

**St. Stephen the Martyr
Board of Education Minutes
June 21, 2011**

Attendance: Jeanne Meyer, Greg Youell, Joyce Snowden, Nicole Neesen, Jaime Bizal, Chris Shouse, Eric Grandgenett, Mary Maguire, Tom Jorgensen, Fr. Jim Tiegs, and Gina Langel, Parish Trustee. Also in attendance as guests were a number of parents with children in St. Stephen the Martyr School.

I. Opening Prayer: The meeting was called to order with the prayer of St. Aloysius Gonzaga led by Fr. Tiegs.

II. Guests: Joel Schafer, school parent had requested in advance to address the Board regarding the recent resignation of Dr. Dave Peters, SSM School Principal. Joel expressed that parents are concerned over the losing of Dr. Peters as our school principal. It was acknowledged that issues over Dr. Peters contract cannot be discussed in an open forum. Other concerns were shared:

- The concern over losing Dr. Peters is further compounded with the subsequent resignation of Mary Ann Maier as school administrative assistant.
- Parents are concerned and feel as though their voices may not be being heard, and more dialogue and openness is requested from our leaders and BOE members.
- The process of hiring a new principal and selecting a search committee is of the utmost concern, and parents want to have input in the process.
- Parents don't want to lose current teachers due to the resignation of Dr. Peters.
- Parents feel that the Board of Education should have input in the search committee process of hiring a new principal.
- As the search committee is put forth, it is requested that a representative from Home & School be included.
- It is requested that as the search committee reaches the point of offering a contract to a new principal, that the contract be in line with other schools and that best practices in the educational community be used.

In summary, Mr. Schafer expressed that with change comes opportunity and encouraged that the process be transparent with effective communication. He acknowledged that Fr. Jim has to make many difficult and tough decisions. He asked that the Board of Education listen and communicate. Everyone wants what is the best for our parish and what is best for our school. President Jeanne Meyer thanked Joel for his presentation and comments.

Tom Jorgensen, Parish Administrator, then introduced Dr. Barb Schweiger, liason from the Catholic School offices. Dr. Schweiger had 37 years of experience with OPS before taking early retirement. She has since been with the Catholic schools office for 7 years. Dr. Schweiger acknowledged the excellent job that Dr. Peters has done with our school and her respect and admiration of him. She sees her role in the principal search process as providing support. She will facilitate the process, and help ensure openness in the process.

Dr. Schweiger offered her respect for the comments and concerns that had been raised by Mr. Schafer. She also thanked parents for their time and support in attending this meeting. Finally, Dr. Schweiger commented that the process will be focused on finding the right person for the St Stephen the Martyr principal. As such, there will not be any deadline set by which time a principal must be hired. The process will continue until the right person is found.

President Jeanne Meyer thanked Dr. Schweiger for her comments, and then asked Fr. Jim Tiegs for his comments.

Fr. Tiegs thanked Mr. Schafer for his comments as well. Fr. Tiegs acknowledged that he and Dr. Peters had been in contract discussions and that he was in the process of re-writing certain language in Dr. Peters' contract which they had been discussing. Fr. Tiegs was surprised when he received Dr. Peters' resignation during this process. Fr. Tiegs indicated that he must broach these confidential issues carefully. Fr. Tiegs also stated that he had asked Mary Ann Maier twice to stay on and continue in her role at St. Stephen the Martyr.

Fr. Tiegs also addressed the fact that the most difficult thing for him is the comments and rumors that he has heard and he provided some examples. Father indicated the number of people who had contacted him directly since the announcement of Dr. Peters' resignation was one. Communication is two-sided, and Fr. Tiegs feels like he has gone out of his way to communicate, such as through the weekly email.

Fr. Tiegs commented that other parties on the staff may have chosen to breach confidentiality and professional ethics. He indicated that going to a Catholic school saved him from a dysfunctional family and led him to becoming Catholic and to his priestly calling. He asked that parents consider whether their actions now would hurt our school and cause an increase in tuition for every family who has children in the school. He also asked that when parents hear rumors, they should ask themselves, "Is this correct?", "Is this the whole truth?"

Father next read from the "Principals of Professionalism for St. Stephen the Martyr Staff" which is reviewed annually with parish staff and members of parish boards. These principles and Fr. Tiegs' related comments include:

Commitment to Service "I have come not to be served, but to serve."

The interests of those being served come before self-interest. Compassion and respect characterize this commitment. Comment: Is vengeance toward Father appropriate?

Commitment to the Whole "Many though they are, they are one body."

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Comment: A pastor has to have a vision of and for the needs of the whole parish.

Commitment to Line-in-Staff "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it for the Lord." Know who you are accountable to and who has to account to you.

Commitment to Professional Responsibilities & Quality Know your job description well.

Commitment to Professional Competence Everyone is committed to life-long learning and is responsible for maintaining the knowledge, skills and attitudes for high quality performance.

Commitment to Confidentiality Everyone safeguards the privacy of personal and sensitive information about staff, parishioners, and all councils, boards and/or committees. Comment: Would parishioners want records of donations made public? Of course, not. Likewise, all areas of sensitive information including staff contracts must be kept confidential.

Commitment to Honesty We are truthful, trustworthy and accountable. We do not cheat, steal, lie or destroy or falsify information. Honesty and accountability also prevail when errors and injuries occur. We promptly admit our mistakes and take corrective actions.

Comment: Father acknowledged having been human and having made mistakes in the past. He also expressed that he has apologized to those involved when he was wrong.

-Commitment to the Responsible Use of Resources We are stewards of money, time, equipment, space and personnel. Comment: We are the largest parish in a 5 state area with the largest budget. For the fourth year in a row, our parish has finished the fiscal year in the black. There are difficult decisions involved in managing all aspects of the parish in order to manage the finances responsibly.

-Commitment to Appropriate Relations Every person avoids using a position of power to unfair advantage, given the inherent vulnerability of individuals who enter ministerial service.

-Commitment to Conflict Management Disagreements, conflicts, bad feelings happen. We commit ourselves to the art of peaceful resolution of issues. Personal communication is to be preferred over e-mails.

Fr. Tiegs indicated there are some things we cannot do and some things we cannot say regarding this issue. Fr. Tiegs commented that he was happy to see so many parents at this meeting which shows a great passion for our school. Father commented that he believes that the Mount Michael position is a wonderful opportunity for Dr. Peters. Prior to Dr. Peters' resignation, he had given Dr. Peters the opportunity to continue to work without a contract while they continued discussion on the contract.

In conclusion, as a human, it is hard to listen to disagreement. Fr. Tiegs believes we have a top-notch staff and top-notch members of the Board of Education. Rightly or wrongly, every board or committee is "consultative" in a parish. He thanked parents again for their passion and concern for the school. We are all committed to finding the best possible principal no matter how long it takes. God has provided for this parish and Fr. Tiegs believes that God will continue to provide for this parish.

A member of the audience asked if they could ask a question, and President Jeanne Meyers commented that by the Constitution of St. Stephen the Martyr Board of Education, discussion from visitors is not normally allowed. However, given the nature of the issues, a question and answer period was allowed. Questions were answered by Dr. Schweiger and Fr. Tiegs. Questions included:

-How long does the process take to hire a principal and what has been done up to this point.

Answer: The process typically takes 4 – 6 weeks. It is hoped that we could have someone in place before school starts, but only if the right person who is a match for our parish and our school is found within that timeframe. Dr. Schweiger indicated that this is considered a choice position, and that the position has been posted with the Catholic Schools office and an ad has been placed in the newspaper. The publication timeframe did not allow for an ad to be placed in the most recent issue of the Catholic Voice. Colleges have been notified to post the position on their websites that are often used to publish open positions in the educational community.

-Will it be possible to add a representative from Home & School to the Search Committee?

Answer: We are committed to following the Archdiocesan protocol in the search process for a new principal. The search committee, at Dr. Schweiger's recommendation, will be composed of Archdiocesan consultant Dr. Schweiger, Pastor Fr. Tiegs, Board of Education President Jeanne Meyer, RE Director Mary Maguire, two teachers, two trustees, two parents, and parish administrator Tom Jorgensen.

-Will we be given a list of who is on the search committee?

Answer: Those identified to date are Dr. Schweiger, Fr. Tiegs, Jeanne Meyer, Mary Maguire, Parish Trustee Gina Langel who is also a parent, Parish Trustee Marvin Winkeler who is a parent of a 2011 graduate, and Tom Jorgensen. One teacher has agreed to serve and Fr. Tiegs is waiting to hear back from another teacher. Possibly one additional parent will be added to the search committee.

-Who will make the final decision regarding hiring of the new principal?

Answer: Traditionally, the search committee will make a recommendation of its top two selections to the Pastor. Dr. Schweiger indicated that each person on the search committee will have one (1) vote. Dr. Schweiger has worked with various parish search committees in the Archdiocese 35 times. Specific guidelines and processes are followed. The Search Committee will be provided with mandatory training on the process to be followed. The search process

will include both written and oral information and interviews. Applicants may be pre-screened based on criteria that the Search Committee develops. All applicants may not be interviewed. Tom Jorgensen added that appropriate communication and input is important in the process. All full time faculty members will be asked for input to help develop questions for the process. An example given was “What are the characteristics you consider most important in an effective principal?”

-If a candidate comes forth who is already under contract with another school, is it possible through the Catholic Schools office that a contract can be broken?

Answer: Based on Canon Law, that decision would be up to the Pastor at the given parish.

-Are all teachers currently in place for the new school year and have any teachers resigned?

Answer: All contracts for faculty, except for two, were signed for next year. Dr. Peters has hired two new teachers for next year, including the most recent one for 5th grade who is an alumnus from St Stephen the Martyr School.

-When was Dr. Peters presented with the detail of his contract?

Answer: The Archdiocese requires that principals be issued their contracts in February. Father and Dr. Peters were in the process of negotiating details to a contract addendum at the time of Dr. Peters resignation.

-With two gaping holes in the school administration with the absence of Dr. Peters and Mary Ann Maier, how will Mr. Lebeda as Acting Principal and Jodi Broughton be able to handle the work?

Answer: No additional staff has been hired at this point. However, if we need more help we will hire people as needed. A new principal may have an administrative assistant that they may want to bring along. Dr. Peters has been meeting with Mr. Lebeda and Jodi regarding plans that are already in place for next school year. All key members of the parish staff are expected to have succession plans in place. Dr. Peters has previously had to step out of his job for a six-month period when his son had a heart transplant. Mr. Lebeda served as Acting Principal at that time, and is very capable to serve in that capacity again. Mr. Carnie has called and offered to cover Mr. Lebeda’s classes in the event that Mr. Lebeda is still serving as Acting Principal when the new school year starts.

-Will there be a background check before a new Principal is hired?

Answer: Yes, there will be a full background check which is very thorough. All teachers who are hired also go through a full background check.

-Has there been a meeting with our teachers to discuss this change?

Answer: Not as yet, given that it has only been 10 days since Dr. Peters gave his resignation. When a decision is made regarding a new principal, the communication will be made first to the Board of Education, and then next to teachers and staff before it goes out to the parish as a whole. It was suggested and discussed that holding a staff meeting soon could help alleviate concerns and misunderstanding among staff members.

Gina Langel, Parish Trustee, introduced herself to all in attendance. Gina is a past president of the Board of Education, past chair of the Middle School Study Committee, past treasurer of Home and School, past chair of classroom coordinators. She offered to meet with Home & School officers to address any questions they may have. She also indicated that she will be attending Board of Education meetings. Gina has four children, a Junior at Skutt, a recent graduate of SSM who will be a Freshman at Skutt, a 6th grader, and a Kindergartner. Gina offered the following perspective:

Twelve years ago, when her oldest child was finishing Kindergarten, the then principal of St Stephen the Martyr left. All of the teacher contracts were in place. Many parents and teachers were upset. The parish then, as now, followed the Archdiocesan selection process, and a search committee was formed. Out of that search committee, we were able to identify and hire Dr. David Peters. Following Dr. Peters first year as principal here, 1/3 of the staff left due to their loyalty to the previous principal. Dr. Peters then worked hard to fill the openings on the staff with top notch teachers, many of whom are still here today.

Gina encouraged any parents with questions, concerns, or input to call her.

Jeanne Meyer also repeated that communication is key. She encouraged parents to contact Board of Education members with suggestions, concerns or questions. During her four years on the Board of Education, she feels that communication between the Board and parents has improved and increased.

At this time, a ten minute break was requested before continuing with other business on the agenda for the meeting. Parents were welcome to stay and listen to the remainder of the meeting if they chose. Fr. Jim excused himself for the balance of the meeting due to the time and due his early Mass schedule the next day.

II. Approval of the April 19, 2011 Minutes: The minutes were presented for approval. After discussion, it was moved and seconded to approve the minutes. The motion carried.

III. Religious Education Report:

- A. Calendar items were shared. Youth ministry has over 30 students attending the Steubenville Conference in Rochester, MN and Fr. Jeff will be attending as well. Religious Education classes begin on August 23rd and 24th.
- B. Vacation Bible School went very well and had enough volunteers, especially after help was obtained from the Young Adult group. There was discussion whether volunteers who are entering 6th grade should be paired with an older volunteer such as an 8th grade student to help train them and provide better guidance for the children. Mary also indicated that the RE department is discussing having a week between the two sessions for next year.
- C. Registration for 2011 – 12 Religious Education classes is still short approximately 200 families from last year. However, the enrollment is on track with previous years at this time and is expected to be comparable to prior years when the school year resumes.
- D. Training for catechists will be on August 3rd at 6 p.m. and will include training in EConnect, an on line resource available as part of the new Religion curriculum which will be used in both the RE program and the 5 day school. Mary will set each Board of Education member up with an EConnect account so that we can review the curriculum.
- E. There will be a parent meeting on August 21st for parents of 7th and 8th grade students preparing for Confirmation, including parents of students in the parish school and parents of RE students. This is a change from previous years when a letter was mailed to parents. The meeting will include input from Archbishop Lucas.
- F. Youth Ministry has a number of summer activities planned including Faith Factor, a movie night, Steubenville conference, and a teen trivia night.

IV. School Report: Dr. Dave Peters provided a report in advance for Board review.

- A. Teacher in service days are Aug 11, 12, 15 and 16 with back to school nights on Aug 15 and 16. The new school year begins on August 18th.
- B. New faculty members have been hired
 1. 5th grade (Miss Maggie Burbach) an alumnus of St. Stephen the Martyr.
 2. 7th grade homeroom (Miss Amanda Carter) 7th & 8th grade English/grammar

- C. A Teacher-in-Service has been scheduled with Dr. Susan Anderson, ESU#3, in working on our new School Improvement Goal on student writing. Students will be actively writing in all content areas including Library, PE, and Music.
- D. New curriculum is in place for the upcoming school year:
 - 1. **Pearson Science** for K-5; **Glencoe Science** for 6 - 8
 - 2. **Our Sunday Visitor Call to Faith** updated Religion series K – 8
 - 3. **Benzinger Family Life** (one student set per grade) K – 8
- E. Family and faculty handbooks were provided for review with minor updates still needed.

V. Pastor's Report:

- A. Due to Fr. Jim's absence, Tom Jorgensen presented the Pastor's report.
- B. Long Term Planning Goals and Objectives which were formulated by the long range planning committee have been posted on the parish website. All BOE members were encouraged to read the plan, particularly the portions related to the school, Religious Education, and Kidzone. Archbishop Lucas has approved a capital campaign based on our facilities assessment and our long range plan. However, based on the current principal search, a capital campaign has been tabled at this time.
- C. Fr. Tiegs has been working on the presentations for the new Mass translations which will be presented on a schedule directed by the Archdiocese this fall.
- D. Some concrete work is being completed this summer, particularly on the ramps, school entryway, and some sidewalks. The building is also being totally cleaned top to bottom over the summer months. Other areas of cleanliness which were raised in the BOE surveys are being addressed.
- E. Tom Jorgensen reiterated that the Search Committee will be following the Archdiocesan plan throughout the principal search process. He also emphasized that the Catholic Schools office feels strongly that Mr. Lebeda is very qualified to be Acting Principal for our school until a new principal is hired.

VI. Old Business

It was brought up that the parish website should include contact phone numbers and email addresses for Board of Education members and perhaps a link from the home page to the BOE page of the website. Tom Jorgensen was asked to check on this.

A question was raised about further review of the BOE constitution. After discussion, this was tabled until a future date.

VIII. New Business

The agenda item of the SSM School Principal search had been previously discussed in detail. BOE members were asked to consider a donation from the BOE for the parish festival. The date and need for a July meeting were discussed. Jeanne Meyer will send out an email with the details for the meeting.

IX. Adjournment and Prayer

The meeting was adjourned with a closing prayer.