

SMOTH School Commission
3/5/2013
5:00 PM (Parish Hall)
Minutes

Expected attendees: Fr. Jerry, Rhee Fincher, Steve Hagler, Kyle McArdle, Mary Beth Mitchell, Tony Ramage, Charles Whatley

Excused: Mary Davis, Ruth Ann Vericella

The meeting was called to order at 5:04 PM and opened with prayer by Fr. Jerry.

Principal's and Assistant Principal's update was presented by Joe McBride.

- Registration update for AY 2014: Current enrollment is 430 students and current registration for AY 2014 is 422. Typically, the major changes in numbers of students are at the kindergarten level, which is the primary target group for recruitment. There are 85-90 children in the parish who are eligible at kindergarten level; usually about 1/3 of the eligible group comes to SMS. About 60 eligible kindergarteners are not registered at SMS and active recruitment efforts continue.
- Catholic Schools week follow-up: SMS had good attendance at Open House with 20-22 families attending; however, this is fewer than some years. The revised website with a "new family interest form" has resulted in 16 inquiries, all of which have received follow-up by Joe or Mary Beth.

Marketing discussion was led by Joe McBride and Tony Ramage

- The primary discussion focused on acquisition of a bus for transportation of children from Columbia County to SMS since transportation is a most-often-cited reason why families do not send their children to SMS. Based on inquiries, SMS could probably get a bus that holds 21-23 students for \$15,000-17,000 plus insurance (\$2000/year). One member suggested talking with Matt LaZotte about bus issues.
- Discussion and suggestions included: (1) Possible collaboration with Aquinas, (2) We would need to charge families whose children ride the bus, but the assessment would be less than the anticipated monthly cost of gas for transportation, (3) Two pick-up/drop-off points in Columbia County, (4) If we get a bus that requires a CDL license, Joe feels confident we can get enough CDL drivers (advertising now), and (5) Promote the ease of transportation by bus to parishioners at St. Teresa's (Fr. Jerry endorsed Joe calling the pastor at St. Teresa's to discuss the plan and putting a flyer in the St. Teresa's bulletin) and more generally by putting an announcement in the *Southern Cross*. The risk of acquiring and transporting students via a bus is felt to be relatively minimal, with substantially positive potential benefit.
- After extensive discussion of many views and issues, the group reached the following plan:
 - Fr. Jerry asked Commission to write proposal and present it to the Finance Commission. Charles Whatley and Steve Hagler volunteered to draft and **submit a draft proposal to the School Commission no later than 3/18/2013** that will include background and rationale for purchasing a bus (including information from CCD survey, why we feel a bus is needed) and several options of varying cost. The proposal will be presented (by Rhee) to the Pastoral Council on 3/25/2013 and, hopefully, to the Finance Commission before then.

- Other marketing updates
 - School news in bulletin is being well received
 - Children will speak this weekend before Masses – being well received
 - Consider creating and placing a pamphlet in pews each week about school
 - Marianite school articles – Next 2 will be on the PTO and School Commission

School Commission retreat: The last segment of the meeting was a brief discussion related to school advisory board (School Commission) training session at Aquinas attended by Ruth Ann Vericella, *National Catholic Review* article, “All Hands on Desks”, and retreat. The value of an annual school advisory board (commission) retreat was stressed by Sandra Leatherwood in her presentation. After discussion, the group endorsed having a retreat and that all members of the Commission would strive to attend. The consensus was to try to schedule a half-day retreat during working hours at the end of May or early June if possible. There was discussion about whether to ask Sandra Leatherwood or one of us to facilitate, but no conclusion was reached. Initial suggestions of possible topics included:

- Is Catholic education important? Why?
- Could St. Teresa’s parishioners be allowed to send their children to SMS as stewardship family? St. Teresa’s would need to pay part of the stewardship funding to SMS.
- Role of school board – advisory vs. decision making?
- Strategic plan development

Rhee will circulate possible dates to the group as soon as Joe identifies a few possibilities.

Fr. Jerry’s Update

- Grace scholarships – need to encourage more parishioners to participate
- Christmas offering – less than hoped for

The next School Commission meeting will be 4/23/2013.

The meeting adjourned with prayer at 6:02 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Rhee Fincher

Action Items

- Bus proposal to be submitted by Charles and Steve by 3/18/2013; Rhee will present at Pastoral Council 3/15/2013; Fr. Jerry will arrange a Finance Commission meeting before 3/25/2013
- Identify dates for retreat ASAP; make decision about facilitator
- Joe will talk with St. Teresa’s pastor about marketing SMS and bus plans to make it easier for St. Teresa children to attend SMS