

## Minutes

Atlanta Archdiocesan Schools' Advisory Council Meeting

Tuesday, June 16, 2020

Archbishop's Conference Room – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

**In Attendance:** Diane Starkovich, Marcos Arias, Mark Uebelacker, Brad Wilson, Stacy Lewis, Brian Dooling, Fr. Jim Duffy, Bob Heilmann. Joined by phone: Maureen McAbee. Michelle Raney, Beth Clark Morrison, John Cryer, Paula Brosnan, Catherine Kennedy Harris.

- **Welcome and Opening Prayer**

Marcos welcomed all to the meeting and asked Hal Plummer, the soon-to-be Superintendent of Catholic Schools, to tell everyone a little bit about himself. Diane Starkovich then asked all present to take turns introducing themselves to Hal.

- **Approval of Agenda**

Marcos asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was given and seconded.

- **Approval of the Prior Meetings in March and April 2020 Minutes**

Marcos asked for a motion to approve the March and April 2020 meeting minutes. The motion was approved and seconded.

- **Council Self-Assessment – Paula Brosnan**

Paula mentioned there was no additional feedback on the council self-assessment, therefore it remains unchanged from what was covered at the previous meeting.

- **Nominating Committee – Paula Brosnan – New Council Member Discussion**

Paula asked Diane to announce the new pastor assignment to the council. Diane said she consulted with Bishop Konzen and he recommended Fr. Neil Dhabliwala to serve on the council. Diane asked Fr. Neil and he graciously accepted the position. Fr. Neil is a graduate of St. Pius X High School and presently serves as pastor at St. Catherine of Siena parish, which has a preschool and elementary school. Diane said he will be a good addition to the council.

Paula added that in addition to Fr. Jim Duffy rolling off the council, Augusto Elias, Mark Uebelacker and Paula Brosnan will be ending their terms. There are three promising candidates in the works and Paula said she will have it wrapped up by the end of June. Diane asked Paula to get with Brian Dooling once the names are confirmed to send out a notice to all council members for an approval of the new council members. The prospective members are Brian Hershberger (St. Joseph-Marietta), Chris White (Saint Jude) and Jennifer Prindiville (IHM).

- **New Policies – Beth Morrison**

Beth said there are two new policies that have been approved by the Archbishop. The first being a School Closure Policy. This policy was put in place in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. This policy states that in the event of a natural disaster or disease outbreak (such as Covid-19) the Superintendent of Schools has the discretion to close school campuses for safety reasons and all archdiocesan schools would continue classes virtually as soon as possible. In addition, schools will develop a safe plan to return to campus as quickly as feasible under the supervision and approval of the Superintendent of Schools. Due to on-going financial obligations in running the schools including teacher salaries, there will be no reduction in tuition during the period of virtual/at home learning. Beth opened it up for questions.

The second policy is the On Demand Transportation Services Policy. This policy prohibits students from using On-Demand Transportation Services (i.e. Uber, Lyft) to/from school campuses without a parent accompanying the student. The legal age to order these services is 18' but very seldom do these on-demand drivers check I.D.

Diane said there is another policy in the works which will be called the Infectious Disease Policy. The task force is working hard at getting this done and will be sent to the council for approval as soon as possible. The goal is to have the policy manual updated before June 30, 2020.

- **Marketing & Enrollment – Brian Dooling**

Brian said even though everyone is working remotely, he has been keeping in close contact with the admissions and advancement directors. He said the directors receive tips weekly to help them stay positive and moving forward. He has also been offering webinars, best practices and promoting virtual tours of school campuses on their websites which is particularly helpful in this time of staying in place.

Welcome Grants are being offered to all the schools. We have received 56 applications for the 42 grants that are available. A few of our schools have forfeited their welcome grants to other schools that are in greater need.

A new website for our schools has been created - [catholicschoolsatlanta.com](http://catholicschoolsatlanta.com). This is to help bring awareness to our schools and promote catholic education in the Atlanta area. Strategies are now being developed to help drive traffic to this site.

Brian has been actively posting on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn and is working to add Instagram to our social media lineup. Parent Ambassador Programs, website reviews, virtual tours, continuous learning, communicating with other dioceses and promotional videos are some of the other avenues being used to help with marketing efforts at our schools. Brad reminded Brian to always include GRACE as a marketing tool.

Diane asked Brian how enrollment stands currently in our schools. Brian answered that all with the exception of St. Mary's in Rome were very close to the numbers in their budget. Diane spoke of the task force recommendations and the challenges some of our schools will be faced with opening up this fall. There could be an economic factor for some families in this Covid environment. A comment was made that some private schools are checking in with their parents to see how they are doing in the wake of this crisis, which could help determine what to expect with enrollment in the fall. Diane mentioned several things in place to help St. Mary's get back on track and a discussion followed. Marcos asked if an exit interview is being conducted on families leaving our schools. Brian said this is something he is working on to formalize but it's not a standard practice at this time.

Marcos asked about the survey that went out to parents and students regarding on-line/virtual learning. Diane asked Connie to give a report on the response to this survey. Connie said the parent comments were mostly positive but many did express a personal frustration on having to take on more responsibility. These survey comments along with those from teacher surveys are being evaluated in the hopes of taking steps to improve upon this during summer institute for teachers and/or the fall teacher in-service.

Bob Heilmann asked if the AP scores were in yet. Diane said the AP tests were taken at home with open book and open notes and scores were not in yet. Some students had to retake the AP tests which could be delaying the results.

There was a discussion that followed regarding the gap some schools will experience once everything gets back to normal. Diane talked briefly on the PPP loans and CARES Act and how all the schools are being told to take advantage of this opportunity available to us. There are no federal entanglements with the CARES Act. Brad said all 18 schools have received PPP loans and have spent the money but are now waiting for forgiveness on these loans. Diane said all school employees are have been in full and will be paid through June 30, 2020.

Beth Morrison gave a shout out to the task force working on the safe reopening of our schools and said they are all working very hard and doing a great job. Diane added that we are getting expert advice from a few pediatricians on the task force who have children in our schools. There will be an option in all our schools to go virtual if that is what is best for their family.

- **Election of Officers (2020-2021) – Marcos Arias**

Marcos said the chair and vice chair positions are up for renewal. Beth Morrison has been asked if she would agree to chair this council and John Cryer was asked if he would consider being vice-chair. Both have graciously accepted. Diane asked for a vote on these two nominations. All showed in favor of selecting Beth and John as Chair and Vice-Chair of this Archdiocesan Schools Advisory Council effective July 1, 2020.

- **Council Meeting Dates – 2020-2021**

Diane handed out a copy of the meeting dates for next year beginning this August. She said the dates are very similar to last year and the meetings will remain on a Tuesday morning at the Chancery from 7:30am-9am. New council member training is also on the calendar for two dates in August. Each new advisory member of this council as well as any new school council member will be required to attend one of these sessions. Also on the calendar is the All Schools Advisory Council In-Service which is scheduled to be held at the end of September. Attendance at this in-service is very important as the school loses viability points for a low attendance. Topic planning for the in-service should begin in August with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Superintendent. The comments and concerns from the virtual learning surveys might be a good tool to use in selecting topics to discuss at the in-service.

The Archbishop's Banquet for Catholic Education is set for January 30, 2021 as of now. We are still awaiting a contract from the Marietta Hilton.

- **Committee Assignments for 2020-2021**

Diane said all council members should contact Beth or Hal to express what committee they would like to serve on for this council. Some will be obvious and others may want a change. Diane mentioned that the ad-hoc committee may experience some activity in the coming year with a possible project on the south side schools. Stay tuned.

- **Recognition of Outgoing Council Members**

Diane gave out a small token of appreciation for those departing members of the council and thanked them for their years of service.

Marcos thanked each council member for their support and dedication during his time as chair and said he couldn't be happier with the selection of officers that are in place moving forward. He said he remains a member on the council and will be happy to serve in any capacity where he is needed.

Lastly, Marcos gave a fine farewell to Diane saying she has been pivotal in leadership and counsel to this committee and to the entire Catholic School System of Atlanta. Marcos thanked her for giving her heart and soul to this ministry and wished her well in her retirement.

- **Adjournment & Next Meeting Date – August 18, 2020**

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Wheeler  
Schools' Program Specialist