

**Saratoga Central Catholic School
Board of Trustees**

***Meeting Minutes
Monday September 25, 2023***

Opening

The regular meeting of the Saratoga Central Catholic School Board was called to order at 5:00 pm. Principal Signor led the opening prayer.

Present

Bill Darcy- Chair, Dan Kumlander - Vice Chair, Trish Dugan - Secretary, Chris Signor - School Principal, Nikki Hartmann, Lisa Moser, Rose Place

Absent: Fr. James Ebert, Jeff Pompa,

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the June 20, 2023 meeting minutes by Bill Darcy and was seconded by Dan Kumlander. All were in favor, none opposed.

State of the School Report: (Chris Signor, Principal)

- Enrollment: 195 students currently, the hope is by October 4th (BED day) actual start of school, there will be 197. A goal has been set for 200 students for the year. It was mentioned that the students that left the school did not leave due to the academics or tuition. Other reasons determined this shift; sports, location, moved out of state, etc.
- Safety: Security Guard Chris Clark, a retired Sherriff is fitting in well and establishing a presence at the school. Mr. McGee is still assisting in the mornings at the drop off entrance, while Mr. Clark is securing, observing the cross walks and perimeter of the building.
- The Safety Committee met, reviewed and updated last year's plan. Ballistic film was purchased and installed on the windows as part of the Higher Power Learning Grant obtained through the assistance of Courtney Manning and Dina Henke, SCC parents.
- The topic of the vacant senior building bordering school property was brought up. There have been new developments that Rise will most likely be utilizing this location as office space with the intent to counsel clients regardless of the 1000 foot buffer. There was also mention of the informal parent group and task force that has been following the chain of events with regards to the homeless shelter. The parent group has stated it fears there is potential for "creep" whereby the tenant continues to add additional services without proper notification, narrowly violating the buffer zone. It will continue to be closely monitored and addressed as things unfold.
- The individual that walked into the open gym the other night was served with a No Trespass Order. The rental client that was holding the open gym that had mistakenly left the door open and unlocked was made aware of the proper protocol and moving forward will lock all doors.
- Chris Signor discussed the need to push forward with a capital campaign. The first ask needs to be the parish. The roof has been a big issue for the school and after review from

Steve Rowland, Architect, there are 3 layers of roof on a building that is only structurally able to carry 2. It was also noted that asbestos is present. \$350K will be needed in remedial costs to rectify the roof situation. This will prompt the discussion with the parish; ownership and funding are the main issues to be addressed.

- Bill Brooking, a U Albany Business Teacher and Assistant Director of Financial Aid, has been hired to help secure endowed scholarships for tuition assistance. This position will be based upon the enrollment, should it stay the same or increase. He will be working to secure funds for advancement, capital campaigns and endowed scholarships.
- Principal Signor also shared and was very pleased to announce that the Kerry Warner Women of Distinction award was given to Maria Izzo, who was nominated by Kate Sedlak.

1. Committee Reports:

a. Advancement and Development (Lisa Moser)

- Two large yellow school buses have been purchased. One is a 30 passenger school bus and the other a 34 passenger school bus. The budget has already been established for gas, labor, insurance and maintenance. There will be (3) bus drivers that will be hourly employees and the school is self insured by the diocese. This will allow for significant savings as each trip now through the bus companies are \$450 / trip (sports or field).
- Gala will be more than likely in the fall but there will be further discussions to take place.

b. Enrollment and Retention (Nikki Hartmann)

- There was a brief overview of the committee and its members for Enrollment Retention. There are 6 main members and 3 consult roles. Main: Pat Douglass, Molly Green, Ann Constantino, Rachel Hajos, Brittany Day, Nikki Hartmann. Consult: Aiden Lambert, Maria Izzo, Heather Bott. The current goal is to bring 10 new students into the school each year to increase enrollment. They are scheduling various activities and purchasing marketing materials to offer to prospective families.
- Spirit Day was discussed with the possibility of inviting potential students along with parents to be able to experience the schools welcoming and positive energy first hand. We discussed options of creating stronger ties and better connections with sister schools; St. Mary's Ballston Spa, St. Clements Saratoga Springs and St. Mary's Glens Falls. Principals will try and connect once a month for lunch to strengthen relations.
- Saints for the Day is an opportunity for elementary school students to visit SCC for the day and be given their own schedule to shadow other students. This is to give them a better understanding of what to expect when entering middle school or high school at SCC. It was mentioned that this is currently happening twice for St. Clements in the fall and spring and just the spring for St. Mary's Ballston Spa due to limited resources and staffing.
- Marketing, recruitment and retention will be the main focus of this committee. Aiden Lambert has been extremely instrumental in getting the school on all branches of Social Media. It was discussed that along with this there needs to be a word of mouth campaign with testimonials. Aiden Lambert mentioned that current reviews are outdated on the

website and need to be revamped. Niche school ranking service would be a good place to start. New enrollee's and especially transfers from larger school districts would be preferred testimonials at this time.

- The open house that is happening October 26th, 5:30-7:30 was discussed. It was requested that all board members be present, if at all possible.
- The surveys from last year were tallied and all answers were categorized. The majority of similar sentiments will be reviewed with Chris Signor to create action items and determine trends. The minority of individual sentiments will be reviewed if immediate action is warranted. The mission statement was also discussed as a factor for the survey.

c. Mission Enhancement (Trish Dugan)

- Pat Douglass, Campus Minister had submitted information with regards to class retreats and schedules through the campus ministry report. It was determined through the report that all masses would be either a feast day, memorial service or some sort of a celebration. Mr. McGee and Mr. Pikus will assist by preparing students during the week of mass, so each student will understand the reason for the mass and why it is celebrated. It is Pat's hope that the more each student understands about Catholic traditions, they will be open to accept Jesus Christ.
- A discussion was had on the elimination of masses during lent. This will need to be discussed in more detail. There was also mention of a plan to bring in guest speakers that have overcome severe pain and hardships, along with the welcoming of board to offer any other recommendations of guest speakers.
- There is currently a 12 member peer ministry team that was assembled in August 2023. They have been preparing for the retreats and are responsible for the morning prayer, pledge and planning for participation in the upcoming masses.
- In the religion and theology classes all students have been taking the Circle of Grace – Safe Environment Training, mandated by Bishop Sharfenburger for all parishes and Catholic Schools in the Albany Diocese. Example: 6th Grade just finished Social Media's Influence on Relationships,
- The main focus of the Campus Ministry is to build a faith based education with the hope that each student will grow in his or her faith and personally encounter Jesus Christ.
- The calendar was also submitted and it was noted that it may be prudent to add to the Campus Ministry Calendar of Events to the online school calendar as well, if it has not already been done.

d. Finance (Dan Kumlander)

- The reports were noted that the school is currently operating in the black, as opposed to the red. Advanced budget preparation has played a huge part in this. Dan Kumlander and Chris Signor have been working on putting the budgets in place for tuition rates since the spring. The adjustments to the staffing have also helped the bottom line to recover. There

will be some creative uses of the money generated from the gala; capital improvements such as bathroom upgrades and roof repair.

- Health Insurance is also down 25% after just a 2 month period. New staff members are opting out of taking the school insurance benefit.
- The new buses that have just recently been added to the fleet will contribute to significant savings with regards to sports trips and activity and field trips. The school was paying \$450 per trip at the mercy of the outsourced bus company.
- The school wide field trip of October 4th, 2023 was discussed. The field trip costs are already racking up and hitting the budget early in the school year.
- The addition of Bill Brooking the U Albany Business Teacher and Assistant Director of Financial Aid will be helpful in securing funding and endowments that will assist in our fundraising campaigns.
- Background checks were discussed and have been mandated by the diocese for chaperones. The school can no longer cover the costs for individuals. Parents will need to pay for their own background checks and they will good for 5 years. Principal Signor mentioned that he would like for the checks to be in real time like they are for the staff. So if there were changes in the status of the individual with the background check on file, the school would be notified immediately. Unfortunately, there currently isn't a way to obtain a background check for individuals with the same real time results as staff. Currently parents without a background check are still able to attend functions with their student, just not chaperone other students.

e. Financial Aid (Dan Kumlander)

- Currently there are \$16K in discounts marked for Financial Aid.

f. Nominations (Bill Darcy)

- Bill Darcy noted that Terrell Brown has stepped down as Recording Secretary and Mission Enhancement Chair.
- With an opening within the board, Gail Riley was invited to the September board meeting by Bill Darcy and was given an application to apply for a position within the board, pending review. Gail serves on the school board at St. Mary's in Ballston Spa and mentioned various fund raisers that she was involved with during the meeting. Nikki Hartmann noted that Gail may be a good point of contact to continue to strengthen the bond between both schools.
- Gail Riley left the meeting and conversation about board size and parent ratio were discussed. Dan Kumlander mentioned that perhaps we could increase the size of the board to accommodate the ratio. Chris Signor suggested that if we did increase the size he would like to have a set limit but it would be great to have a non parent, member from St. Peters parish added to the board to balance it.

g. Facilities (Jeff Pompa)

- Jeff Pompa was not at the meeting but his report was discussed. The findings were that the roof was recently patched again and that there needed to be serious discussions regarding a capital campaign to fund roof replacement. He was planning on meeting with the original bid Architect within the next few days and suggested that we obtain 2 more bids, at minimum, as well. This would all fall under capital improvements. The plan would be to design in the fall / winter and execute the actual work in June when the school was out of session.
- Custodial contracts were negotiated for landscaping and grounds as well and there is a company in place that Chris Signor has designated for this work.
- Bill Darcy mentioned that four new maintenance staff were added and are on retainer currently to perform general maintenance duties around the school as part time employees. It was agreed that the school would maintain a small inventory for repairs and emergencies as they arise. These staff members work at various schools in the area and are very familiar with the intricacies of older school buildings as well as boilers.
- Chris Signor stated that he will be testing the water daily for the boiler but has set up the new maintenance staff to come and turn on the boiler, service and perform monthly maintenance etc...
- Overall budget surplus leaves some room in case of facility emergencies.

Additional Agenda Items

1. Old Business

- Homeroom Parents to work with Advisors – Chris Signor is working with Advisors in determining candidates within each grade. The idea is that this will be the new PTSO.
- Student Council Elections are set for next week.

2. New Business

- Should there be a cost to Volley Ball games like we have for Basketball games?
- Trish Dugan asked if there was going to be a Halloween Dance and if so, what grades? Nikki Hartmann was going to look into it but wasn't aware of any plans at this time.

Closing Prayer – (Chris Signor)

- Meeting was adjourned at 6:45pm. Principal Signor led the closing prayer.