

Minutes

St. Ambrose School PTO Board Meeting – 08/20/18

St. Ambrose School Library

Attendance

Angela Rowley	Principal
Father Andrew Fisher	Pastor, St. Ambrose Church
Marion Gravis	President
Phil Coady	Vice President
Kati Krueger	Treasurer
Mary Helou	Secretary/Assemblies
Mallory Holleran	Faculty Representative
Cindy Hollcraft	Service Chair
Michelle Robbins	Social Committee Co-Chair

Absent

Sharon Driscoll	Gala Chair
Heather Terreri	Social Committee Co-Chair
Eileen Bliss	Social Committee Co-Chair

St. Ambrose School Mission Statement:

Fostering a faith-filled and academically strong environment, Saint Ambrose Catholic School works with families and the faith community to encourage the formation of the whole child through the examples and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Opening Prayer & Introductions

Father Fisher led the group in prayer and expressed his wishes for a successful school year. Brief introductions were given by all members present.

PTO President – Marion Gravis

Old Business

- Parent-School Partnership Meetings
 - Meeting 1 – Celebrate Calm Workshop presented by Kirk Martin has been scheduled for Wednesday, September 5 from 7-9pm. Flyer will be provided to Principal Rowley for distribution.
 - Meeting 2 – Accommodations Support for Parents with Maria May – Marion and Principal Rowley to discuss the possibility of scheduling a workshop for October.
- Suggestion Box has been installed in the school lobby and will be checked by Principal Rowley
- Buzz Sections and Columns
 - Accommodations Support column by Maria May was previously suggested at the last meeting. Marion and Principal Rowley to discuss this possibility with Maria May
 - Principal Rowley has requested that the PTO emphasize the importance of checking the Buzz with parents at Back to School Night
- STEM Program for 2018/2019

- Principal Rowley is in contact with an outside company that teaches Coding, which is consistent with the curricula of diocesan high schools. The cost would be \$150 for an 8 week program. The company would have 2 separate sessions (K-2 and 3-8) and would be responsible for bringing and setting up materials. This is still in the discussion stage and has not been finalized yet.
- After School Activity List is being finalized. There are still a few programs/activities in the final stages of being scheduled.
- Parent Volunteer Program
 - School website is being updated with a tracking system that will allow parents to self-report on their volunteer hours. This will be used to track family hours during the year and to determine any fees to be assessed for hours not worked.
 - Angel hours – families unable to contribute time due to varying reasons may discuss with Principal Rowley and may be able to utilize “angel” hours donated by another family.
 - Sign-Up Genius will still be utilized to manage volunteers for specific events.
 - We have a list of volunteer positions and descriptions. The school website is being updated with this information and Principal Rowley will communicate to parents.

New Business

- PTO Yearly Theme – the PTO has adopted the school’s theme for this year, “With Christ we live, love and learn”.
- Fundraising Discussion/Brainstorming: new options to explore and existing programs include:
 - Thread Up – can either consign or sell clothing. School receives 100% of funds. Marion to explore this option.
 - Mabel’s Labels – can purchase through a custom link and school receives 20%
 - Amazon Smile – Marion will provide a write up of instructions on how to ensure mobile purchases from the Amazon App are linked to the schools Amazon Smile label, as the App does not automatically link to Smile, so we may not be getting credit for all purchases. Instructions will be communicated thru The Buzz.
 - Box tops – Principal Rowley reported that the box tops program was very successful last year.
- Look for opportunities to integrate student service in place of smaller fundraisers that do not generate substantial income for the school.
 - Fr. Fisher recommended that the PTO connect with parish youth group director, Theresa Ryan for service opportunities that the school may participate in.
 - The school already works in conjunction with the parish on multiple service projects.

Social Committee – Michelle Robbins

For the 2018-2019 school year, the Social Committee would like to focus on fellowship and bringing our school community together for family-friendly, casual events that foster relationships between our students and parents. A tentative list of activities was presented with potential dates. Discussion included the need to include parishioners and to provide adequate notice in the church bulletin, as well as potentially inviting prospective students/families to social events. The list includes:

- Wine Tasting Event in October to replace Oktoberfest

- Trunk or Treat
- Class Socials throughout the year – these would be grouped by grades (K-2, 3-5, 6-8) and would include students, families and their teachers. These would present opportunities for children to play, parents to socialize, and provide informal access to teachers. Possibly incorporate class presentations, displays or art/classwork .
- Christmas Activity – possibly movie or caroling
- Dinner and Trivia Night in January
- Book Exchange in February
- Easter Egg Hunt in April
- Amazing Race Family Activity in April or May

Pastor's Report – Fr. Fisher

- Father discussed the transient nature of our area and new families attending the parish. He has asked that the PTO (and parents) spread the word to new neighbors to encourage attendance at the parish and school.
- Construction update: The site plan has been with Fairfax County pending approval for approximately 1.5 years. Approval is expected in the 3rd quarter of 2018.
- The parish and diocese is currently interviewing construction companies to begin site work. Short listed companies have worked with the diocese in the past and have prior experience working in a school environment and are focused on keeping disruptions to school operations at a minimum. Once the rectory is torn down, we will gain parking as well as open space on the side of the school.
 - A suggestion was made that perhaps the construction company selected could provide tours/lessons to students.

Treasurer's Report – Kati Krueger

- Kati reviewed income and expenses from the 2017/2018 school year. Discussion centered around the highlighted items listed below.
- Teacher Start Up funds – motion to approve receipts due by October 31. Motion Carried
 - Start-Up Funds for Specials teachers will be available throughout the year.
- Field Trips – funds will be added to the budget for field trips to ensure that parents will not be charged additional fees. While each grade is budgeted a particular amount, it was discussed that unused funds can be shared between grades to cover the cost of more expensive trips such as Gettysburg and Philadelphia, which are planned for this year.
- Fundraisers: The gala, Fun Run and PTO dues generate the most funds for the PTO. Dues were increased this year after having remained constant for the past 10 years.
- Teacher Development and Training
 - The PTO is sponsoring Celebrate Calm Training for teachers to be held on Friday, 8/24.
 - It was discussed that we may want to explore a continuing education tuition support program for faculty that includes a defined time commitment in exchange for financial support. The PTO and school currently contribute to teachers' training expenses.
- Teacher Appreciation – discussion included a possible increase in Christmas and end of year bonuses for teachers. Kati and Phil to meet and request info on prior years from Carla.

Service Chair's Report – Cindy Hollcraft

A list of this year's planned service activities was provided and discussed. The list includes a combination of projects from recent years. Additional projects discussed include care packages and 'adopt a seminarian'. The list of proposed projects is below:

- Sept/Oct – St. Lucy Food Drive
- Nov – Second story Thanksgiving Baskets; Coat Drive
- Dec – Babies in Bethlehem; Santa's Ride Toy Collection
- Jan – Respect Life infant gift basket project
- Feb – Food for Others Collection; Sandwiches for Martha's Table
- Mar/Apr – St. Lucy Spring Food drive
- May – Collection for baby items

Faculty Representative's Report – Mallory Holleran

- Specific questions from faculty were addressed
- Room parents and Volunteers – communications to be sent out and should have by Back to School Night
- Discussion about creating a list of items needed by teachers that parents could supply (magazines, paper rolls, etc)

Assemblies Discussion/Secretary's Report – Mary Helou

- Last year's assemblies and assembly budget were discussed by the group.
- Teachers are very supportive of assemblies and find them beneficial. The PTO sponsors two assemblies per year, usually one STEM based and one that is 'arts' based.

Principal's Report – Angela Rowley

- Copy of the PTO bylaws was provided to all PTO members for this first meeting.
- The diocese has changed to a trimester system for grading. A request was made to ask for enhanced report card comments so that more qualitative information is passed on to parents.
- An additional 30 minutes of PE per week has been built into the school schedule for grades K-3
- New Staff have been hired for multiple vacant positions. Staff bios with qualifications are being added to the school website.
- Headsets have been integrated into the school's sound system, which will be of use at performances and when mass is moved to the school gym during construction.
- As a result of the Security and Safety Analysis performed last year, Principal Rowley has requested that the PTO consider the purchase of devices that can be used to secure classroom doors from the inside. There are 8 rooms with doors that can only be locked from the outside. A motion was made and carried to purchase these devices for the school.
 - 4 lockdown drills are required this school year (2 in the first 20 days, 2 at other times during the year)
- We have 6 new middle school students enrolled for the upcoming school year
- Extended Day Program – additional staff has been hired to cover 3pm-6pm on a daily basis to ensure consistent staffing.

Next Meeting – Sept 20, 2018