

WEST CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

November 19, 2025

West Catholic High School

MAK Board Room

Mission: To form disciples of Christ through a dynamic, excellence-driven Catholic education

Attendees: MK Britenfeld, Dan Byers, Suzette Colon, John Frey, James Leonard, Molly Nawrocki, Dave Veneklase (late), Jeanne Walch

Absent: John Kesterke, Jenny Pudelko, Fr. Anthony Russo

Resources: President/CEO Jill Wierzbicki, Principal Tony Fischer, Communications Director Natalie Scalabrino, DOGR Controller Meredith Weathers

Agenda Item	Discussion/Conclusion/Action	Responsibility
<u>Opening</u>		
1.1 Call to Order & Welcome	Frey called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.	John Frey
1.2 Opening Prayer	Opening prayer led by Suzette Colón	Suzette Colón
1.3 Roll Call	8 out of 11 present at the time of roll call	James Leonard
<u>Comments from the Floor & Community Topics</u>		
<u>Presentations</u>		
<u>Approvals & Discussions</u>		
4.1 Review & Approval of Sept 24 Minutes	<p>Leonard asked about 4.2 surplus to verify the monetary total. Nawrocki confirmed and approved inclusion.</p> <p>Leonard also inquired about the President's Report and the desire to move the official count day number into the minutes. The Board agreed to make this addition. Leonard also proposed adding quotes to the specific verbiage surrounding the staff's survey results - the Board agreed.</p> <p>Leonard added that he included a few additional details from the Principal's Report into the</p>	John Frey

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	<p>official minutes and noted them for the group.</p> <p>Vote to approve as amended –</p> <p>Motion: Walch; seconded: Colon. Unanimously approved.</p>	
4.2 New Board & Committee Members	<p>Deborah Schaefer – Nominated by Byers. Deborah is a WC grad (1984) and current parishioner at Holy Spirit, where she assisted with their Capital Campaign. Deborah has experience with strategic planning and capital campaigns, so Byers and Frey suggested she could be an excellent match for the Development Committee.</p> <p>Tim Grant – Nominated by Frey. Frey and Grant previously worked together on the WC Band Boosters. Grant is a former parent of a WC grad who organized and helped increase band revenue. Grant returned to West Michigan after moving to SC and FL and is excited to get involved in the WC community. Frey also suggested Grant be on the Development Committee.</p> <p>John Beadling – Self-nominated. Beadling works the gate at WC football games and has an extensive marketing background. With his heart at WC, Beadling is excited to possibly work with the Marketing Committee. Britenfeld mentioned that she invited Beadling to the December Marketing Committee meeting. Frey clarified that participating in any of the various Committees can be separate from the Board membership.</p> <p>Frey shared the names of the prospective Board members and mentioned he had been communicating with the candidates to move them through the new Board member approval process. The November meeting's Board packet included the resumes for all three candidates that the WC Executive Committee previously voted to approve unanimously. All three candidates received glowing recommendations from their respective Parish priests. Grand Rapids Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Sarah Grey, indicated she was ready to sign their approval letters but was waiting on the WC School Board's vote of approval. Grey noted the approval letters would be drafted and sent to Schaefer, Grant, and Beadling within a week once the Board approved.</p> <p>Frey reminded the Board that active Committee involvement is highly encouraged.</p> <p>Wierzbicki wanted to ensure that there was enough time to onboard Schaefer, Grant, and Beadling before the January Board meeting. Leonard questioned how 3-year terms work in terms of rotation with mid-year membership additions. While Wierzbicki shared that she is not opposed to mid-year rolloff with proper overlap of people to pass the torch to, Frey highlighted that the bylaws clearly define terms and rolloffs for guidance.</p> <p>Vote to accept Schaefer, Grant, and Beadling to WC School Board membership beginning</p>	John Frey

	<p>next board meeting (Jan. 21) – Motion: Frey; seconded: Nawrocki. Unanimously approved.</p> <p>Frey shared next steps – Grey will be emailed after the Nov. Board meeting to finalize and send approval letters. Onboarding will be scheduled as soon as possible. Terms technically start Jan. 21, but new members will be included in communications to the Board effective immediately after final approval from Grey.</p>	
Sales Tax	<p>Weathers shared that the 2024-25 Audit was completed. A draft audit report was provided to the Finance Committee. The Auditors shared that there may be a footnote regarding the risk surrounding sales tax. The Auditors and Finance Committee believes the exposure for not paying sales tax on the applicable sales is for four years, although the State of Michigan could potentially go back to “infinity.” WC may need to settle with the State of Michigan and come forward with this four-year settlement proposal. Doeren Mayhew has offered to help WC with this proposal process. Weathers is working with the Auditors to not have this footnote included.</p> <p>It was noted that this applicable sales tax only needs to be paid on prepared food. Accounting started in 2016, and Weathers is going back as far as she can. Concession sales are easier to calculate but line items are harder in other areas. Doeren Mayhew is concerned that the Michigan Department of Treasury could come looking for this back sales tax payment, but most schools are not known to pay this tax.</p> <p>Wierzbicki mentioned that this has been an ongoing concern for three years. WC tried to turn on sales tax for payment methods a few years ago, but was instructed not to do so by the DOGR Controller because both WC and CC had to be ready to do so at the same time. Once sales tax payments are triggered, the State of Michigan may require sales tax to be submitted monthly, so internal processes and procedures will need to be put in place to assist.</p> <p>Leonard asked if 501(c)3s were exempt. Weathers clarified that WC doesn't need to pay sales tax on items purchased for use but must collect and pay sales tax on items sold.</p>	Meredith Weathers
4.3 International & Domestic Tuition Rates	<p>Nawrocki shared that the Finance Committee recently met and made recommendations for salary increases and tuition increases.</p> <p>Salary: 3-4% wage increase for staff, although respective departments would have discretion.</p> <p>Tuition: <u>International</u> \$17,200 (5% increase + \$1,000 fee) – this adjusted amount is close to the full cost to educate.</p> <p><u>Domestic</u> \$13,235 (2% increase).</p> <p>Wierzbicki mentioned the Finance Committee spent considerable time discussing the</p>	Jill Wierzbicki and Molly Nawrocki

	<p>enrollment projections for WC to help guide budgeting. While 521 students were the initial projection, including 135 incoming freshmen and a stretch goal of 20 international students, the updated enrollment projection in view of the CC Catholic Promise was tempered to 115 incoming freshmen and a conservative 15 international students. The uncertainty in enrollment is driven by the unknown impacts of the CC Catholic Promise and international markets. Enrollment numbers will be difficult to assess until tuition statements go out. Committees have advised Wierzbicki to build the 2026/2027 budget as if WC would not be impacted by CC Catholic Promise, so any budget deficit could hopefully be made up elsewhere.</p> <p>Byers suggested Wierzbicki prepare a contingency budget so a backup plan could be on standby. Nawrocki shared that the Finance Committee discussed the possibilities of both 20 and 50 fewer students. Byers followed up asking about the possible loss of 10th-12th graders. Wierzbicki noted that CC has promised that they are not allowing transfers, but have yet to communicate that to parents. Wierzbicki explained she was unsure of what to do with families that could potentially have older students at WC and younger students at CC, since she wanted to avoid splitting up families.</p> <p>Britenfeld asked if Wierzbicki was prepared to give more money to WC families to help them remain at and/or choose WC for their children. Wierzbicki is working through options, but noted that WC cannot keep pace financially to offer more money to everyone who would otherwise qualify for the CC Catholic Promise. Nawrocki asked if the no-transfer policy would be enforced by the Diocese, but both Wierzbicki and Weathers shared that no such policy has been put in writing. Wierzbicki again noted that there are no good answers right now.</p> <p>Nawrocki shared that there is a subcommittee within the Finance Committee(Nawrocki, Vande Guchte, Blundy and Wierzbicki) who are reviewing all options.</p> <p>Lots of questions and potential answers are on the table for this subcommittee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What if there was a final target tuition of \$8,500 for each family that asked for assistance? Would take \$1,000,000. • Where would \$1,000,000 of additional funds potentially come from? Suggested $\frac{1}{3}$ from WC, $\frac{1}{3}$ from donors and $\frac{1}{3}$ from diocese (Bishops Scholarships, etc.). • Is lowering tuition a priority? What other options could we do? Meeting 100% of the financial need for applicant families would require a dramatic increase in tuition assistance. Providing welcome scholarships could be a good option to help relieve the financial burden for freshmen, but it would only be a temporary 1-year solution. <p>Nawrocki shared that the DOGR school board (in advisory capacity) found out about the CC Promise when it was released publicly. To proactively help WC react, a subcommittee</p>	
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	<p>Taskforce of the Diocesan school board was formed, including Tim Thimmesch, Andrew Blum, Teresa Reid and Sue Haas-Williams.</p> <p>Recommendations/proposals from the Taskforce included: 1) using half of WC's rainy day fund; 2) take a low-interest loan from the diocese; 3) redirect money from WC's Capital Campaign; 4) ask for more money through Bishop's scholarships; 5) increase rolloff from endowment (increase from 4%), etc. Colon stressed how financially irresponsible each of these five options would be and how it was against WC's mission - the Board agreed with Colon's comments.</p> <p>Wierzbicki shared that this Taskforce needs clarity regarding the diocesan advisory and what is WC advisory roles of each board. WC is actively working on determining solutions, but recognizes our bylaws have a process we need to follow. Wierzbicki then shared that the WC Finance subcommittee had started editing/re-drafting a letter to the bishop that the Taskforce had drafted themselves regarding the recommendations/proposals listed above to ensure accuracy. The subcommittee ultimately decided not to support or co-sign this letter. Within the WC committee, Vande Guchte has also suggested outlining a letter about the impact and having it signed by as many WC Board members as possible to provide a mutual front between both the WC and DOGR Boards. Wierzbicki doesn't want this history to be painted incorrectly as a joint effort that we're signing off on if it's misinformed. Britenfeld and Byers stressed the importance of accepting the Taskforce's assistance and advocacy but noted that we need to determine the best way to utilize their energy/passion.</p> <p>Wierzbicki shared that she has been consulting with WC Capital Campaign consultants on annual giving strategies. Consultant Terry Fairholm keeps assuring WC that the school's numbers are already fantastic, but increasing the donated funds to what would be needed to keep pace with CC tuition would be unsustainable. Nawrocki mentioned the need for a donor pitch deck where WC could go to bigger donors who are not typical WC donors but support faith-based education. Nawrocki posed the bigger question: Where do we want our WC tuition to be for our families? How do we get there?</p> <p>Wierzbicki shared that WC has seen an increase in financial aid applications, including those that would not normally qualify for aid. WC has been promoting "apply for aid" and see what the package looks like. Now that the applications are rolling in, we need to determine how WC will respond. Wierzbicki noted more financial aid apps would come in before Christmas and that the first round of Bishops Scholarship is due Dec. 8.</p> <p>Frey shared that Wierzbicki, Frey, and Leonard met with the Bishop and Superintendent Saray Grey just prior to the CC public announcement to share their concern regarding</p>	
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	<p>inequity in tuition rates for the sister schools. No diocesan strategies for high school tuition rates were expressed at the meeting.</p> <p>In addition to the meetings between the CC lead donor and Nawrocki and Wierzbicki, Byers has also met with this donor and shared that he understands where the donor is coming from. WC needs to figure out how to raise money that's not tied to the diocese and utilize it effectively. Britenfeld suggested submitting numbers to the task force, donors, etc., to show the real monetary impact of the CC Promise.</p> <p>Walch asked if the Bishop's Scholarship would divert more aid to WC. Wierzbicki shared that this could be a recommendation to Bishop in the upcoming letter.</p> <p>Wierzbicki mentioned the need to have communications to family ready to go in Feb and beyond when tuition statements start rolling out. Britenfeld recommended staying positive by saying something along the lines of, "We can't match, but this is what we can do." Wierzbicki shared that WC is planning to meet with any family who wants to discuss tuition statements, so she can do all that we can to help them choose WC.</p> <p>Wierzbicki noted that families don't know what WC is doing to help them. Will be addressed in the Christmas appeal letter, among other things. Weathers shared that one person has called the business office about the CC Promise.</p> <p>Fischer asked about who would be able to get people in the room and get donations. Wierzbicki shared that the strategy would be to get on the phone with top donors. The appeal is to try to double the support for as many donors as possible. The development committee will be asked to assist with these efforts (phone calls, conversations, etc.).</p> <p>Wierzbicki also shared her worry about writing the annual tuition letter to parents to signify any tuition increase. The subject of whether a letter should be sent will be further discussed at the marketing committee meeting.</p> <p>Partner schools are worried about raising their elementary tuition to over \$6,000 since CC's Promise caps the tuition at \$6,000. Pudelko spoke to this as well – the non-parishioner rate is already over \$6,000, and raising the parishioner rate is on their radar.</p> <p>Britenfeld asked if the vote had to be tonight for salaries and tuition rates. Nawrocki shared that, in theory, they could build a budget without immediate approval. Wierzbicki stated that financial aid couldn't be run if tuition wasn't finalized. Historically, WC distributes over \$1 million in aid. Weathers shared that operation costs have increased substantially, but WC is</p>	
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	<p>dedicated to making things affordable. Tuition rates need to be approved as soon as possible to ensure Weathers' staff can get moving on tuition assistance. Weathers noted her concern about the timing of the first round of tuition statements going out. Nawrocki emphasized that packaging is important. Weathers also shared that a decision would need to be made before mid-December. Veneklase stated that a special vote would be needed if the board didn't vote tonight because the next meeting is in January.</p> <p>Veneklase asked how much money would be needed to bridge the gap if a 0% increase was approved. Wierzbicki stated that the number would be \$200,000-\$400,000. The Board questioned where this deficit could be made up elsewhere.</p> <p>Wierzbicki stated that the Marketing Committee would need to look over the messaging of a parent tuition letter. Nawrocki questioned if there was a pitch deck for donors or if that is something the marketing committee could create. Wierzbicki said it was a possibility.</p> <p>Byers inquired about the possibility of the diocese offering low-interest loans to families where parents would foot the bill directly and pay off over time. This echoes the diocesan proposal that WC take a loan from the diocese should it need to do so.</p> <p>Vote for an increase in salaries (3-4%), international tuition (5%), and domestic tuition (2%) – Motion: Nawrocki; seconded: Byers. Unanimously approved.</p>	
4.4 Financial Update	See Agenda Item 4.3. The Financial update was naturally combined with the International & Domestic Tuition Rates discussion.	Molly Nawrocki
4.4 President's Report	<p>Wierzbicki took questions from the Board. Byers asked about how WC recruits internationally. Wierzbicki shared that there is considerable interest from foreign students who want to attend WC, but the limiting factor is finding host families. Word-of-mouth recruitment is popular with students requesting WC (siblings, friends, etc. of those already attending here). WC's international student body has diversified over the years to include several different countries. Byers asked how WC recruits host families, and Wierzbicki shared that a strategy is being built to help with this. Frey asked if it was easier to have WC families host vs outside families, and Wierzbicki shared that WC community members are preferred because it's easier integration and many families want to share their love of WC. Currently, half of the hosts are made up of families with children, and the other half are empty nesters.</p> <p>Britenfeld asked about increasing international tuition even more. Wierzbicki shared that further increasing WC international tuition would price a lot of students out of coming here. The cost for a student to stay and study here at WC is closer to \$40,000 for international students due to fees, insurance, etc. Britenfeld offered to share her experience as an</p>	Jill Wierzbicki

	international student in Germany when she was in high school and as a host parent if testimonials are ever needed.	
4.5 Principal's Report	<p>Fischer made an addition to his report – Fall 2025 athletics recap compiled by the athletic department.</p> <p>Britenfeld praised WC athletics, and the Board noted the WC Football Team's success in winning the State Title. Britenfeld additionally noted how, in particular, Angelique Gaddy-McElveen brings amazing energy and enthusiasm, which provides a positive light to parent volunteers when needed.</p>	Tony Fischer

Organization Minutes & Reports

5.1 Finance Committee	See Nov Board Packet. No additional comments to note.	Molly Nawrocki
5.2 Development Committee	See Nov Board Packet. No additional comments to note.	James Leonard
5.3 Facilities Committee	See Nov Board Packet. No additional comments to note.	John Frey
5.4 Catholic Culture Committee	See Nov Board Packet. No additional comments to note.	Jeanne Walch
5.5 Marketing Committee	See Nov Board Packet. No additional comments to note.	MK Britenfeld

Unfinished Business

6.1 Accreditation	Wierzbicki distributed a survey for accreditation (Standard 10). Board members are asked to provide their score/feedback to Wierzbicki and Nawrocki via email. Electronic copies of the standards will be sent to Board members. Committees are receiving similar prompts for review with the appropriate standards that correlate with their respective areas.	
6.2 End of Year Giving	<p>Wierzbicki shared that WC is participating in a matching program challenge for Giving Tuesday. Messaging will go out to the community soon, but the match has also been promoted via socials and will continue to be pushed. The CFWM will also be giving out Challenge Grants again. The Development team is strategizing about how to earn those extra dollars.</p> <p>An appeal letter will be sent to donors in early December. The focused message of this appeal letter is “giving as a community.” The average WC aid package is \$7,000, which means each aid package takes approximately 7-8 donors to help a student based on the average gift. The Development team is exploring the possibility of making a video version for a digital push.</p>	

Adjournment

7.1 Closing Prayer	Closing prayer led by Britenfeld	MK Britenfeld
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7.2 Adjournment	Frey adjourned the meeting at 8:13 p.m.	John Frey
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DATES TO REMEMBER:

- Nov 19 Board Meeting
- Nov. 27 Thanksgiving
- Dec. 1 Facilities committee
- Dec. 2 Marketing committee and Giving Tuesday
- Dec. 4 Catholic Culture
- Dec. 11 Development committee
- Dec. 17 Finance committee
- Dec 19 Day of Engagement
- Dec 25 Christmas
- Jan. 7 Finance committee
- Jan. 9 Executive committee
- Jan 19 MLK Day - No School
- Jan. 21 Next WC Board Meeting
- Apr 17 Celebrate West! Auction
- May 19 WC Graduation