



MINUTES

Saint Thomas the Apostle School Advisory Board

Herron Hall

April 11, 2018

The meeting of the Saint Thomas the Apostle School Advisory Board (STASAB or the Board) was called to order by the Chairperson, Anthony Salandy at approximately 7:00pm.

Board Members in Attendance

Mr. Michael Petrillo, Principal
Mr. John Garrison, Facilities
Mrs. Rhona Siciliano, Marketing
Dr. Anthony Salandy, Board Chairperson, Strategic Planning
Mr. Paul Drexler, Finance Head
Mr. Kevin Courtney, Finance
Rev. Charles J. Miller, M. Div., Pastor

OPENING

Dr. Salandy at approximately 7:00pm calls the meeting to order and requests Rev. Miller to said a prayer. Rev. Miller then led the Board and audience members in a prayer. Dr. Salandy called the roll. All current Board members were present. Dr. Salandy then directed the audience's attention to the documents related to the Board that are available on the school's website and encouraged the audience to review.

ADVISORY BOARD BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the most recent executive session meeting on March 11, 2018 had not yet been fully vetted and approved by the Board. Therefore, there was no vote to approve minutes from the past meeting.

New Board Members

Dr. Salandy then introduced the nomination of two new Board members, Mrs. Susan Wessling Mattingly, who is present at the proceedings and Dr. Mary Ann Miller, who is not present due to a business engagement. Mr. Petrillo then provided a brief overview of the qualifications of Mrs. Mattingly. Dr. Salandy requested any public testimony on behalf of the nominees. No public testimony is offered. Dr. Salandy asked for a motion to vote on the approval of Mrs. Mattingly to the Board for a term of three years. The motion was seconded and the vote to approve Mrs. Mattingly to the STASAB for a term of three years was unanimous. Mr. Petrillo then provided a brief overview of the qualifications of Dr. Miller. Dr. Salandy requested public testimony in support of Dr. Miller. No public testimony is offered. Dr. Salandy asked for a motion to vote on the approval of Dr. Miller to the Board for a term of two years. The motion was seconded and the vote to approve Dr. Miller to the STASAB for a term of Two years was unanimous.

Principal's Report

Mr. Petrillo provided a hand-out detailing enhancements and improvements to the school. Mr. Petrillo then spoke about the four groups of students who were selected to represent St. Thomas the Apostle School at the Archdiocese of Newark's STEM Expo. Mr. Petrillo stated that the results of the Iowa Assessment standardized tests will be available by April 27, 2018. Mr. Petrillo spoke about the continued evaluation of the school facilities for safety and security including the possibility of replacing the all glass doors that lead to the gymnasium with steel doors and adding security cameras to the halls. Mr. Petrillo concluded with information regarding several of the 8th grade class receiving high school scholarships.

At the conclusion of the Principal's Report, Dr. Salandy then announced the Standing Committee Reports.

Standing Committee Reports

Dr. Salandy introduces Mr. Drexler of the Finance Committee.

- Finance

Mr. Drexler spoke about the general financial condition of the school. Mr. Drexler announced the additional proposed \$1.00 per hour increase (from \$5/hour) to the school's Before and After Care programs, that would still be competitive versus local alternatives, yet help to increase school revenues by approximately \$15,000. Mr. Drexler discussed the need to review the current cost allocations of the custodian and general grounds maintenance between the school and the church. STA is one of the 50 plus schools of 60 in the Archdiocese that receive subsidies from the Archdiocese

Upon conclusion of the Finance Committee report, Dr. Salandy opened the floor for public commentary. There was no public commentary and Dr. Salandy introduced Mr. Garrison of the Facilities Committee.

- Facilities

Mr. Garrison spoke about some of the projects completed at the school by the Boy Scouts such as the bathroom painting. Mr. Garrison also announced the new volunteer initiative to have parents volunteer to help with some maintenance at the school during the summer, such as painting some of the school hallways. Mr. Garrison concluded with a discussion about upcoming projects at the school, such as refurbishing some of the window grates on the ground floor windows. There is also a need to replace the grates around the 1st floor.

Upon conclusion of the Facilities Committee report, Dr. Salandy opened the floor for public commentary. There was no public commentary and Dr. Salandy introduced Mrs. Siciliano of the Marketing Committee.

- Marketing

Mrs. Sicilliano discussed the advertising employed by the school in order to maintain enrollment for the continued viability of the school. Mrs. Siciliano described the annual cost of the digital advertising is \$500 for a targeted demographic within the Bloomfield, New Jersey area. Mrs. Siciliano concluded her marketing update.

Upon conclusion of the Facilities Committee report, Dr. Salandy opened the floor for public commentary.

There was an inquiry about the retention of the Pre-Kindergarten class about to enter into Kindergarten. Mr. Petrillo responded that not all the registrations are in, but the numbers are pretty good. He indicated about 75% are registered. There was an inquiry about the actual percentage of Pre-Kindergarten retention. Mr. Petrillo does not have the percentages but will follow up with those figures for the next meeting.

There was a question regarding plans to update the school's website, as she is of the opinion that the website appears outdated in comparison to other school websites. Mr. Petrillo acknowledged the website appearance and will raise the concern with the web developer, Zuma, with whom the school has an annual contract. The contract is thought to have an annual cost of about \$500, but Mr. Petrillo will determine the exact cost. The current contract with Zuma expires on June 30, 2018.

There is a comment from the floor to put educational degrees and amount of teaching experience of each of the teachers on the school website. Also, there was a suggestion to place ads at Essex Park apartments in Belleville.

There is a question from the floor about what the maximum number of students can be in one classroom before it is required that the classroom be divided between two teachers. Mr. Petrillo stated that he believes the number in question is 30 students as per the Archdiocese.

There is a question from the floor regarding the criteria for any new students coming into St. Thomas the Apostle School. Mr. Petrillo detailed the vetting process for new students which involve placing the child with the classroom teacher in which it is anticipated the child will be placed if accepted, teacher feedback regarding the prospective student's experience in the classroom and an interview with the Principal. In addition, the Principal interviews both the parents and prospective student. There was a suggestion from the floor that exit interviews be conducted as well as the entrance interviews

A constituent inquired about whether the school receives any support from the other local parishes that do not have schools. *No record of response.*

Dr. Salandy concludes the public commentary for Facilities and introduces the final standing committee report for Strategic Planning of which Dr. Salandy is the head.

- Strategic Planning

Dr. Salandy discussed the plans to implement a five-year strategic plan for the school which includes a road to financial stability and student enrollment targets. Dr. Salandy stated that the goal will be to have the new strategic plan in place prior to the beginning

of the next school year. Dr. Salandy concluded with stating that the Board would like to develop and implement metrics to gauge the success of any measures taken to meet the goals of the strategic plan and to hold the Board accountable for providing insightful guidance to the STA Principal.

Upon conclusion of the Strategic Planning Committee report, Dr. Salandy opened the floor for public commentary.

There is a question from the floor regarding the possibility of teaching assistants. A constituent inquired about the support available for new teachers. Mr. Petrillo stated that there is professional development available for the teachers through Bloomfield township.

A constituent from the floor talks about opening up the strategic planning to the public. There was an inquiry from floor on the status of next year's sports, if the teams will still be co-ed and, if not, how can parents help either keep the co-ed programs or find alternatives so the students will still have a sports outlet.

There was an inquiry from floor about the current enrollment for the next year. Mr. Petrillo stated that currently there are 176 students confirmed, approximately 155 of which are returning students.

A constituent asked if the Board will be looking at teachers. The constituent also asked if the students are up to par. Dr. Salandy responded that the role of the Board is strictly an advisory one and that the Principal is the decision maker.

A constituent inquired about moving some of the specials (music, art) to classrooms. Mr. Petrillo responded that music has moved to a classroom, but that art continues to be held in Herron Hall. Mr. Petrillo explained that for some of the younger grades, moving to a second or third floor classroom may take away more class time. A constituent also expressed concern for the younger classes located on the first floor. Mr. Garrison talked about the logistics and expense of moving the main office from the second floor to the first floor in order to move the younger grades to the second floor.

Dr. Salandy concluded the public commentary for Strategic Planning.

Announcements

Next Meeting

Dr. Salandy motioned to have the next public meeting on:

Wednesday, June 13, 2018 in Herron Hall

There is unanimous agreement on the date and the motion is passed. Dr. Salandy then opened the floor for public comment. A constituent who had previously submitted a request for public comment form to the Board, was recognized by the Chair, and asked to present her comments.

A constituent expressed her concern about the level of academic rigor at the school, especially in the areas of math and science, and is concerned about the lack of homework, projects and book reports. The constituent expressed concern about the lack of quantifiable grades until the 4th

grade. The same constituent stated that she has noticed a difference between the New York City standardized test and the Archdiocese testing and is concerned about the student's preparedness academically.

A constituent also expressed concern about the academic rigor based upon recent experience of his child bringing home a math test that the student was asked to memorize, then take as the actual test the following day. The constituent also expressed concern about the lack of homework.

A constituent expressed concern for writing skills of students.

A constituent stated disagreement with decisions about students or teachers based on the Iowa Testing alone. The constituent believed that the STEM Fair took too much time away from classroom instructional science class.

A constituent provided feedback that they were pleased with math classes being split based upon student ability level and states that the school used to do that starting in the 5th grade. Mr. Petrillo explained that breaking out the math class by ability level begins in the 6th grade and continues through 8th grade.

A constituent was pleased with the level of security at the school. The constituent stated that there continues to be problems after school hours when people wedge the door open. The Boy Scouts do a good job keeping the building secure when using it the constituent said.

A constituent inquired about the uniform policy and wants to encourage stricter adherence to the policy and enforcement of the policy

A constituent expressed concern about a mess that was left in one of the classrooms by the CCD class that used the room the day before. Mr. Petrillo stated that he will address the issue with the CCD program.

Dr. Salandy asked for a motion to adjourn at approximately 8:15pm and the motion was seconded and a vote taken and passed unanimously.