

Mt. Irenaeus
Board of Trustees Meeting
Minutes

September 13, 2025

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| Present: | Kathy Colucci Christine Cusick Tom Conway, ofm Matt Cressler Matt Delforte Mary Domes Kathy Dougherty, osf (Zoom) Jeff Gingerich Matrecia James Jimmy Kernan, ofm Dianne Kuzia Hills Mike Sullivan (Zoom) Sarino Tropeano | Excused: | Evan McElroy |
| | Rob Buckla Mike Fenn Mary Giardini Joe Kotula, ofm Kevin Kriso, ofm Wendy Mann Michelle Marcellin Lou McCormick, ofm Karen Pulaski Natalie Pronio Otto Rothermel | | |

Began with prayer in the Chapel. Meeting taken to family room in the House of Peace.

Community updates:

Natalie Pronio –

- ❖ Last academic year had 900 student visits from SBU. Natalie participated in a mission review from Fr. Stephen Mimnaugh and provided this data tracking. 96 1-time/ 92-repeat visits.
- ❖ Have set the fall schedule, busy as usual.
- ❖ Have 2 communications interns for the new year, looking for one more intern for data entry.

- ❖ Since July we have had 250 students visit. New groups that came up include Men's Basketball Team, Women's Rugby Team, Molecular Biology Club.
- ❖ At the Club Fair on campus we had 35 or 40 new students who signed up to be on our mailing list.
- ❖ Along with Karen Pulaski we will be attending the FAN Conference again this year with students involved.

Br. Kevin –

- ❖ Students are returning to our building on campus, both Campus Ministry and the Mountain are busier than before Covid.
- ❖ Kevin has had conversations with Fr. Stephen Mimnaugh, and he is anxious to work with us. Fr. Stephen is responding to us and integrating the mission with us.

Comments:

- ❖ Jeff Gingerich shared that Fr. Stephen noted to him how much Natalie Pronio is at the center of the efforts on campus with students. She is forming many student relationships.
- ❖ Rob Buckla feels this data being kept of visits is critical in showing the vibrancy of the Mountain.
- ❖ The Mountain, Karen and Mari were a featured story in the Bonaventure Magazine this month. A picture of Karen and Mari at the Mountain was on the cover.
- ❖ The relationship between University Ministries and the Mountain have never been better.

Karen Pulaski –

- ❖ Karen obtained a generous grant from the Province to take students to the FAN conference. The price doubled this year, but the Province funded even more than we asked. The spots are all filled with 8 student spots. Natalie, Alice Miller Nation and Karen will go with them.
- ❖ Karen continues her work with the Justice Circle on campus. In the 4th year. First year there were no students involved, now there are 17 people total, included in that number are 5 students. Others involved in the Circle are Allegany Franciscan Sisters, people from Canticle Farm, SBU faculty and the Mountain community. Their focus is for care of creation and environment on campus.
- ❖ The first round of the Adult Formation Pods finished in January. Almost every Pod chose to continue meeting. They have chosen another book to use.
- ❖ We have partnered with the Province this year to do similar Pods/meetings with them. Ended up with 20 Conveners for the virtual meetings – 77 virtual people. Tom Conway is working on 2 in-person meetings and the Province has others doing in-person. Kathy Colucci, Jimmy Kernan and Sr. Kathy Dougherty helped with training the Facilitators.
- ❖ We have two Mountain on the Road events scheduled for the fall. One is in Buffalo, the other in Rochester. Four students are selected already to go on the trips. They are very good student leaders and will do a fine job.

- ❖ Have one Mountain in Your Home set for October at the home of Denny and Cathy Riley.

Br. Joe –

- ❖ Weekends and More are planning another “Fire Side Chat” event in November. They are still consider several themes. They are also looking at doing the Stations of the Cross again during Lent.

Br. Kevin –

- ❖ Kevin just attended the annual Guardian’s meeting of the Province. There were many financial concerns discussed. Typically with mergers, it is found that it can take up to 20 years to get things straightened out.
- ❖ Discussions on fraternal life in the Province. Kevin noted that the Mountain is far of other friaries and houses. They are having difficulty with friars struggling with each other. We have none of that at the Mountain.
- ❖ We had a Contemplative Retreat for friars last June. The meeting was important, but not an easy week. He found out that we are in a good place as a community here.
- ❖ In December the Province will be doing the straw vote (seeing who might have interest) for Provincial candidates for the next elections of officials and that should all be wrapped up by March 1. The next Chapter is July 17th .
- ❖ We are looking into friars who are interested in the Mountain. Nothing will be done until after the Chapter meetings.

Mari Snyder –

- ❖ Mari announced that her time at the Mountain as a Companion will end on November 1. She has greatly appreciated her year at the Mountain. It has been a truly holy time for her.
- ❖ She shared with the Brothers, Karen, Mike and Kathy, that she is available to be called back for a couple of weeks/month/season. She will take a year to go to places that she thinks she wants to be and trying them on for size.

2025 Endowment Campaign:

Rob –

- ❖ The “3 Peaks Campaign” has started strong.
- ❖ Have established a Campaign Cabinet – group of volunteers – they meet 1 time a month, but talk often. The Co-Chairs are Les Quick and Bob Daugherty. Also in the group are Jim Gould, Br. Kevin, Mike Fenn, Evan McElroy, Kathy Colucci, Dick Tantillo and Rob.
- ❖ We have raised more than \$4.28 M already, that is about 20-25 people who gave during the leadership campaign. \$269K to Mtn fund – need to keep that vibrant. When we began the goal was \$5.35M, we are already adding \$4.28M. The target now is between \$7-12M – this fall will be critical as we reach into the next level. We are being very methodical as we go about this. We want to exceed goal, not miss or equal it.

- ❖ Rob has been doing this work for 40 years and believes we are exceeding our expectations and trending in a very positive direction. People are seeing that our ministry and mission are vibrant and needed. They also see that we are critically important for SBU and our students.
- ❖ Our objective is to have 100% participation from the Board of Trustees.
- ❖ Expressed gratitude to Maureen Dee and Denise Dee – they are matching Board 1-1; up to \$200K.
- ❖ Currently creating communication materials – grateful to Greg and Evan for their help. Brochure is almost done.
- ❖ We will become more public after this first phase.
- ❖ Asking donors to keep their current donations to Mt. Fund also.
- ❖ Otto Rothermel and Wendy Mann are helping to organize a “decades initiative” for graduates from SBU. Some small events are planned, but they aren’t fundraisers, they make connections. They are not MIH or MOTR as they are small and targeted.

Advancement Report –

Jackie Lanzillo –

- ❖ Went over advancement report. Mountain Fund is doing well, we are on track.

Mike Fenn –

- ❖ Second annual 40 Hour of Giving:
 - Last year’s goal was \$40K and we made \$116K. Did not expect to match that again this year. Final total is \$62K.
 - Produced many videos featuring different people associated with the Mountain.

Jackie –

- ❖ Auction 2025:
 - Goal last year was \$35K, we raised \$40.
 - Have another pilgrimage to auction off this year. Please talk it up!
 - Dinner with Jeff and Betsy Gingerich.
 - Other overnight stays to different places.
 - Many other exciting items.

Personnel needs of the resident community -

Kathy Colucci, Kevin Kriso –

- ❖ Fr. Lou is now the only presider for Masses.
- ❖ Mari is leaving in November.
- ❖ We have funding to hire persons at some level. A handyman has already been approved.
- ❖ Kevin has reached out to at least 15 friars, but probably will not get anyone until after the Provincial Chapter next year.
- ❖ Kevin Zoomed with a friar who expressed interest in coming here, but it is unclear how he would fit in and how much energy would have to go into him for what would come out of him.

- ❖ We will have a Provincial visit from Br. Roger in November to see how the friary is doing.
- ❖ Michelle is working with Lou on a Mass schedule and finding other friars who can preside a couple times a month to give Lou a break.
- ❖ Stephen Mimnaugh, ofm is very willing to help Lou as much as needed.

Discussion on the needs of the Mountain resident community and personnel.

- ❖ Want to use the gifts of the people as best as we can.
- ❖ Perhaps looking at people who are retiring and want to serve a community in a different way.
- ❖ Are there part time workers at SBU that would want part time work at the Mountain?

Further discussion on part time persons from SBU, interns, who to contact, etc. Matrecia James talked about giving more experiential learning experiences to students to give them experience before graduating.

- ❖ Would they only be summer interns? Would they be able to work throughout the year?
- ❖ Could/should we get 2 people to overlap so there is always someone who is trained and working?
- ❖ Would it be credit hours or paid? Work study hours?
- ❖ Franciscan service after graduation?
- ❖ Graduate students?

Mike Fenn spoke about a couple people who are interested in the Mountain Companion Program:

- ❖ Declan from Hoboken – looking for a place to fit in. He is going to come up and visit for 5 days at the end of September. He has a Bachelor of Science degree from Marquette. Not sure yet what he would do here. He is thinking of 3 months or more.
- ❖ A man from Buffalo has talked to Mike. He loves tinkering, electrical, etc. and does parish youth work. Working on getting him here to see if he is a good fit. He has also had conversations with friars.

Sarino would like to find a higher level operations person, who would be under Mike Fenn's supervision but would coordinate all of the work being done here (renovations, construction, etc.) and take it off Mike's plate.

It was agreed we need someone:

- ❖ Project management.
- ❖ Needs to be local.
- ❖ Would be good to know finance and HR.
- ❖ Not directly managing employees.
- ❖ Person to take care of concrete details as the visionary does that work.
- ❖ Clearing off Mike's plate of simple things so he can do the more complex work.

- ❖ Needs to be mature enough to lead, be reliable, consistent and mission forward. Has work experience.
- ❖ If we find someone who cannot do the finance, we can hire a bookkeeper.
- ❖ Good at communicating.

Finance Report –

Mike Fenn –

Focusing on assets:

- ❖ Went over statement of financial position.
- ❖ Operating and checking accounts are in good shape. Adjustments are made as needed.
- ❖ Just under \$6M in long term investments.
- ❖ Close to \$8M in assets.
- ❖ Reviewed 2025-26 budget.
- ❖ Reviewed budget for upcoming year, 2026-27.
- ❖ Hired an accounting/auditing company: Buffamente, Whipple and Buttafarro

Discussion/questions on the budget. Accounting terminology gone over by Tom Conway.

Motion by Dianne Kuzia Hills: Approve 2026-27 budget. Second by Sarino Tropeano. All in favor, none apposed.

SBU Update –

Jeff Gingerich –

- ❖ Undergrads now total over 2K at SBU.
- ❖ 40% of current students are in programs that didn't exist 10 years ago.
- ❖ Finished comprehensive campaign at \$131M, the goal was \$125.
- ❖ Personnel wise – VP for Advancement – Mike Pressamone has left, an interim has started.

Communications Report –

Report on the Board website for review.

Buildings and Grounds –

Sarino Tropeano –

- ❖ Waiting for solar battery backup to be done.
- ❖ 3 cabins on this side of the road are getting electrical upgrades so they are electric power, not propane.
- ❖ Need a person to help Joe with making calls and arranging work with contractors.

Mike Fenn on Chapel entrance:

- ❖ Tammy Hilmey is the architect advising us on this project. She has given sketches of her suggestions. Some changes:

- Putting wings on the sides of the entrance to allow for a bathroom.
- We need the vestibule to be a transition from outside to a place where people are praying.
- Eliminate the loft.
- Had thoughtful conversations about safety and the setup. One example is that the color of the floor blends in with the steps and people with depth perception cannot see them.
- Need plenty of space for coats and shoes.
- Trail to basement starts further out.
- Access of cars to get closer to the doors for drop off.
- Heat down to concrete so it doesn't ice.
- Price – she has a vendor relationship – as it is, should be under about \$100K for now.
- 3-4 months until completion.
- Tammy would be the clerk of the works.
- She charged \$2,500 for what she has done thus far.

Motion by Matt Cressler: To provide approval to the Executive Director, working in concert with the resident community, the Buildings and Grounds committee, and others as needed, to move forward in the design, planning and construction of an addition to the Holy Peace Chapel. The approval would allow up to \$125K in spending, to come from the Building Maintenance Fund and supplemented by targeted fund raising. Any need for additional funds needed over \$125K would need to be approved by the Board.
 Second by Matt Delforte. All in favor, none opposed.

Mike Fenn with Land Report:

- ❖ Fenn quickly summarized the land deal and the Premielewski family. 7 original owners, some have passed away and their estates being settled. The family is on board with trading/selling the land, but 3 estates are not closed yet.
- ❖ Brian Attea's firm is working with us and the Premielewski family to settle the deal.
- ❖ We are getting 18 acres, they are getting 50 acres and 2 houses. They are getting \$200K more than they are giving.

Discussion/questions.

Meeting adjourned.

Upcoming meetings:

November 7-8, 2025

February 6-7, 2026 (Zoom)

April 24-25, 2026

September 11-12, 2026

November 6-7, 2026