

St. Bernadette School PTO General Membership Meeting February 10, 2011

7:30 pm

School Cafeteria

Meeting Minutes

Copy to: Donna Feerst Church
Fr. Larsen
Fr. Pollard
All Committee Members

The following constitutes our understanding of the matters discussed and conclusions reached. If there are any errors or omissions in the basic discussions, please notify the writer.

MEETING NOTES:

Opening Prayer: Fr. Kevin Larsen

Fr. Kevin Report:

Fr. Kevin thanked the staff here today and here everyday. He also thanked the volunteers for all the efforts put into the school to make it a better place.

President's Report: Geoff Bacino

We had a very successful Race for Education. Thank you to everyone who worked on this especially Darlene Rouin.

We did a poinsettia sale this year and it was well received. We made about \$200-\$300.

Thank you to the PTO board.

Treasurer's Report: Mike Hickman

Events:

Golf tournament was successful. Secret Santa and Fall Festival did well.

SCRIP

We've had a successful year with the SCRIP program and look forward to selling more. Thank you to Mary Fedorochko for all the work she does on this program.

Auction:

Down the road is the auction. This is the last big fundraiser for the year.

Question: How much do we have to raise each year? Geoff says we have to raise what we want to spend money on such as new Art Room, Library, Active Boards, Computer Lab, Science Lab, etc... it's a floating number as to what projects we want to do.

Question: Could we have a SCRIP request sheet? Maybe it can go in the Wednesday packet. SCRIP is also sold after the 9 and 10:45am masses.

Volunteering:

Geoff Bacino says last year we discussed mandatory volunteer hours. It set the stage for what we have to do going forward. We have a lot of 2 income families and parents with young kids but as we ask for things that we want, we have to staff them.

Grade Representative Report: Tracey Pilone

Volunteer Survey (Tracey distributed the results of her survey)

The survey was conducted through Google survey. We had 128 responses, about half the families of the school. It was a great representative sample of the school.

The questions were based on the mandatory volunteer discussion from last year.

Most people thought they were asked to volunteer about the right amount.

Geoff says the one thing that he would like to address is increased transparency by the PTO and is working on this.

Discussion:

Question:

Does the PTO give out the budget? Yes, we will have it at the next meeting in March and then it gets voted on in May.

Question: Are the people sitting here at the meeting, the ones that most likely filled out the survey and are volunteering?

Geoff: Probably, but we had to have a way to determine what we are going to do. We may have to cut some events if people aren't willing to step up and run things.

Kathy Mueller says when Room Parents ask for food donations, people are willing to contribute, but when you ask for people to come in and volunteer, you don't have the same response.

Question: We get the feeling that people would rather give money than volunteer.

Our numbers are growing. We have registered 9 students since Christmas. God is good to us. This is an extraordinary place. Everything we do, we do for these kids. Thank you to all of you very much. Mrs. Beeks is happy to answer any parent's questions or concerns. Fr. Kevin, it's wonderful to have you with us tonight and to have your support. Fr. Richardson has been wonderful to us as well.

Question: What are you looking to raise money for in the future?

Mrs. Beeks says there is a new program called Lab Learners. It is a Science program for K-8. It's a hands on Science program and it costs about \$75,000. Mrs. Beeks would also like to renovate the Classrooms. She would also like to start an annual fund to replace windows. There is also the Accelerated Reading Program--A new series of books and hands on material and money needs to go to new technology.

Question: Some of these things you just mentioned, what is the responsibility of the parish to the school?

Fr. Kevin says it's a shared, but not equal responsibility. Wear and tear comes from school usage. Some big ticket items like windows and a roof we are looking at--this will be about \$400-500,000. We have to work with the diocese. We can only spend a certain amount of money at one time. Some money comes from the school reserves and some comes from the parish. Fr. Kevin is happy to say the school has built up capital reserves. We are doing the bathrooms which came from operating costs. There are projects that have to happen from an infrastructure point of view. There are big tickets items such as hot water heater, boilers which the lions share is from the parish side. Shifting the PTO to other projects that we do not have to put on the school or the parish is a good thing--such as the Race for Education to replace computers. We're going to buy new copiers. That will come from the IT fund. It's a fair share from the school and the parish and we're trying to balance it out.

There's also the tuition assistance fund. The more the school becomes more self-sustaining, covering water, heat and some of the infrastructure, then it allows us to be able to do more of things with the money that comes from the PTO. We've been able to build up the tuition assistance fund to help families in need.

Question: We would like to know where the Race for Education money is going--we thought all was going to the Art Room, seemed like we were asking money for the same thing.

Geoff: We will spell out exactly where it goes. The Mini-Auction money was for the Art Room. The Race for Education was for technology. We will do a better job in conveying where the money is going.

Question: Is there one central document you can go to where you can see how many volunteers are needed?

Fr. Kevin: There is a distinction that needs to be made about the kind of volunteers that are needed. There are cafeteria and playground volunteers and classroom support. In the past, at some point, those have been paid positions. But, now to get people to meet the responsibilities of playground and cafeteria, it would have to come from the fees. The same applies to school aides--people that are helping in the classrooms. Do we need to increase staff, therefore we need to be ready to give money to have people here consistently as employees and to help in terms of fundraising. At some point, there needs to be a distinction made in increasing staff or increasing volunteering. If we increase staff, it has to be paid for by tuition or an increase in fees. If we do that, then we need the volunteers for the fundraisers—I am not sure what the breakdown is, but if these become staff positions there will be an increase in tuition. This needs to be in the discussion in the volunteer hours or staff positions. The decision would come in getting the money needed to fill these positions.

Questions: What is the problem with the cafeteria? Is it not staffed enough?
Kathy Mueller says we have 2 groups-- the cafeteria/playground monitors and also volunteers serving food in the cafeteria.

Question: Does lunch money cover the food and the workers?
Geoff: Yes, it goes back to the PTO and covers other things.

Question: Could we use fundraisers to pay for staff?
Geoff: We use fundraisers to pay for projects.

Question: Why doesn't the PTO hire people?
Kathy Mueller says we could hire the kitchen staff.
Joan Kwalwasser says the PTO money goes into the pot, where we can buy Active Boards, etc...

Fr. Kevin says he remembers when the whole program was kicking off and it was not making a lot of money and the debate was not raising the cost of the lunches or the milk. We're talking about running a mini-business and we're going to need to have administrative oversight with a paid person, which may eat up our profits. The easiest thing would be to outsource the lunch program to a company. Then, you have to control the costs. Everything would be run by a company and I think the in house system helps to keep the costs down.

Kathy Mueller: I think the large portion of the lack of volunteers is not the cafeteria, it's the auction, the Fall Festival, classrooms, etc.

Mrs. Beeks says we are talking about 2 separate things here. In all Catholic schools she has been in, parents have to do so many hours and that is what we have here for the cafeteria/playground monitors or opt out. It's the other events where we have the problems. What it comes down to is the Fall Festival, The Auction, The Sock

Hop, etc...this is where it's hard to find volunteers. Huge numbers of people step up to help when emails go out from the Room Parents—a lot of Indians but no Chiefs.

Question: I am in a 2 working parent family. We want to be involved but maybe a solution is to hire people to do the cafeteria duty but make the mandatory duty the other events such as classroom support, Fall Festival, Sock Hop, etc... Maybe there are things parents can do at home to volunteer and keep them involved. We have to make it feel that parents who work don't feel like they are excluded.

Question: I have been helping in the cafeteria a lot but I see the cafeteria workers are very short staffed. It seems like madness sometimes and it might affect the kids. I encourage the parents to come and help. The women working here do a great job but they need more people. In regards to events, maybe it could be an idea that a class takes over the Fall Festival or other events such as that.

Geoff: We are working on that—trying to divide up some of the events class by class.

Question: We have a community of Seniors in Greenspring Village. Maybe there are people there that would like to volunteer. It's a wonderful resource. They would like to be active doing things.

Fr. Kevin says it is something that can be done. We have a strong relationship with Greenspring. We have Mass there and Penance weekly. His only concern is consistency. There is a difference in what you are getting in a paid position versus volunteers. It is something we can explore.

Principal's Report: Mrs. Beeks

It is wonderful to have so many parents here tonight. This is the largest membership I can remember in 5 years. It is wonderful to have so many new parents here supporting the school in so many ways.

I see people in and out of this building all the time. It is a unique experience at St. Bernadette. There is such a wonderful group of parents and grandparents at St. Bernadette. It is frustrating to find the "Chiefs" but thousands and thousands of dollars have been raised at the auction and the Fall Festival and the Sock Hop. I am very grateful to this school. It is amazing. Thank you for your great support. I am most grateful to this faculty and staff who are extraordinary. I want to thank them for the great job that they do. In working the lunch line, I continue to be impressed with the students who go to this school. We often talk about courtesy and we attribute this to all the parents here and those who couldn't be here. Our children are learning and growing and we are proud of the work they are doing.

Fr. Kevin says it's a good idea to have a master list but it's the cart before the horse.

Geoff: Are people willing to work on a master list for volunteers?

Question: Maybe it's time to scratch some things off the list since there are so many events in May.

Mrs. Beeks says the only events where we really make money is the Auction and the Race for Education. If we didn't have these events we wouldn't renovate the Art Room, the Library, etc...but we would still be able to education the children.

Closing Prayer: Fr. Kevin Larsen

Meeting Adjourned: 8:58pm