suzanne Sherby, School Commission Secretary