

## WEST CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

June 25, 2025

St. Alphonsus Catholic Church  
Parish Center Boardroom  
224 Carrier NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

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

Attendees: MK Britenfeld, Dan Byers, John Frey, John Kesterke, James Leonard, Molly Nawrocki, Jenny Pudelko, Dave Veneklase, Jeanne Walch

Absent: Suzette Colon, Fr. Anthony Russo

Resources: President/CEO Jill Wierzbicki, Communications Director Natalie Scalabrino

Agenda Item	Discussion/Conclusion/Action	Responsibility
<b><u>Opening</u></b>		
1.1 Call to Order & Welcome	Frey called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m.	John Frey
1.2 Opening Prayer	Opening prayer led by Fr. Epplett	Fr. Christopher Epplett
	<p>Fr. Epplett noted that he reviewed the West Catholic (“WC”) strategic plan and appreciated WC’s focus on transformational growth and journeys to encounter Christ. As a whole, he noted the Church is also working on discipleship and trying to create various types of encounters. Father pointed out it is not as easy to provide encounters with Christ in a school setting, which makes the witness of teachers and staff so important. Fr. Epplett suggested if WC is creating a culture of prayer to help students encounter Christ, the Board should look for options to incorporate this focus on prayer into our Strategic Plan.</p> <p>Fr. Epplett productively pushed the Board by noting that Eucharistic adoration is something West does really well so we should incorporate this strength into our Strategic Plan. In addition, Father mentioned he appreciated the order of the WC Strategic Plan (prioritizing I, II, III, then IV) because it follows the encounter, grow, witness model the diocese is currently promoting via billboards.</p> <p>Lastly, Fr. Epplett encouraged the board to ask for prayers that the strategic plan may come to fruition.</p>	Fr. Christopher Epplett

1.3 Roll Call	10 out of 12 present at the time of roll call	John Frey
<b><u>Comments from the Floor &amp; Community Topics</u></b>		
	Per request by the Board, a complete list of all Committee meeting dates was compiled for the coming 25/26 school year. All Board members were invited to attend and participate in Committee meetings whenever possible.	
	Frey addressed the loss of Duane Kluting and pledged his dedication to serving as the next Board Chair. He thanked everyone for their confidence and asked for their prayers. Frey also introduced Jeanne Walch to the Board for her first meeting. Veneklase suggested introductions and everyone on the Board shared their names and roles.	
<b><u>Presentations</u></b>		
	None	
<b><u>Approvals &amp; Discussions</u></b>		
4.1 Review & Approval of April 23 Minutes	<p>April 23 Board Meeting was discussed first. No changes. Motion: Veneklase, seconded: Nawrocki; unanimous approval</p> <p>Annual meeting minutes were brought up. Frey shared that the executive committee was still working to verify committee leadership, but approved the executive committee roster at that meeting. No changes were requested to the minutes. Motion: Leonard, seconded: Nawrocki; unanimous approval</p>	John Frey
4.2 Financial Update	<p>Nawrocki shared that the monthly finance committee meeting was earlier in the week. The finance committee shared their excitement for their new controller, Meredith Weathers. Frey added that he had already reached out to Weathers to share committee information with her, and she was already involved and eager to assist.</p> <p>Veneklase asked if Nawrocki was aware of the delays that had caused enrollment issues in the past. Wierzbicki confirmed that those conversations have already begun as Weathers has been highlighting areas of improvement. Weathers' turnaround time was applauded, and it was noted she is very process-oriented while actively making several processes more efficient. Pudelko asked about Weathers' professional experience and it was noted that she previously worked at Otsego.</p> <p>As of April 30<sup>th</sup>, the reviewed financials predicted a \$300,000 surplus budget. While this is an aspirational surplus, the Finance committee expects the final surplus to be \$100,000-\$300,000. Weathers to review the numbers and bring the final projections to the next meeting.</p>	Molly Nawrocki

	<p>Nawrocki, Wierzbicki, Deja and CC's board treasurer were planning to meet with Weathers on Friday, June 27<sup>th</sup>, to ensure the schools are working on similar schedules and operating effectively. A virtual meeting with Doeren Mayhew may be conducted to address audits. Auditors will be coming in October or November 2025 to discuss results with the committee.</p> <p>Nawrocki discussed pledges already coming in from the capital campaign and the importance of tracking. The committee is confident in accurately recording practices thus far.</p> <p>Frey asked how often the finance committee meets. Nawrocki shared that it's a monthly meeting. Frey shared that it is up to each committee chair to confirm the scheduling of their meetings. Wierzbicki added that Admin Assistant Brooke Shuff can help with scheduling. Scalabrino is in charge of the master calendar and can help if Shuff is unavailable or if individuals have questions about dates/times.</p>	
4.3 Committee Updates	<p>Frey added that committees are working toward making sure committee meeting minutes follow similar formats. Frey additionally praised that board meeting notes may be listed as "Draft" or "Unapproved" to show active committees. Byers asked that we come up with a consistent terminology. The Board agreed to use "Draft" on pre-approved minutes and then use "Approved" after they are confirmed. Wierzbicki shared that this was important as Bishop Walkowiak reads through all the minutes and asks for clarification and confirmation of accuracy.</p> <p>Walch asked for a template of agendas. Wierzbicki shared that templates have been used in the past, and there are similarities between all, but there are no specific templates used currently. Wierzbicki mentioned that committees should be used for staff to report to the committee, and then the group acts as a think tank. Staff should not be running meetings, and Frey added that the agenda should come from the committee chair. Byers shared that facilities are a great model of this. Frey asked that an individual be appointed for each committee to record minutes or notes.</p> <p>Leonard asked if committee members played any role in the evaluation of staff members. Wierzbicki clarified that no, they do not, as it is a board of limited jurisdiction; however, if there are questions or concerns, please bring them to her.</p> <p>Frey stated that committees should be looking at the number of members. The executive committee is looking to update the bylaws to where new Board members would be recommended by the chair and vetted with approval of the president/CEO. The desire is to provide clarity for all new Board member selections. Wierzbicki noted that committee members are the pipeline for future board members, so this should be a consideration when</p>	John Frey

	<p>adding members to the standing committees.</p> <p>Walch asked about the process of adding new members to a standing committees. The committee chair, and the Board chair consult with the CEO to ensure committee needs are being met and to begin the vetting process of a prospective member. The process of adding new committee members will be examined up in the coming months and brought to the governance board so everyone is aware of the updates.</p>	
4.4 President's Report	<p>Wierzbicki opened the floor to questions after providing her handout to the Board.</p> <p>The results of the program effectiveness survey were included. Wierzbicki shared that the board/committees should use this to guide focus year-to-year. Wierzbicki additionally noted the answer to the final survey question of "would you recommend WC to friends/colleagues?" was favorably strong.</p> <p>Byers asked how the 24/25 survey compared to the previous year's results. Wierzbicki acknowledged that students took the 24/25 survey after a rough morning of cracking down on haircut policies. The student body was NOT happy, sitting side-by-side, answering the survey negatively because of their combined grievances. There was a DRASTIC change in tone as freshmen, sophomores and juniors took the survey after the seniors left the mentor groups. There were not a lot of comments, but the majority of comments provided were positive.</p> <p>Kesterke asked about tracking students from their freshman through senior year results. Wierzbicki noted that the diocese controls the survey, so we are unable to edit it. Also, the new superintendent has not indicated whether she's going to give a survey moving forward. Pudelko noted that the survey flips between a mission effectiveness and faith focused assessment each year. Veneklase noted that there is no benchmark. The Board noted many flaws with the survey, including excessive length, and noted changes should be passed along to the superintendent to create improved and more clear results.</p> <p>Pudelko noted a success story of a family wanting to move from Minnesota to WC because the mother wants her one child with learning difficulties to be supported by WC's amazing staff – "no one does it better" – and was impressed by the diocese as a whole but in particular WC.</p>	Jill Wierzbicki
4.5 Principal's Report	Nawrocki asked for historical data on the graduation stats that Fischer shared. Wierzbicki said she would look into pulling that information, if possible.	Tony Fischer
<b><u>Organization Minutes &amp; Reports</u></b>		

5.1 Finance Committee		Molly Nawrocki
5.2 Development Committee	Leonard asked about the successful growth of the endowment. Nawrocki and Veneklas provided historical context of joint funds with CC (allocated based on student population). After the combined CC & WC board split into separate boards, WC had to grow/develop trust, but has been thriving in recent years. Wierzbicki attributes the success of the WC endowment's growth to transparency. Most recently, we have published a named scholarship and donor honor roll, which has encouraged individuals to give and share legacy gift information with the school. Leonard asked about having a separate endowment board. Wierzbicki shared that no such endowment board exists, but the WC development team takes care of all that in conjunction with the diocese.	James Leonard
5.3 Facilities Committee		John Frey
5.4 Catholic Culture Committee		Jeanne Walch
5.5 Marketing Committee		MK Britenfeld
<b><u>Unfinished Business</u></b>		
6.1 Board Effectiveness Survey	<p>Frey asked if, with extra time, the group takes the Board Effectiveness Survey. Veneklas shared that taking the survey as a whole (which the school was asked to do) may lose some value as members can't share their individual thoughts.</p> <p>Wierzbicki verbally asked questions and recorded results. To combat ignoring outliers, Wierzbicki asked board members to send any notes on dissenting opinions to Frey.</p>	
<b><u>Adjournment</u></b>		
7.1 Closing Prayer	Closing prayer led by Wierzbicki	Jill Wierzbicki
7.2 Adjournment	Frey adjourned the meeting at 7:36 p.m.	John Frey

**DATES TO REMEMBER:**

- June 15-28 - Out West Trip
- July 26 - Board Social Event at Suzette Colon's home
- Aug 3-9 - Athletic Dead Week
- Aug 12-13 - GIFT Days Retreat
- Aug 20 - First Day of School
- Aug 29-Sept 1 - Labor Day Weekend
- Sept 5 - Honor Game
- Sept 24 - Next Board Meeting