

## **Saint Mary Catholic School Advisory Council**

Meeting Minutes for October 23, 2024

*Meeting was assembled at 2pm in PLC Upstairs Meeting Room*

In Attendance: Principal Peter Rodgers, SAC Chair Vanessa Kuennen, SAC Secretary Amy Hebson, PTO President Brooke Barnes, Katie Ryan, Stacey Mai, Karen Kirk, Delores Noechel, and Cristina Gill.

I. **Opening Prayer:** Led by Principal Peter Rodgers

II. **Reading of School Mission Statement and Welcome:** Read by Vanessa

*Dedicated to Catholic values, Saint Mary Catholic School is a Christ-centered educational community committed to academic excellence, spiritual growth, individual responsibility, and service to others.*

III. **Reading and Approval of Minutes**

Karen made motion to approve minutes from September 2024 meeting. Motion was seconded by Stacey. Minutes were signed.

IV. **School Report:** Given by Mr. Rodgers

- A. Enrollment is currently at 407. We anticipate some fluctuation throughout the year due to military moves.
- B. We received the first draft of the new, updated website from JCW, the company out of New Orleans who is building it. Mr. Rodgers showed it to the committee on the overhead screen. The new site will be launched in the Spring (most likely March) after the accreditation process is complete. It will be ready before then but the accreditation package is linked to documents and information on the current site. Current site will remain live to minimize any confusion.
- C. The school was awarded a \$150K grant from the Florida Division of Emergency Management to be used for security upgrades. SMCS parent, Illy Reiker, wrote the grant proposal that was submitted and approved. This grant proposal was put together in just a week which was only made possible by Katie Ryan's thorough security assessment that was required for the grant.
- D. Annual Campaign letters were sent out about a week ago. The plan is to use the Annual Campaign funds along with the Fun Run funds (about \$60k in total from last year) and the \$150k grant award to fund new windows for the middle and elementary buildings which are an estimated \$220k.
- E. Saint Mary Impact has raised \$200k to date. This includes the \$100k match from an anonymous donor. Ryan Montalto has pitched several ideas on how to spend the money.
- F. Mr. Rodgers and Vanessa recently spoke about the SAC's bylaws and committees which need to be completed by the February accreditation.
- G. Mr. Rodgers announced at the last faculty meeting that the school will no longer be able to use the PLC classrooms or the HUB by next summer. We are currently using the spaces for music and band.
- H. Mr. Rodgers shared his idea for the formation of a House System in middle school as an opportunity for all students to get involved. It would be a fun initiative to create a community within a community. More details will be become available as the planning is underway.
- I. Teachers' Salaries and Benefits
  - 1. The Finance Advisory Committee discussed tuition and faculty salaries and benefits at their last meeting. Our teachers currently make about 80% of Okaloosa County's

teachers' salaries for comparable teaching experience. We spend a lot of time and care choosing the right people to fit into the St. Mary community and would like to lessen this salary gap to show them their value to the school. The finance committee discussed ways to accomplish this including a tuition increase.

2. Mr. Rodgers also discussed the formation of a summer camp program as a means for extra income for the teachers. We shared ideas for incorporating different themes and involving parish teens helping with the camps for volunteer hours. The camp is still in the planning phase but Mrs. Monica Minarchin has been named Camp Director.
- J. School Mass: Padre Nuestro, the Our Father in Spanish, was said at last Thursday's Mass for the first time. Our parish priests will be in Pensacola tomorrow, October 24<sup>th</sup>, for the priest convocation so there will be no school Mass.
- K. Track or Treat will take place 10/31 from 12p-2p.
- L. Father Anderson is assimilating to the community well.

#### **V. Subcommittees Introduction: Given by Vanessa**

A. Council Chair: Vanessa Kuennen

B. Enrichment/Catholic Identity: Delores Noechel.

We would like to not only continue enrichment programs, like the science center, but also add programs that promote our Catholic identity, like the Chastity program that the 8<sup>th</sup> graders participated in last year. This program is based on John Paul II's Theology of the Body. The 8<sup>th</sup> graders also recently participated in a talk from Jesuit priest, Fr. Stitzer, in Pensacola where he discussed how modern-day scientists are more commonly theists versus atheists.

C. Security: Katie Ryan.

1. There is a 3<sup>rd</sup> party risk assessment scheduled for mid-November to help shape priorities for our future plans. Their expertise is focused on school safety and security. The assessment from the Sheriff's Office and Police Department was focused more on the tactical response. This 3<sup>rd</sup> party assessment will be more wholistic. We have submitted all necessary documentation to them in preparation for their visit.
2. Security committee is continuing to update procedures and planning for future upgrades including the window project, landscaping around campus, replacing locks, hiring a security officer, and upgrading fencing. Funding is needed to complete these projects. We will apply for the Florida Division of Emergency Management grant again next year.

D. Handbook Review: Karen Kirk. This is ongoing

E. Impact Liason: Stacey Mai

Stacey met with a group from Impact and walked around campus to discuss options where Impact funds could be used. They discussed campus security and classrooms. They also proposed making upgrades to the courtyard including new sod, new plants, and adding the Stations of the Cross with pathways to them. Stacey in meeting with a landscaper this week for a bid.

F. Uniform: Cristina Gil. This is ongoing.

G. PTO: Brooke Barnes

H. Pastor: Father Halsema

I. Records Keeper/Minutes: Amy Hebson

#### **VI. PTO Report: Given by PTO President, Brooke Barnes**

- A. Volunteer Compliance will continue to take place individually at the local business who facilitates finger printing. Hosting a group event will not work at this time.

- B. Spaghetti Dinner was a success and raised over \$2k.
- C. Trick or Treat will take place 10/31. Ruby and Brandy are doing a great job bringing the Catholic element into the celebration.
- D. Breakfast with St. Nick is being planned and will take place in December.
- E. PTO is working with teachers, parents, and school admin on how to best use PTO funds.

VII. **Pastor's Report:** No update at this time.

VIII. **Final Discussion: Next meeting is Wednesday, November 20<sup>th</sup>**

*Ending prayer led by Mr. Rodgers.*

*Meeting adjourned at 2:47pm.*

Father Doug Halsema \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Peter Rodgers \_\_\_\_\_

First Motion to Approve \_\_\_\_\_

Second Motion \_\_\_\_\_