

ASCENSION SCHOOL BOARD MINUTES: 5/12/08

IN ATTENDANCE: Father Larry McNally, Mary Jo Burns ,Neil Heskin, Lynn Frederick, Terry Thiese (06), Liz Skalitsky (05), Jason Allington (07), Dan Rodde (07), Tom Carraher (05), Craig Shannon (06), Patti Farley (06), Pat Hess (08), Jill Pollard (08), Mark Szaflarski

DATES TO REMEMBER:

5/20/08 at 7:30 PM Commissions Meeting
6/9/08 at 6 PM Installation of New Board
July TBA Board Dinner
August TBA Board Retreat
9/27/08 Annual Archdiocese Meeting for School Board Members

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

MINUTES: Last month's minutes were approved.

PASTOR'S REPORT: Father Larry thanks all who contributed to our successful First Communion ceremonies. He will visit with the Second Grade this week.

He will be meeting with other priests and representatives of the Archdiocese on May 18, 2008. He hopes to discuss improving communication with the Downtown Office as well as Ascension's progress in the Liturgy.

As reported in the Dome, Ascension will participate in the PADS program this summer, hosting lunch on the last Saturday of June and July/

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT: See attached.

Terra Nova tests will be going to parents within the next 10 days.

Ms. Burns requested that the Board contribute to her self-evaluation as required by the Archdiocese. The evaluation is due May 19, 2008.

Ms. Burns requested that the School Board form an ad hoc Enrollment Committee to discuss current enrollment and plan for the future. Planning is needed in view of the possibility of having 50 four year old students in our Pre-K program. Terry Thiese., Jason Allington and Liz Skalitzky will participate.

Ascension School will continue with the Archdiocese Lunch program.

Board Chair Terry Thiese will draft the letters to our 8th grade graduates.

At our June meeting, next year's Board Meeting dates and other important dates will be set, including Elections, Open House, and Back to School Night. The Board is encouraged to attend the Archdiocese Meeting on September 27, 2008 at Nazareth Academy in LaGrange Park.

The Board's summer pot luck dinner will also be scheduled and Ms. Burns and Father Larry would like a Board retreat to take place in August.

DEVELOPMENT REPORT: See attached. The Board reviewed the recent Development and Fundraising policies implemented in August of 2007. The distinction between Fundraising and Endowment and where contributions go will be reviewed. The Endowment Committee should meet to work on this issue. Lynn will work with Neil to ensure that all income is properly tracked and reported. The Best use Gifts are currently around \$48,000 and our Endowment is at \$4,630. Ascension School needs to raise \$10,000 to invest with Archdiocese's Endowment Fund. Money from the Golf Outing will be designated for Endowment.

COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS:

New Committees and Liaisons will be appointed in the coming months. Terry Thiese stressed that these Committees must make it a priority to meet.

Academic Committee: An ad hoc enrollment committee will meet this month.

Finance: Neil Heskin attended and reported on the school finances. Neil attended to respond to Board concern that the Board is not receiving enough information on finances to adequately address budget issues in December and January of each year.

Neil will be taking a more active role in the school budget. He detailed the Schools regular submissions to the Archdiocese and the various reports that are due in January, February and September of each year. 83% of our school budget is devoted to salaries and benefits; 11% to fixed costs such as maintenance and utilities; and about 7% of the budget is discretionary. The Board will receive monthly reports next fiscal year on the budget. He is working with our Development Director to track fundraising. Mike

Iannaccone and Tom Booker have also participated in finance reports and their contributions are appreciated.

The Board also discussed the Parish contribution to the school. As expected, over the years, when enrollment is up, the parish contribution is lower.

Our regular fundraising activities (Auction, Runathon, and Shopping Certificates) are figured into our budget based on prior year projections.

The Board addresses Tuition costs in January in preparation for our Open House in late January. Salary and benefits information is provided by the Archdiocese in around the first of the year.

Commissions: Will meet on 5/20/08 at 7:30 PM

Submitted by Mark Szaflarski
Next meeting June 9, 2007 at 6 PM

DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The Development Committee of the Board met this week and made headway in a mutual understanding of the purpose of the group. I met with Fr. McNally and Mary Jo the following day and I believe that the three of us are in agreement as to how the committee will advise the development office.

We need board input in both fundraising and in development programs. We need board support for the implementation of the policies that we wrote this year and we need help with the establishment of the big picture, not to the detriment of the immediate status of the school, but for its advancement. The relationships we're building through development programs are the future of the school. You have to be able to count on me to build them and to know how best to go about it but it's my responsibility to help you understand why we do the things that we do.

To that end, we began the process of committee formation with background information that I believe the committee found helpful. To continue that formation, I will meet monthly with the board development committee (ideally, at a set day and time); I hope that the committee will help with a development plan and a development budget and will be responsible for representing the development office at board meetings. I'll be responsible for those meetings; for the establishment of an agenda and for running the meeting. That group will participate in decisions (such as the current list of funding priorities) that will be presented to the board.

I believe that you are receiving (or have received) resolution regarding the question of the golf outing income from Mary Jo and Father McNally. In the interest of helping you understand the decision, I offer three points. One, since the golf outing comes at the end of the fiscal year, we've never been certain whether it was necessary for school operating costs; if those funds are not necessary to balance the budget, they simply reduce the parish investment in the school and we'd prefer that not happen. (This is part of a much larger budget issue that is being addressed by Neil and the parish finance committee.) Two, we have written a 'best use' policy that gives us a fall-back if we need best use funds to balance the budget; best use gifts are given without strings; when we ask for gifts, they're given more readily with strings – restrictions. Three, it is much easier to seek underwriting support, and to invite alumni support, for a specific, far-sighted need, like the endowment. The alumni who work on the outing requested that the funds be directed to the endowment.

In one way, the timing of this conversation is perfect. There has been a significant amount of discussion at parish staff, and now with the parish finance committee, about the feasibility of adding some parish responsibilities to my role. I can only take on additional duties if we hire an associate for the office; and we are still negotiating what my new duties

would be. This change will certainly call the question of a development committee. A parish committee? A school committee? With what relationships with current parish/school leadership? Without the position having been formed, without the associate position announced, without the details of the new responsibilities determined, it is impossible to say what sort of committee we will have to form. The leadership of the school, though, has to be part of that discussion. It would be very helpful if we would have the model of a board development committee in place prior to the next step with the parish. I believe we made significant progress this week.

Mary Jo sent you a piece that she got at NCEA that is a great beginning for our conversation about development—actually, about advancement, but for now we'll continue to use the word development so as not to muddy the water. In summary, the piece distinguished between fundraising income and development income. The difference is crucial but the two models are very closely connected. The success of a development program is dependent on a carefully controlled fundraising program.

As the piece says, “the main thing not to do is...‘nickel and dime’ people to death.” This is the reason we have to oversee all fundraising programs, that 7th and 8th grade fundraising, student council fundraising etc. all be conducted within the auspices of the development office. We are trying to minimize fundraising programs and expand development efforts. You can't do the latter successfully without doing the former. (We should be working to this end in the parish as well, a much more challenging project.)

Looking at the auction may help you understand the points at which fundraising and development diverge. We have two kinds of people who attend the auction: shoppers and donors. Shoppers are doing just that: they are looking for a bargain. Donors are making an investment. Shoppers have the “buy and sell” mentality that the article from Mary Jo describes as being a fundraising component. Donors are going to pay \$1,000 for boxed seats at Pack the Place—a much nicer way to spend that night in the gym, admittedly, but when they write that check, they are making a gift. Each person, donor or shopper, has a pretty good idea what they are going to pay to get out of the building at the end of the evening. They know what their role is. Part of my job is to move people from one role to the other—to change their relationship with Ascension School. It means helping them to see the big picture and in order to do that we (the leadership of the school) have to have a big picture. (This is advancement.)

We have two major fundraising events (auction and runathon) that bring in fundraising dollars—dollars that benefit operating expenses and we have a fundraising commitment program that provides great opportunities for shoppers (literally!) to be involved. But increasingly, those two events depend on development efforts. (Underwriting support, sponsorships, etc.) Fundraising is not the way to fiscal security—development is.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Neil Heskin will be present at Monday's School Board meeting and Finance will be the focus of the meeting. Lynn will also be present to report on Development. Board members should have received a report from her about the Development Committee meeting. I am including a rather lengthy report here to keep Monday's meeting a reasonable length – that is, ending about 9PM. I would ask every Board member to bring calendars in order to schedule monthly committee meetings, summer Board events and a School Board retreat in August or September. New Board members should be invited to the June meeting. I will also extend an invitation to this meeting, since it will provide important information and a culmination of some of this year's work.

Thanks/Acknowledgements for many outstanding "happenings" this last month.

Lynn Fredrick, parish staff, musicians and all volunteers who made this year's Grandparents' Day very special. Christine Ondrla, Kathy Marifjeren, David Anderson, choristers, Mrs. Dunn, Mrs. VanThorre, ministers, deacons and everyone who contributed to creating beautiful First Communion experiences. Annie Boockmeier, Deb Morawski and Lynn Fredrick for hospitality for Ascension Sunday. Dan Lawler and teacher volunteers, Grade 8 parents for supporting Grade programs and activities. Home and School for enrichment programs. Runathon coordinators, Jean Bowling and Barb Fitzgerald, runners, donors and volunteers – the awards assembly will be May 16, rain or shine. Lynn Fredrick and the D'Onofrio Family, Paula Schumacker, Bill Komala and school volunteers Rick Sandoval, Jen Hansen and others who helped with the PK 4-Kindergarten project. It looks wonderful! Earth Week coordinators were most creative. Becky Coffman for outstanding leadership of the talented strings players. Mrs. Lippi, Mr. and Mrs. Kreis and everyone who helped with Greek Day! Mr. Sengstock for his reliable leadership of Student Council. Mrs. Atkins and Mrs. Morawski for completing all the paperwork required to earn Ascension the \$15,000 safety grant.

Staffing

The School Community has been informed that Mrs. Alice Dunn will retire at the end of this year. There will be an event honoring her on Sunday, June 1 at noon. I have resumes from two excellent Grade 2 teaching candidates that were referred to me. Mrs. Walter is transferring to Washington DC. Mrs. Parrilli will be the new Kindergarten teacher. It is my plan to replace Mrs. Parrilli with current Grade 1 aides, Mrs. Blatner and

Mrs. Segó who will share that position and continue to work part-time in Grade 1. Mrs. Wilmoth and Mrs. Sklaney and Mrs. Blatner and Mrs. Segó have been in conversation. This one-year plan will save a full time benefits eligible position while providing assistance to the Grade 1 teachers.

With the addition of an afternoon PK Multiage Class, there will be an opening for a part-time teacher (no benefits). Archdiocesan policy requires that the teacher be certified, ideally with an endorsement in Early Childhood. The teacher assistant position will be filled in-house.

Current staff are meeting with me for annual reviews. Contracts are being offered and should be signed and returned by May 23.

Enrollment

Pastors and principals from the Tri-Village area met on April 21 to discuss Catholic education. Every parish and school was represented and committed to support one another and the mission of Catholic school education. Representatives addressed a letter to Archdiocesan leadership urging a one-year grant for St. Bernardine School. Fr. Tucker acknowledged receipt of the grant, and plans for St. Bernardine to remain open for 2008-2009.

Ascension's projected enrollment for 2008-2009 is 516. (I will have a class-by-class chart for Monday) This number does not include a potential addition of 8-12 students in a three day a week afternoon PK class. That class would bring the school to its maximum facility capacity. This could also bring the PK 4 enrollment to more than 65; it is currently 58, or eight more than recommended for two Kindergarten classes. I ask the Board to assign an ad hoc committee on enrollment (I recommend the current Long Range planning committee or a volunteer group). The role of the ad hoc committee will be to look at the current enrollment policy in light of preschool enrollment. The committee should review enrollment patterns for the last several years, and could recommend changes in policy for 2009-2010 registration. The committee would meet in May or June and at least one time in late summer or early fall. The committee would advise the principal and pastor and draft new policy or changes as needed. The current policy limits enrollment in upper grades to 26 students. The school is following that policy and has two families on a waiting list for Grade 5. The School has been in communication with the families. There are no openings in Grade 7 as well.

PK wait list families have been contacted. Ascension teachers and the School Board advised opening another section, so this plan is going forward.

From the April Minutes:

“Long Range Planning: Met twice to review the 2003 Strategic Plan Discussed creating a new 10 year plan ideally by year’s end. Board authorized moving forward to complete a strategic plan”

This committee did not meet this month, but had information to study about long-range planning.

Terra Nova Test Scores

The School received test scores, and Mrs. Pesce (testing coordinator) and Mrs. Ganzel attended a workshop sponsored by the Office of Catholic Schools and the testing company. Mrs. Pesce will have a report for the June Board Meeting. Families of children in grades 3, 5 and 7 will receive test score results later this month, with a summary report for their child’s grade level. I have not reviewed scores with Mrs. Pesce, so I am not prepared to discuss them on Monday.

Lunch Program

Ascension School will continue to participate in the optional Archdiocesan Food Service Program.

Development

Based on the recommendation of the Alumni Golf Outing Committee and the director of development, the golf outing earnings have been designated for the school’s endowment. With luck, there will be \$10,000 total in the account, enough to deposit with the Archdiocese.

Board Responsibilities:

The School Board writes a letter to each graduate and each graduating family. Who will take responsibility for this task? The School Board chair or a representative of the School Board attends the Graduation Mass. This year it is on June 2. Who will attend? All Board members are welcome. Who can represent the Board in summer calendar meetings? Generally, Home and School sets Back to School night and the School sets Open House, but Board advice could be helpful concerning conferences and other dates. Can the Board select a calendar representative? School is set to open on Tuesday, August 26. The annual School Board development day is in late September. I will have the date. I am scheduling a short Board retreat for fall, and I would like at least one Board member to help with planning.