

**Board of Advisors Minutes**  
**Monday, July 21st, 2025**  
**7:00 p.m. / Aquinas Conference Room**

**Aquinas Catholic Schools Mission Statement:**

*Provide a Christ centered learning environment where we develop individuals to be disciples of Christ in all areas of their lives.*

**Opening Procedures**

1. Welcome & Call to Order (Austin Witmer- President)
2. Fr. Ventre led an opening prayer.
3. Roll Call of BOA Members (Kelly Koranda- Secretary)
  - a. Present board members were: Sara Miriovsky, Katie Smith, Sandy VanCura, Ryan Meister, Philip Zegers, Mike Moravec, Brian Birkel, Alina Strong, Austin Witmer, Fr. Ventre, Jodi Pelan, Ron Mimick, Maggie Miratsky, Kristy Andel, Kelly Koranda, and Kyle Eller
4. Approval of Previous Board Meeting Minutes (Austin Witmer- President)
  - a. Philip Zegers made a motion to approve the previous meeting's minutes, Austin Witmer seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously
5. Amendments to the Agenda (Austin Witmer- President)
  - a. Big Beautiful Tax Bill updates that will affect school choice

**School Reports**

6. Chief Administrator Report - Fr. Ventre reviewed the following items from his report:
  - a. Tillotson is currently working on the Kindergarten roof at the elementary school and emergency roof repairs at the middle school/high school.
  - b. Fr. Ventre met with Sandy VanCura and Katie Smith and they mapped out teacher orientation and professional development days for beginning of the year. He plans to send this information to teachers in the next week or so.
  - c. They attended the ICLE conference in Lincoln and garnered lots of good resources to share with the teachers.
  - d. He requested the board's input on a date to present the State of the School address to the parents. The board agreed that a mandatory meeting with parents will be held on 2 consecutive Wednesdays – September 10<sup>th</sup> and September 17<sup>th</sup> – this will allow parents to choose which one they want to attend.
    - i. This presentation will include discussion of the school's finances and budget, look ahead to the future of the schools, explain the roof situation, and provide an update on the strategic plan.
  - e. He received a second bid from Tillotson on the roof – if we only replaced the 3 oldest (worst) sections – the High School wing, North side of the gym, and front entrance – the bid would be \$225,000. He needs to tell Tillotson this month to be able to fix the roof this Fall (the bid for the whole roof was \$500,000). He recently received \$100,000 from an anonymous donor, which could get us started.
    - i. There was some discussion about the various options for fixing the roof. The life expectancy for the rest of the roof is only 1-2 years, though the chapel and the old gym could probably wait if needed. It was noted that it is unlikely that supplies will become cheaper over time.

- ii. We could apply for a loan from the diocese to help with payments, as well as collect donations. There isn't a specific payback date for loans from the diocese, so this gives some flexibility. Fr. Ventre will look into this.
    - iii. Tillotson could complete the whole project this fall.
    - iv. Brian Birkel motioned and Mike Moravec seconded motion to do the whole roof now and go with Tillotson. The vote passed unanimously with 8 voting members in favor.
  - f. Fr. Ventre noted that additional cleaning is happening now before the end of the summer and John Svec has continued to work on scraping and painting the exterior of the building.
7. Aquinas High School/Middle School - Sandy VanCura reviewed the following items from her report:
- a. She reviewed enrollment numbers again.
  - b. She, along with a couple of staff members, met with a teacher at St. Vincent's in Seward. 10 kids will be travelling to come to Aquinas this year from Seward, next year there should be 12 – they anticipate that this number will continue to grow, so we need to continue working on recruiting.
    - i. Fr. Ventre talked to Msgr. Tucker about going there to preach a couple of times.
    - ii. Their parish council approved a \$26,000 assessment/donation to help with their parishioners' cost of education.
    - iii. Board members suggested inviting their students to sports camps in the summers, cheer camp, dance camp, and possibly send some free tickets to a football game. It could also be possible to arrange a shadow day at the school.
  - c. Sandy noted that the library has been updated a lot this summer and is looking great!
  - d. They continue to discuss ways to implement the Boys Town education model and will focus on 3 aspects at the high school: be respectful, be responsible, be safe.
  - e. The Crisis Response Team met and talked through various scenarios and had great conversations.
  - f. There is one addition to the calendar – August 6<sup>th</sup> will be a “Unite Night” including adoration in the south gym and short presentations from administrators.
8. Activities Report – Ron Mimick reviewed the following items:
- a. They have started membership sales – these went up a little bit, and Ron is coordinating with Michaela Moravec.
  - b. Otherwise, he has been busy getting ready for the school year!
  - c. The \$100 raffle will start in December.
  - d. We are done paying for the lights on the football field/track; we will still have to pay about \$5,000 (instead of \$8,000) per year for use of the football field/track, which is not bad considering the cost it would take to build and maintain our own field and track.
9. Aquinas Elementary - Katie Smith highlighted the following items on her report:
- a. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd – Rachel finished her training and she is fully ready to incorporate it weekly into the 5-day PreK and twice a month in the preschool program; implementation in Kindergarten will wait until a later date.
  - b. The Campus Cleanup day was a success – the daycare helped as well as a few others; Paula DeWispelare updated some garden areas to help with easy upkeep. Another Campus Cleanup will occur August 4<sup>th</sup>.
  - c. Robotics program– Katie reached out to the 4H Extension and will meet with Janessa and Katelynn to see what opportunities there could be to work together in order to keep the robotics program going. She noted that she has plenty of helpers, but needs a leader who can really take charge, so she is excited to look into cooperating with 4H.
  - d. She is excited to launch a volunteer program at the elementary school called “Monarch Dad Volunteer Program” – it aims at bringing more positive male role models to the school and is somewhat modeled after the “Watch Dogs” program – there are a variety of tasks with which dads, uncles, older

brothers, grandpas, etc. can assist for a day. More information will follow and she hopes to have things in motion by Labor Day.

10. Holy Family Early Learning Center - Kristy Andel reported on the following:

- a. Attendance this fall should be about 48 kids (not including extended day care).
- b. She currently has 9 full time staff, plus one who will return soon, and 2 part time staff members.
- c. She recently spoke with the LEAF project manager – she is really excited about this program. They’ll be working with UNL, and they only chose 10 daycares total and only 2 rural sites, and we are one of them! She will be meeting with them again to talk about how to share news with parents, set up permissions slips, and get things started.
- d. August 7, the Communities for Kids meeting will happen.
- e. Austin Witmer plans to have daycare financials updated to review by next meeting.

<b>Subcommittee and Pillar Reports</b>
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11. Finance reports

- a. Mike Moravec reviewed reports from the Finance Committee and Financial Sustainability and Advancement Pillar.
  - i. We have about \$930,000 cash, which is very good. The parish assessment revenue is \$290,000 (some of this comes from what St. Mary’s previously owed). Gold Rush was slightly above budget, and gym signs were a new source of income.
  - ii. There is money in the budget from the Nebraska Opportunities Scholarship – some of that will be dispersed for this year’s tuition; about half should be held for next year’s.
  - iii. Fundraising was a little above budget this year.
  - iv. Receivables from daycare were \$35,000 which is about what the daycare lost.
  - v. He noted that we could probably spend some of the cash on the roof.
  - vi. Usually we should aim to have about 90 days’ worth of cash on hand, which is about \$1,000,000.
  - vii. St. Mary’s still owes \$180,000, which should still be coming through their campaign.
- b. He also reviewed historical enrollment data and the elementary has held pretty consistent numbers for the past 10 years, but the high school is where we see more decline in enrollment. We need to continue looking at these trends and identifying what we can do to keep the families that we have in our school system.
  - i. As they consider the 5-year projection, we have to project finances based on what we are experiencing enrollment-wise.
  - ii. There was some discussion about a tax credit that could help, which will come in October 2027, which is part of the “Big Beautiful Bill.”
    1. There will be a \$1700 credit (per tax return) through which people can get dollar-for-dollar credit by donating to a scholarship fund.
    2. Students will qualify if their household income is 300% of the local median household income.
    3. States can opt out, but it is likely that Nebraska will choose to participate.
    4. This could amount to up to a \$5,000 scholarship per kid, depending on donations.
    5. We would need 1100 donors to get every kid covered with our current enrollment; but it runs through the diocese, so the diocese needs to promote in addition to our own promotions.
    6. It was suggested that Michaela should work on updating contact info for alumni, grandparents, etc. to get the info out to everyone and that the school should emphasize getting the word out to potential donors!
    7. The government is doing this because competition is healthy between schools, so we need to continue striving to become the best school we can be.

12. Catholic identity reports

- a. Melissa sent a report reviewing Sacred Catholic Foundation and Campus Ministry
  - i. She’s working on getting her committee list finalized
  - ii. She has also ordered the book *I Believe in Love* for staff members.

13. No Community Outreach report

14. Exceptional Learning Environment Pillar - Jody Pelan reported:

- a. Jody is still looking for some additional men for this committee; as of now, she only has Fr. Caleb Hile and Lyle Jakub for men.
- b. The Ag Advisory Committee met again– Foreman Lumber bid just over \$100,000 and will donate their general fee; Cory Vandenburg gave a bid as well and is going to donate some of his costs too.
  - i. They have raised \$135,000 in commitments; goal is still \$200,000.
  - ii. At the end of the day, it will cost the school about \$75,000, and other money will be in the account for other future expenses.
  - iii. Construction will begin within a few weeks and hopefully be completed toward the beginning of the school year.
  - iv. Ms. Kubicek has a “wish list” of supplies, books, etc. – they will discuss this more to come up with prices for the items on the list.

15. Enriching Student Life Pillar - Sara Miriofsky reported:

- a. Sara has her teachers set for her team, but needs some other outside of staff community members (Melissa Hotovy is the only one).

16. Dynamic Community Partnerships and Communication Pillar – Austin Witmer and Ryan Meister reported:

- a. They have been assembling and recruiting their team members as well.

17. The first Pillars meeting will be Wednesday, September 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30pm at Aquinas MS/HS.

#### Other Items

18. Website Update

- a. Laura has started posting Board Meeting minutes on the website. We will continue to do this after they have been reviewed each month.

19. Upcoming Schedule

- a. See Sandy’s report for upcoming important dates.

#### Closing Procedures

**20. Next Meeting – August 18th, 2025 @ 7:00 p.m. .... Adoration @ 6:30p.m. – This will be a special meeting to prepare for the parent meeting.**

21. Fr. Ventre led a closing prayer and the meeting adjourned at 8:17pm.

## Listing of Board of Advisors

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|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Father Michael Ventre | Chief Administrative Officer               |
| 2. Austin Witmer         | Board President                            |
| 3. Maggie Miratsky       | Board Vice President                       |
| 4. Kelly Koranda         | Board Secretary                            |
| 5. Sandy VanCura         | Middle/High School Principal               |
| 6. Katie Smith           | Elementary School Principal                |
| 7. Kristy Andel          | Holy Family Early Learning Center Director |
| 8. Alina Strong          | Business Manager                           |
| 9. Melissa Yindrick      | Campus Minister                            |
| 10. Michaela Moravec     | Alumni and Foundation                      |
| 11. Laura Adair          | Marketing and Enrollment                   |
| 12. Ron Mimick           | Activities Director                        |
| 13. Michael Moravec      | Board Member                               |
| 14. Christina Podolak    | Board Member                               |
| 15. Colleen Storm        | Board Member                               |
| 16. Brian Birkel         | Board Member                               |
| 17. Jared DeWispelare    | Board Member                               |
| 18. Trent Jakub          | Board Member                               |
| 19. Philip Zegers        | Board Member                               |
| 20. Kyle Eller           | Board Member                               |
| 21. Ryan Meister         | Board Member                               |
| 22. Father Brian Connor  | Dean, David City Deanery                   |