

St. Paul the Apostle School Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting held: February 17, 2009 www.stpaul-school.org

Present: Julie Palmer, Dan Springer, Dale Manske, Lisa Gutting, Jim Rabaut,
Jen Brom, Jeff Potter, Bridget Mull, Todd Mellema

Visitors: Kathleen Lowing, Kris Russo, Bob Young, Dan Tietema, Celine Terranova, Ann Potter, Natalie Jackson, Donna Couture, Tiffny Harmon, Hillary Embrey, Peggy Koenigsknecht, Lisa Leonard, Molly Klimas, Mark Meijer, Kathy Huyge, Dorothy Ramos, Ellen Clark, Cathy Bottema, Amy Quillan, Steve Cole, Sandy Bishop, Colleen Cleves

I. Meeting opened with prayer.

II. Agenda reviewed and approved.

III. Opening Remarks: Dan Springer welcomed the many guests we had in attendance and thanked them for their interest and show of support. Dan also briefly outlined the process of how the School Board meetings typically follow the pre-set Agenda items with opportunity for open discussion and questions at the end of the meeting.

IV. Principal's Report

A. Enrollment: Our total enrollment is currently at 220 students. A new kindergartner recently left after again moving out of the area.

B. Accreditation: On March 18th and 19th a site visiting team, headed by Cindy Thomas, principal of St. Stephen School will be at St. Paul as part of the re-Accreditation process. During these two days, the team will need to have discussions with School Board Officers and committee chairpersons. Julie asked Board Officers and chairpersons to check their schedules and let her know of the times they would be available to come to St. Paul for an interview.

C. Intent to Register: Forms were sent home to all school families on Friday, February 14. So far, we have received 39 forms back, with 36 families intending to register and 3 undecided. The reasons for the undecided were also given, and Julie will follow up with those families. The Intent to Register forms were sent in an effort to get a more accurate count of students enrolling for next year for budget purposes.

D. Kindergarten: Julie has met with the Kindergarten teachers to discuss the options for next year. At this time, St. Paul is planning on a ½ day option and a full day option to meet the needs our school families. Julie would like input from the Board in order to decide if the half-day session will be offered in the AM or PM and at what number of students we would require the addition of teacher aide. One preliminary idea is to offer 2 ½ days for each teacher so that both Mrs. Hoolsema and Mrs. Sabine would be able to work with all of the students.

E. Meitler Study: The Meitler Study group at the Diocese will be meeting in mid-March to continue the discussion concerning a possible new Catholic school in the Ada/Forest Hills area. Results of the family surveys will be shared with the study group participants at that time.

F. Diocesan Calendar: Since Labor Day falls late this year, the Diocese is considering starting the elementary schools before Labor Day for 2009-10 school year. The finalized calendar for the Diocese will be published by mid-March. The new law in the State of Michigan mandating public schools start after Labor Day does not apply to private schools.

V. Committee Reports

A. Finance - Dale Manske

The preliminary budget process for the 2009-10 school has begun using the enrollment number of 208 students. Once results from the “Intent to Register” forms are returned, Dale and Julie will have a better idea of enrollment numbers. Dale noted that at this time, we are planning to keep the Librarian position in the budget, add back the part-time social worker, and maintain teacher salaries at the current rate. Even though the preliminary budget is “balanced” enrollment numbers are “projected” and adjustments may need to be made to the budget after registration packets are returned and more concrete enrollment numbers are finalized. Other costs that still need to be finalized include transportation costs (Catholic Secondary Schools to give us the dollar amount), projected operating costs from the Parish, and actual proceeds from SPAuction. Dale informed the Board that the “fiscal year” for the school runs from July 1st through June 30th.

B. Fundraising and Grants - Jim Rabaut

Jim gave an overview of the Fundraising Committee and the recent process of gathering and summarizing the many fundraising activities currently in place at St. Paul. The challenge now is to avoid fundraising “fatigue” by going outside of just our school environment into the parish and neighborhood communities. Jim noted that the majority of the funds currently raised are “earmarked” for specific areas. The committee will be meeting again in the next few weeks and would like to invite the many people from the Town Hall Meeting that showed an interest or had specific ideas for fundraising. The dates of future Fundraising Committee meetings will be publicized and Jim also encourages people to call him if they have specific ideas or would like to chair an event. A few areas the committee will be exploring in more detail include Casino Night (or a replacement event), opportunities to give on-line through the new website, Spaghetti Dinners, and Grant Procurement. Grant writing, in particular, is an area we would like to dedicate more time to. Jeff Cowdry, a past Board Member, was working on grant procurement last year, and a few St. Paul teachers also have experience in this area, but the process is very time-consuming and ultimately requires someone dedicated to grant writing.

SPAuction 2009 – Dorothy Ramos and Kathy Huyge (Chairpersons)

The goal for this year’s SPAuction was to get back to the basic concept of a fund raising event centered on fellowship and community. In light of the challenging economic times, overall event expenses were reduced, and the focus was on reaching out to the Foundation Angels, the “alums” of the school, and to bring in parishioners and families who have not attended in the past. Investments were made in a new software package and a laptop computer to improve accounting and efficiency. Dorothy reported that attendance was at approximately 280 and cash donations were up by 40 percent. The new “Daily Michigan Raffle,” organized by Steve Cole, worked out very well. Due to an unexpected power surge during the event, the billing/payment process is not complete at this time, but the tentative profit appears to be in the 49-59 K range. All of the proceeds will be going directly to the School Budget. The Board gratefully acknowledged the outstanding efforts of Dorothy, Kathy and the committee, and thanked them for making SPAuction 2009 a great success!

C. Marketing - Todd Mellema

Todd has been dedicating the majority of his Marketing efforts on the new St. Paul website and is happy to report that the website is up and running! Even though the website is a dynamic process, content should be “complete” in the next 1-2 months with updates made periodically as needed. Todd is also creating new Information Packets to be handed out to prospective families. Hillary Embrey has volunteered to create the template for the new information packets. Parent guided tours are being coordinated, with follow-up phone calls to be made to all prospective families. Lisa Leonard is working with Julie Palmer to set up a committee of parents to perform the tours. PR

specialist, Molly Klimas, a St. Paul alumna and past parent, will be working with Todd to create a comprehensive marketing plan to promote St. Paul School. Her goal is to “listen” to our many constituents and to tell our story in a cohesive voice. Her plan will involve evaluating the best use of marketing funds in order to reach our target audience. The main focus will be to define our audience (families with school age children), determine the message we want to convey (St. Paul School as a "brand"), come up with a strategy to achieve our marketing goals (increase enrollment) and to reinvigorate the St. Paul school community as a whole. Mark Meijer made a suggestion to utilize some type of signage placed in the front of the school/church to let people in the area know about the school and that we are currently registering students for the next school year. This should be done in the next few weeks to have the most impact. Todd will follow up with Mark on the idea.

D. School Improvement Committee – Jeff Potter for Laurie Daum

Jeff stated that the SIC is dedicated to making the school the best it can be through open and positive communication with parents. The committee will be focusing on the following areas:

- **Parent Mentor Program** – Focus on new families and linking them with current school families to answer questions or help with transition into our school community.
- **Exit Interviews** – Follow-up interviews with families that leave the school.
- **School Survey** – Giving opportunities for parents to voice concerns and offer comments.
- **Special Needs Program** – Laurie is investigating with a parent the possibility of servicing families with special needs children within the St. Paul school community.
- **Development Team** – Consider forming a team of individuals who would solicit funding for a particular school program or specific project.

VI. Principal Search – Dan Springer

Father Ernie is meeting with the Diocesan School Superintendant, Bernie Stanko, in order to determine the formal process of searching for a new principal for St. Paul School. According to Diocesan guidelines, the school principal reports directly to the parish pastor, and the pastor seeks council as needed from the School Board via the various Board Committees. After Fr. Ernie meets with Mr. Stanko he will communicate to the Board on the best way to proceed with the principal search. The procedure for finding a new principal will include: 1) Solicit candidates (recruit) and 2) Evaluate candidates (interview). Dan encouraged any interested persons who would like to participate on the selection committee to contact either him or Fr. Ernie. Once the proper procedure is determined the information will be distributed to the School Board and a Principal Selection Committee formed. Dan noted that March and April are typically the time of year when school principal searches are performed, so we are currently on target for replacing Julie for next year.

VII. Open Discussion

Agenda Items - March Meeting:

- 2009-10 Preliminary School Budget
- Update on Principal Search

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Regular Meeting: March 17, 2009

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Gutting,

Secretary