



## ST. LAWRENCE ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES from October 13, 2014

The St. Lawrence School Advisory Council met on October 13, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. Members in attendance were Laurie Batchelor, Kate Capp, Brian Gresens, Nancy Kruger, Jason Street, Angie Weber, and Melissa Wheeler. Also attending were Fr. Gary DeRouchey, Sr. Beth Ann Dillon, Darby Helms, and Chad Novy.

Fr. Gary said an opening prayer and Laurie called the meeting to order. The September meeting minutes were read. Sr. Beth Ann corrected that the students don't sing a song at the beginning of the day, but pray and recite the pledge in the gym as to not disrupt daily Mass. Laurie made a motion to approve the corrected minutes and Jason seconded the motion. The motion passed and the minutes were approved with the corrections.

### **PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

Sr. Beth Ann reported the school had a review of records by the state. Our enrollment figures were improperly recorded by the state. There were problems with the age of some pre-school and sixth grade students due to an error by the state. Sr. Beth Ann asked the state for a waiver for the students since it was their error. Our enrollment numbers are now correctly recorded. A student must be five years of age by September 1st in order to be eligible to enter Kindergarten. The school's immunization records are complete with the exception of one preschool student, but the parents are working on getting a copy of the records.

A few cases of head lice have been reported. The school nurse was in last week and did a head check of all the students. Overall, the kids are doing well in school with only a few behavior issues.

Most of the "Giving Tree" items have been purchased for the school. The School Mall fundraiser is completed and the school met an early deadline so each classroom will receive a \$25 Wal-Mart gift card to use for supplies. The School Mall usually generates about \$1,200 for the school and Sr. Beth Ann expects about the same amount or a little more than last year.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

After the September meeting, Fr. Gary emailed the figures from the gala. Father's email reported the net profit was \$36,244.33 which is divided between the school and endowment fund. The combined endowment fund of three accounts is just under \$440,000.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Questions about office supplies were raised. The L.I.F.E. group provides a "slush" fund for teachers to buy supplies for the classrooms. The L.I.F.E. group was contacted by the school secretary to see if L.I.F.E could provide a fund for office supplies such as postage, ink cartridges, etc. The secretary has been using her own money to purchase some supplies needed in the school office. Sr. Beth

Ann does not have purchasing authority. Fr. Gary said that parish secretary, Cheryl Radermacher, has postage and supplies or can purchase them for the school office. Father stated he was not aware that a request was made to L.I.F.E., that only Sister Beth Ann is allowed make requests of the L.I.F.E. group, and that the issue would be further addressed in a staff meeting.

There are no figures yet from the murder mystery theater. It was a fun evening and the guests appeared to really enjoy the show.

The grandparent's Mass was well attended this year.

Sr. Beth Ann questioned a number for the copy machine. There is a number listed as RE/School. She would like to figure out who the number is assigned to and who is using the number. Sister wants to make sure the school's budget isn't being overcharged for copies. The copy machine is rented and each copy is charged to a budget account. Each teacher and staff member is assigned a number for the copy machine. Teachers are limited to twenty colored copies a month, but have unlimited black and white copies. If teachers need additional colored copies, they can make more upon approval.

The council asked questions on how the school and R.E. budgets are split. The two budgets are not combined. Darby reported that there are approximately 149 students enrolled in R.E. The R.E. program asks the families for a donation to cover the cost of books and supplies, but a family is not required to pay it. Darby orders the R.E. books for the school and R.E. program. Both use the same books, except the school uses the school version which has more lessons. Sr. Beth Ann asked who is charged for books ordered by Darby but come addressed to the school. Any books ordered by Darby are charged to the R.E. program.

Council members asked how the fundraising money was used and what has changed in the budget the last few years. Fr. Gary reported that fundraising money was never included in the school's budget prior to his coming to St. Lawrence. The fundraising money is now part of the budget which has improved the parish funding ratio of the school. He reported that the improved funding ratio enabled the parish to hire a full-time R.E. coordinator (Darby). Darby is the coordinator for the entire R.E. program at St. Lawrence and St. Mary's, she orders books, oversees safe environment training, and is a resource for the school, teachers, and staff.

Fr. Gary gave each council member a copy of the school's budget at the end of the September meeting. After reviewing the budget, council members asked for clarification on some of the income and expense accounts. The church/school uses the diocese's accounting software so specific details in the accounts are somewhat limited by the software. Fr. Gary went through all of the income and expense accounts with the council. He gave details on what funding activities went into each of the income accounts. It was asked if the school receives any tax money from the state and the answer is no. However, our numbers are used in the public school's enrollment which increases their state aid. Some of the benefits we receive from the public school are: bus transportation, text books, band and P.E. teachers, and hot lunch service. St. Lawrence School and the Milbank School District have always had a good working relationship. The council asked Fr. Gary to provide quarterly budget reports and he agreed.

It was asked why there was a name change last year from "school board" to "advisory council" and why some Catholic schools have an actual board that votes, but we don't. This was a mandate issued by Bishop Swain. The Bishop has the final decision in all parish/school matters. The role of an advisory board is to bring the concerns of the school and parents before the priest, but has no

voting power. At St. Lawrence, the parish and school are tied together. In certain communities, the Catholic school is not tied to a parish and they have their own school district, and therefore those schools have an actual voting board. Some council members feel that the concerns of the council aren't being listened to by Father. Fr. Gary replied that the council members represent the families of the school, but his job is to take care of the entire parish and that the council may not always like or agree with some of his decisions. A council member asked if any school matters were on the agenda for the fireside chat. Fr. Gary said there will be discussion on re-doing the school's roof at the chat.

The Christmas greenery fundraiser is in progress. It was asked what happens if we don't make as much money in fundraising as previous years. Fundraising is a vital part of keeping tuition cost down. If the fundraising proceeds drop, tuition rates will increase accordingly. Currently it costs about \$3,800 to educate a child at St. Lawrence. The parish contributes \$1,900 to each student's education, fundraising currently contributes \$600 to each student, and tuition covers the rest. The question was raised about doing new or different fundraisers. Sr. Beth Ann will need to meet with the L.I.F.E. group to discuss fundraising ideas.

Along with fundraising, Sr. Beth Ann is looking for organizations willing to contribute to privately funded schools. She feels that St. Lawrence students need to be highly visible in the public – wearing khakis and blues to lyceums, school trips, etc.; for the school to participate in national competitions such as the spelling bee, etc. She would also like to re-engage with the alumni of the school.

Angie made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kate seconded the motion. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

\*Next meeting is scheduled for November 10th at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Kate Capp, Secretary*

\*All school council meeting dates are published in the bulletin and listed on the parish website.