



**BOARD MEETING MINUTES
STELLA MARIS ACADEMY
August 2, 2018**

Present: Bob Lisi, *Chair*; Fr. Richard Kunst, *Vice Chair*; Paul Fitzgerald, *Treasurer*; Sister Edith Bogue, *Secretary*. Barry Bigelow, Fr Drew Braun, Fr James Bissonnette, Sharon Mollerus, Fr Ryan Moravitz, Fr Peter Muhich, Laura Shauer. Cynthia Zook, Director of Schools, *ex officio*; Hilaire Hauer, President, *ex officio*.

Excused: Karen Newstrom, Steve Olson.

Opening Prayer: After prayer, the meeting opened at 3:13 pm.

Welcome: Chair Bob Lisi welcomed the visitors and explained Mission Moments.

Mission Moments: Board members shared times when they saw the Stella Maris Academy mission made visible.

- The girls' soccer team match began with prayer with the team. They suffered a major defeat, but there was an SMA chant from the sidelines in support of them. They showed true grace and congratulated the opposing team on playing well.
- A child reported that summer was lonely, and that they missed being at Stella Maris.
- A "Family of Origin Issues" workshop at the National Religious Vocation Conference remarked that it is often possible to see the positive impact of Catholic School on young people even when they come from seriously troubled families – they often have an underlying sense of God's love for them that makes a healthy vocation possible.
- Our decision to explore and incorporate elements from the Catholic Liberal Arts approach is supported in the person chosen as the new Executive Director of the USCCB Secretariat of Education, Mary Pat Donohue. (She replaces Sr. John Mary Fleming, OP, who spoke at the Bishops Dinner two years ago.) Ms. Donohue has been a national Catholic education consultant associated with the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education.

Public Comment: The visitors were invited to sign in and to address the Board. A total of 20 minutes was scheduled for this, divided among those who wished to speak. Comments were received from Stephanie Winter, Joyce Cagle, Mary Frederickson, Christine Morrison, Rita Busam, Jerrie Zauhar, Mary Herbertz, Julie Kezenic, and Kris Miller. All of the speakers shared experience home schooling their children and expressed support of a Catholic high school in



Duluth. Comments also included resources and ideas that align with Catholic Liberal Arts education and desires for partial enrollment for access to select courses and extra-curricular activities.

Approval of June 28th Board Retreat Minutes: Deferred into Executive Session.

School Year Decision Roadmap / School Strategic Plan

Chair Lisi and President Hauer provided some orientation for the three new Board members. The School Strategic Plan (SSP) is considered a "living document" that guides the planning and actions of Stella Maris Academy but is expanded as items are completed and circumstances change. President Hauer noted that adjustments to the plan must be reported to the Minnesota Nonpublic School Accrediting Association (MNSAA) accompanied by the rationale and evidence supporting the change.

Certain sections of the SSP refer more specifically to decisions and actions of the Board. The Board discussed the following sections, but no modifications were suggested at this meeting.

- Objective 2 (Unified Operation), Strategy 3: Establish a Family Association that supports the Academy, its students and families. The Family Association Framework that has been developed and is presented for approval moves forward on this Strategy.
- Objective 3 (Long Term Viability and Vitality), Strategy 5: Develop a sustainable financial model. Now that the first year is completed, the Board needs to focus on adjusting the budget cycle. The goal is to be able to have expense projections in place earlier so that they can better guide the setting of tuition and salary levels.
- Objective 1 (Formation Model of Education), Strategy 1 (Curriculum), Action Step 2: Explore best practices of Catholic Intellectual Tradition (CIT)/Catholic Liberal Education (CLE) to meaningfully integrate into our current program. The President's report includes an excellent summary of recent activity. Teacher teams are working through the summer with current resources. Leadership is looking at how SMA could integrate Latin in music, art, and other subjects. A presenter from the Great Books Institute spoke about shared inquiry, looking at book lists. The plan is to build this in as we can, and to explore what it will cost. Several sources of inspiration and resources are identified.
- Objective 4 (Highly Effective Leadership Model), Strategy 4: Engage stakeholders. Discussion with visitors to this meeting is a good example that this is occurring.
- Objective 3 (Long Term Viability and Vitality), Strategy 7: Implement High School Programming. This was identified at the Board retreat as an area around which Board members held widely disparate and conflicting views, which will be further discussed at this meeting.

Family Association Framework

The initial draft document was reviewed by principals, leadership team, and members of the current Family Association. The initial document, designed to more closely align the Family Association with the Mission of Stella Maris Academy (see SSP), drew on best practices for Family Associations and models from other Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese.

After considering the comments and suggestions of various parties, the proposed Family Association Framework identifies one Lead on each campus, resulting in a Family Association leadership trio who will coordinate the work of the Association collectively.

One Board member asked, "Where is the element of Catholicism in this document? It focuses on activities or fund-raising."

Motion: Fr Peter Muhich moved approval of the framework with addition of language provided by Fr. Ryan Moravitz that will strengthen Catholic identity and formation. Seconded. **The motion carried.**

High School Givens and next steps

Chair Lisi opened discussion of the document "High School Givens" that were previously developed in 2017 and amended based on discussion during the Board retreat in June. Work on High School programming began over a year ago and now the question before the Board is whether we are ready to engage interested families and further the next steps. He expressed confidence in Bishop Sirba's support.

Views from other Board members included:

- All that was said is true, but the serious financial question must be addressed.
- The ideas presented so far are primarily conceptual. We need to provide a framework for quality control and curriculum development. What content will be delivered by whom, in what location? Will we pursue accreditation?
- A sense of being "hoodwinked by the process" was expressed. At the retreat, there was a sense of consensus among many to pause this discussion, but that is not reflected in today's process. The public comment also appeared to be an orchestrated effort to express one viewpoint.
- The question is not whether to have a high school, but the timing of it.
- A sense of being stymied was expressed. In December and January, a group put together a set of financials, a tuition plan, and a curriculum. The Board put the brakes on at the January meeting. When will these be considered? Other members said that they had not seen a set of financial, tuition plan, or curriculum, and were hoping for that kind of detail today or soon.
- We announced a Fall 2019 start date and will lose credibility if we do not achieve it.
- The Givens do not reflect stress on current staff. Unifying four schools is a huge initiative that takes longer than a year, and we did it with little money and a high degree of stress on current staffing.
- We need to take two months to put together a step-by-step proposal. One member noted that SMA needs to develop the program first, using expertise, then gauge interest. Parents' interests and ideas may vary widely.

- Is the High School initiative truly connected to Stella Maris Academy? The Givens document feels like two separate initiatives. Development effort needs to be well underway and done so that Stella Maris and the high school program do not compete in fund-raising.
- Chair Lisi responded to each of the issues raised, reiterating the points in his opening remarks.

It was noted that the time allocated to the discussion of the Givens document was long past.

Motion: Laura Schauer moved that action on the Givens document and next steps on the High School be tabled, to be taken up in Executive Session. Seconded. **The motion carried.**

Financial Review

The end-of-the-year status was less painful than expected. That was due to several factors:

- Some parishes offered additional funding to SMA.
- Some campus parishes absorbed some expenses.
- A fund specifically for marketing and advertising was shifted to Stella Maris Academy from the parish which initially received it.

The balance sheet shows a small loss for the year, which is better than expected. We do still have significant liabilities accrued that will be reduced when cash flow allows.

There is a possibility that we might need to execute a line of credit with St. John's Parish to meet the third salary date in August, depending on the availability of early tuition and other funding sources.

Cassie Trust: President Hauer noted that the review process by the trust account manager is ongoing and there is uncertainty when the trust will be distributed to Stella Maris Academy.

Delinquent accounts: A policy was approved at the previous Board meeting and efforts are being made to address delinquent accounts. The desire of the Board is that SMA leadership work with families, especially where significant hardships exist, but that there be a plan in place for dealing with past due accounts. General agreement supporting the implementation of the policy.

Development Committee Formation

Several points were brought out during discussion of the need to re-start Development efforts:

- Our first year budgeted for more development funds than we were able to raise which led to projected shortfalls throughout the year.
- Some Board members have expertise and interest in Development, however would still need the support of staff members to implement elements of development activities.
- Discussion included general support for hiring a full-time Development Director. The Development Committee will incorporate this consideration in the overall Development Plan.
- Many emphasized the importance of development as prerequisite to other initiatives.

Executive Session

The Board entered Executive Session at 5:07 pm. The June 28th Board Retreat minutes were approved during Executive Session. The Board exited Executive Session at 5:55pm.

Adjournment was a 6:03pm, following a closing prayer led by Fr. Richard Kunst.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sister Edith Bogue". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'S'.

Sister Edith Bogue
Secretary