

Koraes Elementary School Open School Board Meeting

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Opening of Meeting:

- Call to Order: Liz Christofylakis at 6:31pm
- Prayer: Fr. Chris Avramopoulos
- Roll Call:

In attendance: Liz Christofylakis, Fr. Chris Avramopoulos, Beth Lind, Marissa Demir, Connie Cassiani, James Galanis, Dean Korolis, Jim Stavrou, George Argires, Dr. Maria Douros (via Zoom)

Not present: Elliot Danos

School Board Chair Opening Remarks:

Started off answering questions about the organization of the school board and the bylaws. Reiterated to everyone that the Parish council is the governing body, the school board is a sub committee of the parish council. The parish council governs the school board. The bylaws of the parish council can be found on the church's webpage.

She also stated that the policy, tuition, and the positions on the school board are application based. The School Board chair is elected and the Parish Council has the final say on what decisions are made by the school board. All School Board members have various backgrounds (i.e. Elliot Danos is in insurance, George Lattas is a member at large, Jim Stavrou is the Parish Council President).

All money that is collected by the School Board falls under the parish of Sts. Constantine and Helen. Money received and collected is presented at the general assembly meeting where the budget is proposed. During the General Assembly, everyone attending knows where the school and the church are financially. Once the General Assembly is over, the school board then runs its budget for an annual report. The church's annual budget report is from January 1-December 31, while the school's annual budget report is from July 1-June 30th.

The Koraes handbook says it is under revision and it is but the school policy is not. The Head of School has taken the document and is making it more accessible, checking for grammatical errors, and making sure everything is in order.

Information regarding the playground:

- School Board Chair reiterated that the delay of the playground is due to the owner of the company being diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer, therefore, stepping back from the company. The money that was raised for the playground was \$80,374.48. The cost of the mulch is \$22,700 and the cost of the playground is \$39,859.00. There is \$18,815 left for the fencing that needs to be put in and if any money remains,

the school will purchase a new basketball net which will cost \$3,000. Landscaping was more work than expected, but grateful to the students that helped moved the old mulch to replace it

Koraes Elementary School Open School Board Meeting

Thursday, November 21, 2024

with the new mulch. The school used the landscapers that the church uses to remove the remaining mulch.

There are currently 3 bids for the playground fencing. The goal is for the bids to fall within the range of \$18,000.

Once the playground is completed, we will have the Marx family come back for a rededication of the playground in memory of Kristina Marx.

- Strategic plan- usually takes about 3-5 years in nature in order to complete it.
- **Goals of the Strategic Plan**
- ❖ **Curriculum:**
 - Develop a staff and curricular plan to address the social and emotional needs of students. The school is using Wayfinder for social emotional learning. We will be studying the program and implementing it in the classroom.
 - Classroom management among teachers is being revamped as well. Focus is on love and logic and best practices for the classroom.
 - Redesign of the Middle School (MS) schedule to include Humanities and Culture. This redesign will allow for Greek culture to be included in scheduling instead of having it at the end of the day. School is looking to align humanities curriculum and based scheduling.
- ❖ **Administration Transition Planning:**
 - Mrs. Lind has become the interim Head of School due to unforeseen circumstances.
 - Administrative mentoring for new Head of School for at least 3 years at Koraes
- ❖ **Communication:**
 - Assess and deliver communication to Koraes community
 - School Board sends out the Eagle times to the school, church, and parents
 - A parent suggested we look into a platform called ParentSquare.com. This platform or something similar can help parents and Koraes community get information more easily. The school is looking to find ways to better consolidate the information sent
 - Koraes website redesign is in progress. A family of Koraes has donated to pay for the complete redesign of our school website. Launch date for the new school website will be on April 1, 2025. The goal of the front page of the website is to highlight student accomplishments and open house. Dean Christofer will be redesigning the website. We will be looking for feedback and have test pages.
- ❖ **Capital Development:**
 - Maintenance in the building: the roof has been replaced, the school has a new HVAC system, and ceiling tiles have been replaced. Maintenance continues for the school. The school needs new windows and are in the plan, outside lighting, parking lot which all costs about \$1 million dollars. As a school we are trying to

Koraes Elementary School Open School Board Meeting

Thursday, November 21, 2024

avoid getting into a situation and are trying to be active and not reactive. The Graven's donation helped with the maintenance of the school. We are now going to replenish the endowment with the help of various school fundraisers

- Assess and redefine spaces throughout the school. Looking at what impact the Maker Space will have for all grade levels. As the school population grows the space gets smaller and smaller. Space constraints are something to consider. Some options are to expand the school or capping enrollment. The School Board takes a look at space and size and has been looking 4-5 years prior at modular units, but they are very expensive.

❖ **Finance:**

- Improve the financial strength of the school by assessing tuition, identifying various fundraising opportunities, and seeking beneficiaries. School needs to utilize all of these aspects to make sure that sound decisions for the future of the school are made and that the school is not operating at a deficit. Koraes relies on fundraising to help with the deficit.

❖ **Personnel:**

- Plan is to attract, retain, and support faculty and staff. Mrs. Lind and Mrs. Grachan both work hard to make sure staff are well supported and have professional development.
- Improved health benefits, provide dental and vision, life insurance, pension plan. There is hope that the school can match and support the pension program in the future.
- Wellness initiatives and programs are offered to encourage faculty to bond and feel that Koraes is a home and place to continue and grow. Every year it's a struggle, but Koraes continues to address all of these issues and will continue to reassess the strategic plan.

- Approval of meeting minutes from 10/24 meeting-approved

Community Comments (if applicable): Marissa Demir-timekeeper

Suzie Killeen-Comment on increase of tuition

- Stated that public schools get \$14-16,000 in federal funding through the state and taxes that people pay; In a private school everything is out of pocket. If we have 197 students, then we would need \$12,500 to help reduce cost
- Asked how is cost reduced when parents pay extra for things and is not feasible for size of school
- Asked if the school is top heavy— do we need a Head of School, Assistant Principal, and a Director of Curriculum and Instruction.
- Stated that Plato Academy is \$10,000/yr-everything is included for that school; Koraes does not have everything that Plato offers so how can a 8-9% raise in tuition be justified?

Sia Petraski-Comment regarding attrition & enrollment

- Asked if the school board has developed a strategy for retention of families

Koraes Elementary School Open School Board Meeting

Thursday, November 21, 2024

- When we say we have 197 students -we have like 54 in preschool, which is like daycare so that means that there are only about 145 students enrolled in K-8
- Says that if we don't retain the families/students we will be in the red even with the increase
- Families that have left the school still live in the same house, but they don't come to Koraes and wants to understand why this is happening. Also wants to know if the school is doing their due diligence to find a way to retain the families who are leaving. Asked if a survey is completed about what school is doing right or wrong in retaining the families.
- Sees there is an interest in the beginning grades and starts off pretty strong but what happens is that we don't keep them all the way to 8th grade
- Interim Head of School, Mrs. Lind, came back during the meeting and gave the attrition numbers (which has been shared at previous meetings) as follows as well as stating that our Preschool program is not daycare:
 - PK3 to preschool - no loss; one new
 - PK to kindergarten-loss of 3 (2 families never stay for kindergarten) 6 new
 - K to 1-loss of one (other siblings are enrolled in a different school) 2 new
 - 1 to 2 - loss of one 1 new
 - 2 to 3 - no loss; 1 new
 - 3 to 4 - loss of two; 2 new
 - 4 to 5 - loss of one
 - 5-6 - no loss
 - 6-7 - no loss
 - 7-8 - one loss

Mr. Petraski-

- Stated that even though the school has successful fundraisers and generous donors there are constant budget shortfalls. T
- Suggested that a team or businesses on School Board or Parish Council should look at areas of budget to help put a plan in place and to help with the revenue streams that are coming in.
- Asked why Koraes has an SEL program in the school. He was told that is mandated by the state. He wants to know that because it is mandated if other things will be introduced such as critical race theory. Social emotional learning should be implemented by a social worker and the school does not have one

Mr. Killeen-

- Asked about the structure of the school; stated that the bylaws never been updated. He was told that the School Board terms began on Jan. 7th, 2024. Received clarification on the bylaws and that those bylaws he was looking at were that of the Parish Council and not the School Board. Clarification given about how the School Board Chairperson is an appointed position via an election and that only Parish Council has a President, Vice President.

Head of School Report: Beth Lind (interim)

Mrs. Lind clarified that having SEL for both students and staff will help with consistent language. Students will learn how to respond and maintain relationships with peers. Second step was adopted by the previous administration and school board but Did not meet the needs of the

Koraes Elementary School Open School Board Meeting

Thursday, November 21, 2024

school and through curriculum reviews, we chose Wayfinder that managed faith and SEL learning.

Regarding the comment on the school being top heavy, Mrs. Lind said the school board hired Head of School, who unfortunately had to take a medical leave, her role as well as Mrs. Grachan's roles are part-time with each of them working 20 hours/week.

- **Enrollment:**
 - Two new families have toured this month
 - Possible three student increase in PK3 to start January of 2025
 - March 1st begins new student enrollment

- **Staffing:**
 - Math teacher: have interviewed a candidate and was not a fit. Have reached out again to local universities for December grads and have offered 5 candidates screening interviews. Declined.

- **Facilities/Buildings & Grounds:**
 - Bathroom leaks have been repaired
 - Playground update provide by School Board Chair
 - Lights and ceiling tiles have been replaced-Bill Lalezas is replacing the lights and we are super appreciative for his hard work. Ceiling tiles will continue to be replaced as needed
 - Everyone who works on Building & Grounds maintenance are all volunteers
 - Projects to be completed: window in the health office, Makerspace flooring, covering vents
 - At a standstill with Makerspace-floor has been chosen, some items removed but nothing can be done during school
 - Sandy and I met with the the cleaning company for a check-in and told them we need more white glove cleaning done in our building
 - Faulty sensor in a fire alarm - 11/21/24. Alarm started at 6:40am, a second alarm occurred with a message stating that there was something wrong in the girl's bathroom at the North end of the building causing an evacuation of the building.

OXI Day Program was a terrific success. It was a different format. Feedback from students - they would like to see the entire program. We used the gym due to Philoptichos using Graven Hall

Report Cards for grades K-2 will be sent home on Friday. Powerschool has been turned on for parents as of this afternoon. PTC will be held on Monday and Tuesday. Students will return from Thanksgiving break on 12/3. Institute Day is 12/2. Staff will be attending workshops on classroom management, ADHD and using data to create assessments and differentiation needs.

Koraes Elementary School Open School Board Meeting Thursday, November 21, 2024

In-house assembly on Fractured Fairy Tales: modern retelling of fairy tales with an ironic ending.
Christmas parties are on Friday, once we return to school (December 6).

PK3 - 2 Annual Christmas play field trip

Santa's Secret Workshop

Confessions begin after Thanksgiving break

Insurance workshop this morning enrollment forms are due 12/3 and enrollment begins 1/1.
Hot lunch survey went out on Wednesday and closes Tuesday.

The Christmas program is expected to be about 90 minutes long in Graven Hall. The program will begin at 1PM and students will be dismissed from the gym.

Working on a new questionnaire for preschool students to be completed at the time of registration.

Mrs. Lind shared Fall MAP data by grade level. Mrs. Lind shared that our kindergarten data is always high from our students that attend our preschool program and clarified that our preschool program is not a daycare.

Old Business:

Fantastic hot lunch program. Bee Brothers will continue through the end of December. Bee Brothers did amazing food and service. Andy has been professional and has been great. Look forward to continuing to work with them outside of the realm of the hot lunch program.

- **KFSA:** Parent climate survey was sent out the week of Thanksgiving. There will be AM/PM sessions to discuss the survey. Parent climate survey.
- **Fall Fest:**
 - Expenses for Fall Fest: \$200 for teacher supervisors, pizza \$483.25. Total brought in \$3,901.75. The money made from this event is considered a second line item and will be held aside. School board will solicit parents as to where the money should be spent. Lots of positive feedback. Complaint was that some Koreas parents and parish members some didn't sign up for a table.
- **Thanksgiving Feast:**
 - It was fantastic!
 - 100% of the food was donated
 - Kids loved it and it is special to the students and the Koraes community.

New Business

- Hot lunch program is shifting to Country House. They asked the parish if it was interested in renting the kitchen and facility to prepare hot lunch. It was approved. Country House does hot lunch for the catholic schools, high schools, and colleges. Major change to the hot lunch program is that it will be served 5 days/week. Parents can order

Koraes Elementary School Open School Board Meeting Thursday, November 21, 2024

up to 48 hours, like before, but are given the opportunity of a late order window. All students will be able to get a lunch to eat if they have forgotten their lunch. All orders will be placed through the PT Board. There will be a late charge for same day order but can accommodate. All servers will be trained and have to do background checks that parents, staff, and administration go through. Lunch monitors will be reevaluated to see how it works out. Country House is confident they can work with or without hot lunch monitors.

- A shift in kitchen usage will occur. Country House will occupy the kitchen Monday-Friday; therefore, the kitchen will not be accessible to anyone due to health code issues. When the kitchen is used both the church and school need to maintain food service standards. Tray washing will be discussed. Clean up after use of the kitchen; it's good to have people with food knowledge and sanitation. Anything to happen will affect school. Kitchen use guidelines along with monitor guidelines will be clearly stated for anyone who does an event that is utilizing the kitchen.
- **Santa Brunch:**
 - An email will go out outlining what the budget is and what expenses are like.
 - Has sold over 120 tickets. Confident that it will sell out.
- **Wellness Day:**
 - This will be a day designated for teachers which includes a 10 minute chair massage to help bring relaxation for the day to the teachers. We will explore options to make it happen.

Tuition & Fees 2024:

- Budget and research is going on to make fiscal decisions. Looking at a top down analysis in comparison to other schools and private schools; student population and current rates and expenses and what does that yield.
- Comps information: are we competitive, are we over or have been aggressive in the past year for tuition increase. Yes, because we need to accommodate teacher salaries to avoid teacher turnout. 85% of the budget goes to teacher salaries, that's why donations are important.
- Cleaning school and maintenance of school
- 5% of other schools in areas have an increase in tuition. The cost of Hellenic American Academy \$8,500 and Guardian Angels \$6,300 is pretty much within the ballpark of what private school tuition costs. Chicago Christian School \$10,000 and Everest Academy significantly higher than us in tuition. We are within the range of tuition.
- Early tuition locks and see if it makes sense; we need to fine tune the budget

Koraes Elementary School Open School Board Meeting

Thursday, November 21, 2024

- Salary expenses and other expenses but even with those expenses we have presented a break even budget or an over budget of about \$5,000.
- The School Board suggests a cost analysis to look at line by line, salary, teachers, fees, cleaning and see where we need to be. Ask Elaine to come to the December meeting to prepare line analysis with Dean. School has been able to balance the budget in recent years.
- Through fundraising efforts 9 years ago, the school raised between \$20,000-\$40,000 but since then, the gala has changed everything. 1st Bouzouki night raised \$80,000 and the 1st gala raised \$21,000. 75% of gala money comes from donors. Events like that critical to school in ways to help the school.
- **Student population:**
 - Student population has grown over the years. Our target is 198 students, which shows a little bit of growth if not flat from prior year.
 - We have a concentration of PK students. How do we retain them? Early tuition locks and see if it makes sense.

Closing Comments

School Board Chair-Liz Christofylakis

Meeting end time: **8:07pm**

Moved to executive session

End Prayer: Fr. Chris Avramopoulos