

**SMCS Board of Trustees' Meeting**  
Wednesday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 - 6:30 p.m.

**Present:** Kristen Bergstrom, William Bittner, David DeWitt, Dan Engelhard, Helen Englebert, Kathleen Healy-Osland, Terry Jack, Phil Kerwin, Fr. Robert Kollath, Mary Krueger, Steve Pable, Natalie Ripley, Brian Rosiejka, Ron Schreier, Paul Seveska, Ron Steffens and Lori Vegso.

**Guests:** Patrick Batey, Kelly Beisenstein-Weiss, Gary Elmer, Jamie Frank, Mike Rohrkaste,

**Absent/Excused:** Fr. Dennis Bergsbaken, Kim Massey, Fr. Paul Paider

Meeting Began at 6:30 p.m.

**Opening Prayer:** Ms. Ripley led the group in opening prayer.

No one asked to speak at open forum.

**Mission Statement and School Vision:** To aid in the Board discussions, the meeting started with a recitation of the Mission Statement and School Vision.

Mission Statement: "Preparing and inspiring students to lead meaningful lives, rooted in the teachings of Christ and our Catholic tradition."

School Vision "To be celebrated as the school system where students discover and develop their God-given talents and experience success through learning, faith and service."

**Mike Rohrkaste – Viewpoint on Future School Choice Program**

State Representative Rohrkaste was invited to speak to the Board regarding his impressions about the possible future of the Wisconsin School Choice Program. The following points were raised and discussed:

- At seems that at every meeting around the state, the public school only, no school choice groups are out in force. They seem very well organized and focused.
- Governor Evers most recent budget proposal included several anti-school choice programs, including capping School Choice numbers going forward. He did not propose eliminating School Choice. No change was included in the budget.
- At the core, Mr. Rohrkaste believes that there is a certain group of individuals that do not want state educational funds going to religious schools.
- There is \$13.3 billion dollars in the most recent 2 year budget for education. This is an increase of over 5%. School Choice is \$600 Million which makes it about 4.5% of the education portion of the budget. This \$600 Million total includes the Milwaukee area. The support for School Choice in the Milwaukee area is bi-partisan. Excluding Milwaukee, School Choice amounts to about 1.5% of the 2 year education budget.
- Milwaukee Democrats do support school choice. There is about 95% Republican support.
- Governor Evers elected for 4 years. From a School Choice scenario, if both houses flip to Democrat it would be questionable whether School Choice would survive.

- The majority of the Neenah School Board has indicates that they would like to see that the amount of money sent through School Choice to private schools be on tax returns.
- Mr. Jack asked about possibility of line item veto affecting School Choice. Mr. Rohrkaiste said to avoid that risk no new language was added regarding School Choice.
- Ms. Healy-Osland asked if it would be worth it to send people to these meetings. Mr. Rohrkaiste said yes.
- He suggested getting on your representative and senator's e-update lists
- There is a national organization supporting School Choice. American Federation for Children. They have a Wisconsin chapter.
- He mentioned the three people running for his office. He knows that at least one of the three for sure supports School Choice.
- It was confirmed by Mr. Rohrkaiste that the state spend less to educate a student through School Choice then it would if that student attended private school instead.

Mr. Rohrkaiste left the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

**Consent Agenda:** The following items were circulated prior to the meeting and were included in the consent agenda.

- Minutes of 10-16-19 Board of Trustees Meeting
- Finance Committee Documents
- November Strategic Dashboard Update
- Athletic Committee October Monthly Report

Motion to approve by Mr. Seveska. Motion seconded by Mr. Schreier. Motion passed unanimously.

## **New Business**

### **Tuition Increase:**

Ms. Bergstrom led the background discussion. Originally \$7,050 tuition for high school was discussed, which would be an increase of 2.25%. The number was lowered to \$6995 which was then brought to Finance Committee. After discussions, the Finance raised it back to \$7050 and this is the High School tuition recommended by the Finance Committee. This recommendation is a compromise and is not unanimous.

Mr. Elmer pointed out the in the last 5 years the System has raised tuition at the High School 21.5% for a total of \$1140. The CPI (Consumer Price Index) for those five years was less than 2% per year. Mr. Elmer is worried that the System will become a combination of voucher and wealthy family students. He expressed concern that we will lose our students from middle class families.

Discussion proceeded regarding how we are not and should not be competing with Xavier. Xavier is over \$7000 but has not moved in the last several years. They raised it a lot several years ago and lost 100s of students. We were under market which is why we raised tuition so much.

Father Kollath asked how we are on teacher salaries. Our goal is to get back to 80% of public. Our entry level teachers are at 80%, our 10 year teachers are not. The System has a salary compression issue which we are trying to address.

Mr. Bittner made the case that the tuition should be increased more. He noted that with all the grants and assistance available that most students pay an amount less than full tuition. The amount we raise it to today effects what we can raise it to in the future. He would propose high school tuition be \$7,125.

So three numbers discussed for high school tuition \$6,995, \$7050 and \$7125.

The proposal for the Middle School is a 2.2% tuition increase.  
The proposal for the Elementary Schools is a 3% increase.

The availability of the following funds and their effect on actual tuition paid was discussed: \$500 Miller Grants, \$1500 Affordable Freshmen Tuition Grant. Other need-based tuition assistance.

It was pointed out that it is likely that Parish Financial Support of the Schools will be decreasing in the future.

Mr. Bittner shared that at one parish in the system, 22% of giving is by households headed by people over 80. The formula calculating Parish contributions needs to change and the base of contributors is changing. Does this suggest the System should increase 3% this year in light of future changes which will need to be made?

It was generally agreed that whatever decision is reached it is important to market not just the stated tuition but the availability of assistance and what that means in terms of actual tuition paid.

Ms. Englebert mentioned that at the Middle School the proposed increase is 2.2%. If we go to 3% at the High School we should do 3% increase at all levels. Mr. Seveska asked about competition when pricing looked at. The concern was raised that we can't just look at private alternatives but the increased amount of students who are being priced out and choose to go to public school. These are not people the System is losing to other private schools.

Mr. Seveska motioned for the increases as recommended by the Finance Committee, \$7050 (2.25%) at the High School with a 2.2% increase at the Middle School and a 3% increase at the elementary level. Mr. Schreier seconded the motion. Motion passed but not unanimously.

Mr. Seveska motioned to reauthorize the transition grants currently in place for students entering Kindergarten, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade and High School as recommended by the Finance Committee. Mr. Pable seconded. Brief discussion as to purpose of transition grants. Encourages early commitment to transitioning. Motion approved unanimously.

Ms. Healy-Osland mentioned the future possibility of a system for those who don't want charity or straight grants but would appreciate a system to work and earn tuition. The Miller Funds might be able to be used to do this. Others agreed. Many people mentioned that SCRIP does this now.

It was noted that the difference in tuition at the high school between \$7050 and \$7125 amounts to \$15,000. Dr. DeWitt asked about changing teacher demographics.

### **New Business –**

On December 6<sup>th</sup> there is no school due to a teacher institute day. Mr. Pable proposed that the Board provide an appreciation breakfast for the System staff. Mr. Pable would like to get commitments from people to help. He got them.

Father Kollath shared some stories about how engaged and informed our students are.

### **Old Business -**

Transfer of funds to the foundation. They will be meeting regarding this matter after the Board meeting.

### **President's Report:**

Ms. Englebert discussed the following items from the President's Report.

- New business services Paylocity. A lot of increased functionality. Ms. Frink said it will provide time savings for business services and Human Resources
- Mr. Rosiejka asked about a potential kidnapping. Someone was yelling at two girls who were running near one of the Elementary Schools. They were part of the Girls on the Run program. There was a parent and two administrators there. Police tracked down the individual. He was trying to be encouraging according to him. No charges were filed.
- Ms. Vegso asked about STEM. A brief summary of the transition to new mentors was given.
- Mr. Seveska asked his son about how prepared his son is regarding school shooting. Where are we as a school on training our students? Are we prepared? Ms. Englebert said you can never be too prepared. We do have mandatory training. Parents have complained about scaring the children. Staff has codes. Staff has information about where to go depending on code  
We discussed the details of how the school does its training and drills.
- Mr. Engelhard asked about Director of Advancement. Interviews are being conducted. Mr. Engelhard said that he thinks the key to our future is 3<sup>rd</sup> source funding. Need a development person. Lots for them to do.

Mr. Seveska made a motion to move into executive session. Motion was seconded by Mr. Schreier. Motion unanimously approved.

**Executive Session Begun: 8:05 p.m.**

Mr. Schreier made a motion to exit Executive Session. Motion seconded by Ms. Krueger. Motion unanimously approved.

**Executive Session Ended: 9:35 p.m.**

**End of Meeting:** Mr. Seveska motioned to adjourn meeting. Motion seconded by Father Kollath. Motion unanimously approved. Meeting Adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 6:15 p.m. Meeting will start 15 minutes early to allow for any School Choice questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Phillip Kerwin

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