

**St. Ambrose Catholic School  
School Board Meeting  
Wednesday, February 14, 2024  
6:00pm – Community Center**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Stephanie King, Erin Kochan, Justin Lacy, Stephanie Monroe, Ashley Lack, Mark Terry, Abby Stephens, Maggie Kohl, Paul Braundmeier

**Others Present:** Bob Baird, Deacon Jay Wackerly, Father Steven Janoski, Jules King

**Call to Order:** Chairperson Erin Kochan opened the meeting at 6:00 pm.

**Opening Prayer:** Opening Prayer was led by Father Steven Janoski.

*Committee and other reports submitted are included after the board minutes. The following notes are from discussion during our meeting about those reports.*

**Approval of January Minutes:** A motion to approve the Minutes from the January meeting as previously distributed was made by Mark Terry and seconded by Paul Braundmeier. The motion was carried with unanimous approval.

**Alton Deanery Meeting Update:** The Family School Agreement will be required of all Catholic schools as of August 2024. The schools will be looking at sharing common policies, common tuition rates, and ways to collaborate instead of compete with each other..

**Standing Committee Updates:**

- Executive Committee (Erin Kochan, Abby Stephens, Ashley Lack): No report.
- Policy/Planning (Justin Lacy/Abby Stephens): Middle School Service Hours Update: St. Mary's current school year 2023-2024 policy is that the number of hours required matches the grade level (i.e. 8th grade = 8 hours; 7th grade= 7 hours; etc). They are revamping their policy and we will have more information for guiding our policy soon. Next year there will also be a standardized parent/student handbook across the diocese. St. Ambrose will likely have a couple of topics for which a policy will need drafted.
- Development (Mark Terry): No report. See the SAPA report for details.
- Public Relations (Stephanie Monroe/Maggie Kohl): The marketing video by Riverbender is in the works. The videographer was not able to make it to the Ash Wednesday Mass to capture footage as previously scheduled. SAPA is developing a brochure to hand out at events for marketing our school.
- Building/Grounds (Paul Braundmeier): The committee is currently focused on the church roofing. There are current leaks in the roof and other issues so it is the priority

project. The committee is in the process of soliciting bids for different options. The second round of bids have been much lower in price.

- **Athletics (Bob Baird):** See the athletics report submitted by Athletic Director Monica Ellebracht and Assistant AD Emily Kribs. Congratulations to the 8th grade boys basketball team who went to the Regional championship in the IESA playoffs. This is the first time St. Ambrose has had a team advance that far. It was a very close game. The chess team is doing well with a current record of 3-1-1; they are tied for second place.

**Strategic Plan Update (Erin Kochan):** A draft was distributed to the Board prior to the meeting. The Strategic Plan Committee is still adding to the finance section. Board members can email questions or suggestions to Erin Kochan. A discussion was held regarding a few of the questions raised upon review of the plan, including regarding the curriculum, teacher tenure and adding/reducing staff. The State recognition/Diocean accreditation is scheduled for March 25, 2024 and a discussion was held regarding how many surveyors would be on site and what the day's schedule would hold.

**IT Update (Deacon Jay Wackerly):** See attached report.

**Principal's Update (Bob Baird):** The tentative 2024-2025 calendar was distributed to the Board prior to the meeting. A discussion was held regarding building snow days into the school calendar. A motion was made by Stephanie Monroe to not build snow days into the calendar (as it was for the 2023-2024 school year). This motion was seconded by Mark Terry. It was also suggested to have a parent meeting at the beginning of the school year to briefly highlight changes to the handbook and give reminders on certain policies. This is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, August 20, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. The Local Wellness Policy was distributed to the Board prior to the meeting. Board members can send feedback to Bob Baird. It was noted that the sound system in the gym has been an issue and one speaker went out this week. There are portable speakers that are being used but estimates are being reviewed for improving the sound system. In order to show more reverence during the Lenten season, it was decided by Father Steve and Bob Baird that dress down days during Lent will be rescheduled. This includes purchased SAPA Dress Down Passes. New dates will be announced for students to use purchased passes.

**Parent Exit Survey (Deacon Jay Wackerly):** The Parent Exit Survey was distributed to the Board prior to the meeting. Results from the survey will be sent to the Executive Committee of the Board and to Father Steve. Information will be compiled and shared with Board members, with names/identifying information redacted. A discussion was held on when is the best time to send the survey to parents after their child(ren) are no longer enrolled. This survey will be distributed to families who have left the school during the 2023-2024 school year; Bob Baird will share that list of families so that emails can be sent.

**Additional Discussion:** No additional discussions were raised.

**Closing Prayer:** Closing prayer was led by Bob Baird.

**Adjournment:** At 7:00 pm Mark Terry motioned to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Paul Braundmeier.

**The next meeting is March 13, 2024.**

## REPORTS

### PRINCIPAL'S REPORT- Bob Baird

2-19 NO SCHOOL, President's Day

2-21 1:30 Dismissal

- **ACRE Testing Coming Soon** - The ACRE (Assessment of Catholic Religious Education) test will be administered in February to 5th and 8th grade students. The test will be given the week of Feb. 19.
- **Registration & Tuition** - Registration for the 2024-2025 school year will open March 1. Shortly before the opening of registration, tuition information and other important updates for the 2024-2025 school year will be shared. Tuition will increase, with our Finance Council deciding the exact increase. This increase is a necessity due to continuing increases in personnel costs and increases in costs of other expenses (utilities, curriculum, safety and security, and more). The costs to operate a quality school, along with a slight downturn in enrollment and the struggle with volunteerism continue to necessitate a tuition increase. Additionally, Catholic schools in the Alton Deanery have prioritized collaboration with the other schools. Consistent tuition, sharing resources, and providing support to one another between the neighboring schools is one of the many goals of the collaboration. Tuition increases are not pleasant and the increases will never cover all costs to operate our school, but they are a necessity as our Parish does not have an infinite amount of money and cannot continue to subsidize the school at the rate it has done for the last few years.
- **Catholic Schools Week A Success** - Thank you to the CSW planning committee for making this year's CSW a success! A special thank you to Kim Wackerly, for leading the committee and helping coordinate the different events! Thank you to other committee members, including Stephanie King, Chris Bachman, and Marcy Fessler.
- **Science Fair Friday** - Our 2023-2024 Science Fair was an amazing display of wonderful projects and informative science. Thank you to Ms. Deb Freeman (middle school science) for leading the students and for developing an organized and sequential process for the students to accomplish their projects. This was a great opportunity for our students to complete a detailed and multi-step project and also display and present their work for parents and judges to view. Congratulations to those recognized for outstanding achievement.
- **English Language Arts Curriculum Adoption** The ELA curriculum adoption committee will be having a meeting in the next week or two and will begin the process to select a new program for the 2024-2025 school year.
- **WCEA Accreditation Coming Soon** - Beginning in 2024-2025 and beyond, the Diocese of Springfield will be using the WCEA accreditation along with 5 of the 6 Diocese in Illinois. This process will work in conjunction with the Illinois State Board of Education Recognition process.
- **National Catholic Presenter, Jason Evert, to speak to 7th and 8th grade students from our local Catholic Schools** - On Tuesday Mar. 5, 2024 7th and 8th grade students from St. Ambrose and our other local Catholic elementary schools will head to St. Mary's middle school in Alton to hear a nationally renowned speaker. Parents that

attended his presentation last year, spoke highly of the messaging and delivery. This presentation is endorsed by our local Catholic leadership. In his seminar, which has been delivered to more than one million teens on six continents, Jason Evert reveals the compelling vision of God's plan for human sexuality and presents an uplifting case for practicing the virtue of chastity. By addressing the issues that teens struggle with most, such as sexual pressure, pornography, modesty, and starting over, Jason offers encouragement for teens to maintain their purity or begin again if they've made mistakes in the past. The night before on March 4, there will be a parent/student presentation that is a ticketed event (please see the attached flier). The ideal format is for the parents and students to attend the evening before and then the group of middle school students attend together with a session focused entirely on their age group. The time of the school presentation on March 5 is still in discussion and will be communicated asap. The students will be transported by bus to St. Mary's and permission slips will be sent home. Parents may opt their students out and they will be supervised at school. Please let us know if you have any questions.

- **10 St. Ambrose 8th Graders to Participate in Model UN** - On Monday Feb. 26 and Tuesday Feb. 27, ten of our 8th grade students will participate in the Model UN conference at SIUE. Schools from around the area will participate.
- **Chess Club Update** - This year we have approximately 25 students in Chess Club. The competitive team is now 2-1-1. The Alton Deanery competitive league added 3 teams this year. We even have "friendly" matches scheduled with Alton Middle School.
- **5-8 Grade Monthly Talks** - This past week, we hosted the first of what will become a monthly event. We spent 20 minutes talking with the students about important topics, especially things like avoiding issues that cannot be joked about or made "light of," including threats to others or one's self, racially derogatory terminology, sexual harassment, and more. We also reminded them to share with parents and adults at school when matters of concern arise. We also reminded them of the available anonymous reporting tool on our school website. The next talk will be Feb. 23. We will share talking points with parents, so the topics can be discussed at home.

FATHER STEVE'S REPORT

**SCHOOL BOARD**

**November 8, 2023**

16 of our children (13 from St. Ambrose School and 3 from the Parish School of Religion) were confirmed and received their first Communion on Saturday, November 4, 2023.

Parent Meeting for children preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation was Tuesday, November 7 in the Church.

Date for Confirmation and First Eucharist for current second graders: Saturday, **October 19, 2024** at 11:00 a.m. at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Springfield

Several children who have attained "catechetical" age (7) will be prepared for the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist) to be celebrated at the Easter Vigil on Saturday, March 30, 2024 at 8:00 p.m.

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Sunday Mass is an expectation for our Catholic families to retain/receive the "active" parishioner tuition rate. Exceptions must be approved by Fr. Steve. We have been following this practice for five years now and the Catholic Churches/Schools in Springfield have adopted it.

## ATHLETICS REPORT

**ATHLETICS REPORT** - Bob Baird (from Athletic Director Monica Ellebracht and Assistant AD Emily Kribs)

- Congratulations to 8th grade boys basketball! They competed for a Regional championship in the IESA playoffs. The boys played well and lost by only a few points in the championship game.
- Volleyball runs until the middle of March. 8th grade girls and boys will participate in the conference tournament March 11-13. The girls play at Marquette and the boys play at Fr. McGivney. The 8th grade girls team will finish the season competing in the IESA state playoffs.
- Track begins in March (date to be announced soon) and Rob Hudanick is set to coach. The meet schedule includes;
  - April 6 Highland
  - April 13 Highland
  - April 20 Collinsville
  - April 27 Highland
  - May 1 Highland

## SAPA REPORT

**St. Ambrose Parents' Association**  
**SAPA Meeting:** February 7, 2024  
**Location:** St. Ambrose Community Center

### MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Susan Kasten, Treasurer.

**OPENING PRAYER:** Jesus, our friend and our brother, please guide us with your wisdom and love today. Help us to do your will and to be open to hear your voice as we speak and listen to one another. Amen.

**PRESIDENT REPORT-** Susan Kasten reporting for Natalie Gordon, *Interim President*

- Emails were sent to all families who still needed one or two tickets on Sunday, Feb 28.
  - 53 tickets from our school families have yet to be purchased
- In sending emails many were not auto filling and had to be typed in full - is there a way to ensure all family emails are included in the family list?
  - Plan to send a list of names to IT to double check email addresses

**SECRETARY REPORT-** Ashley Lack

- Approval of Minutes from January 3, 2024 meeting
  - A motion was made by Natalie Gordon and seconded by Susan Kasten to approve the Minutes as distributed.

**TREASURER REPORT-** Susan Kasten

- Checking Balance: \$72,897.96
- Monthly Income and Expenses
  - Income: \$39,525. Expenses: \$3,250
    - Expenses this month included reimbursement for movie night, ice skating, and teacher appreciation; SAPA paid for doughnuts for Catholic Schools Week; \$800 for electronic billboard for Cash Bash advertising; \$1000 for marketing video from Riverbender. SAPA also borrowed stakes from Applefest for Cash Bash banners; these were bent in the recent high winds and needed to be replaced.
- Cash Bash totals so far - projected profit
  - \$45,950 to date in total sales; projected profit (based on 450 tickets sold) is \$27,850.
  - Final email blasts will be sent out this week to push for the remaining few tickets to be sold.



- Sales close at 6:00 pm Friday.
- A suggestion was made to incentivize more sales for future drawings: drawing for ½ tuition or full tuition for families who sell X number of tickets. This will be looked into for future years.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS REPORT-** Emily Lacy & Natalie Gordon

- Cash Bash ticket sales end on the 9th
- First Early Bird winner chose to get another ticket
- Second Early Bird winner chose to have the cash payout
- We will begin posting about the Mother and Son Dance next (February 24)
- Bowling is in March as well (March 10)

**SCHOOL ACTIVITIES REPORT-** Sarah Mendoza

- Completed Events
  - Ice Skating at the Loading Dock - Thank you to Chris Varady for chairing the event. Thank you to all the families that came and enjoyed a morning at the ice rink.
- Upcoming Events
  - Mother / Son Dance - Sarah Mendoza reporting for Marli Nixon & Amanda Beiser, Co-Chairs
    - Date: Saturday, February 24, 2024
    - Time: 6 - 8 pm
    - Location: St. Ambrose Gymnasium
    - Theme: Glow Crazy
    - Wear your neon colors and glow necklaces
    - Snacks and drinks provided
    - Volunteer sign up coming soon
      - RSVP: <https://bit.ly/3OzCzga>
      - Donations (for a service hour): <https://bit.ly/3SNFgx2>
  - Bowling Family Event - Sue Stirnaman, Chair
    - Date: Sunday, March 10, 2024
    - Time: 1-3 pm
    - Location: Bowl Haven
    - Cost: \$9 per person for 2 games and shoes. Additional games \$3 per game.
      - There was a \$240 deposit required to reserve the 12 lanes. The Stirnaman family has donated this and would like the funds to be available for the kids to get drinks while they are at the event.
  - Father / Daughter Dance - Sarah Mendoza reporting for Lisa Jacobs, Chair
    - Save the Date: Saturday, April 13, 2024

- More details to come
- Golf Tournament - Jamie Frelang, Chair
  - Save the Date: Saturday, May 4, 2024
  - More details to come
    - Cinco de Mayo theme. It will be \$125/golfer this year. There will be a catered lunch from Taqueria Maya. The committee is also working to have \$5 margaritas available.
    - There will be new games this year.
    - There are 2 tiered sponsorships this year with \$100 silver sponsor and \$300 gold sponsor for each hole.
    - Registration will begin February 25; flyers will be sent home with students after March 1.
    - There are currently 8 people on the organizing committee. The profit was \$6,500 last year; committee goal is \$15,000 this year.
    - The committee is planning a February 25th restaurant hop to get sponsors. Katie Krueger will also be visiting businesses with a letter/tax id information to hand out to recruit sponsors.
    - We will also be asking for donations for water, soda, granola bars, and chips; a service hour will be given for donations. Sign up to come.

**MERCY TREE ADVENTURES-** Carlos Tejeda

- <https://mercytreeadventures.org/>
- The focus is bringing Luke 19 to life. The program creates a physical shift of the earthly perspective. It primes the pump physically, emotionally, spiritually to encounter the Lord.
- It is fun for families with activities including geocaching and tree climbing. The tree climbing activities are only for ages 7 and up.
- The program often comes to open houses for the community to share information about the church/school with guests present at the open house.
- There are 75 minute time slots that families sign up for
- One day workshops are in the \$500 range; full weekend events (Friday night, all day Saturday, Sunday afternoon) are in the \$2,000-\$3,000 range (for tree climbing activities; other price points for other programs offered).

**DEACON JAY'S REPORT-** Jay Wackerly

- The Stewardship Report is out and also available online.
- Church Directory (books) will be coming out soon.
  - You can access the St. Ambrose directory on the website at <https://saintambroseparish.gbpd.co/directory/index.php>
  - Your username is your "firstnamelastname" and password is "grace"

- The Diocese is switching to a different database to make financials consistent among the parishes. The church management software will also be changing. There are plans to have a parish “census” to update phone numbers/addresses/emails etc.
- Purified and Gender and the Theology of Your Body, presentations by Jason Evert, will be offered at St. Mary’s. It is highly recommended for pre-teens. Both presentations are March 4th; cost \$25.

**PRINCIPAL’S REPORT- Bob Baird**

**Principal’s Report SAPA 2-7-24**

2-7	PreK Vision & Hearing Screening
2-7	SAPA Meeting, 6:00
2-9	Science Fair
2-14	School Board
2-19	NO SCHOOL, President’s Day
2-21	1:30 Dismissal

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- **Congratulations to 8th Grade Boys Basketball!** - Congratulations to our 8th grade boys' basketball team on reaching the finals of the St. John's Regional. Although the team did not win the Regional, they displayed their talent and character in competing until the end, with an opportunity to win at the end of the game. We congratulate them on a great season!
- **Chess Club Update** - This year we have approximately 25 students in Chess Club. The competitive team is now 2-1-1. The Alton Deanery competitive league added 3 teams this year. We even have "friendly" matches scheduled with Alton Middle School.
- **5-8 Grade Monthly Talks** - This past week, we hosted the first of what will become a monthly event. We spent 20 minutes talking with the students about important topics, especially things like avoiding issues that cannot be joked about or made "light of," including threats to others or one's self, racially derogatory terminology, sexual harassment, and more. We also reminded them to share with parents and adults at school when matters of concern arise. We also reminded them of the available anonymous reporting tool on our school website. The next talk will be Feb. 23. We will share talking points with parents, so the topics can be discussed at home.

#### **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

- A discussion was held regarding marketing ideas and targeting potential preschool families
- Chris Cakes will have a pancake breakfast on Fat Tuesday (February 13). It will be \$7/plate.
- Valentine celebrations will take place in the classrooms on Tuesday, February 13 due to Ash Wednesday being on February 14.
- Stations of the Cross will be Fridays at 2:00
- Tuesday, March 26 will be the Living Stations of the Cross (presented by the 8th grade)
- March 25th will be our IL State Recognition and Diocese accreditation. Diocese Accreditation will change for the 2024-2025 school year to a National Catholic Accreditation. The goal is to create consistency. Our accreditation is every 5 years.
- Committee for ELA curriculum: meeting will be set soon.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

- No new business was brought forward.

**ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION- Open Forum**

- No additional questions were raised.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** We give you thanks, Lord, for helping us to learn more and how to love one another. Please help us to always be instruments of your perfect peace in our school. Amen.

With no additional questions/discussions, the meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m. by Natalie Gordon, Interim President.

***Respectfully submitted by Ashley Lack, Secretary***

## IT REPORT

# St. Ambrose Tech Department Monthly Report

Submitted by Eli Hawkins

### Reporting Period

Start Date: 12-04-2024

End Date: 02-12-2024

### Ticketing Metrics:

Tickets submitted: 31

Tickets resolved: 29

Tickets unresolved (all-time): 22

### Tasks accomplished:

Cleaned and decommissioned ~30 retired Chromebooks, distributed to parents and staff

Identified and resolved major network issues that existed before I started here

Established and implemented periodic backups of the library database

Installed shelving and organized IT office

Set up recording for Cash Bash drawing

Formatted the school policy document to fit the requirements given by the Diocese (this took more than a month, done at the request of Principal Baird)

### Short term projects (to complete by the end of the school year):

Create a full asset inventory for tracking and budgeting (Has been started)

Install phones in all classrooms

Install door access controls

Create and implement staff training

Google Admin Cleanup (In Progress)

Parent Email list cleanup (done already)

Finalize IT Student Onboard/Off Board procedure and notification system

Continue to distribute 20 more Old Chromebooks to staff

Evaluate Actual software license use by teachers for next school year renewals

Parish/School Website- (W/Mel Bechtold) Finalize Website Host evaluation/selection.

Begin build of Parish/School website per request of Diocese to eventually migrate off their hosting.

***Submitted by Ashley Lack, Secretary***