

**S. THOMAS' COLLEGE GURUTALAWA OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 6 OF 2007/2008 (294th)**  
**OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Date : August 4, 2007 at 6.30 pm  
Place : 155/35, Dolalanda Gardens, Thalawathugoda

Present	: Rev. Marc Billimoria	(HM)	President/Headmaster
	Mr Mahen Ranasinghe	(MR)	Senior Vice President
	Mr. Kuru Uthumpala	(KU)	Vice President
	Mr. S. Rajmohan	(RM)	Vice President
	Mr. Chandana De Silva	(CD)	Vice President
	Mr. Shervon Fernando	(SF)	Hony. Secretary
	Mr. Nihal Wanniarachchi	(NW)	Hony. Asst Treasurer
	Mr. Panini Edirisinhe	(PE)	
	Mr. A C M Rashid	((AR)	
	Mr. G S S Perera	(SP)	
	Mr. Suresh Kumar	(SU)	
	Mr. Kenneth Gurusinghe	(KG)	
	Mr. S. Kaviharan	(SK)	
	Mr. P. Dayabaran	(PD)	

**Excuses**

Mr. Athula Kumaranayake  
Brig. B Munasinghe  
Mr. Buddhika Kurukularatne  
Mr. Hermon Fernando  
Lt. Col Hareen Walgama  
Mr. Wansapriya Gunaseela  
Mr. Sachitra Perera

**Absent**

Mr. Anil Wickremeratne  
Mr. K. Kumaravel  
Mr. Pubudu Gunasekera

**Invitees**

Mr. Bandu Wanigasekera

**1. Call Meeting to Orders**

The President Rev. Marc Billimoria chaired and called the Meeting to order.

**2. Notice of Meeting**

Notice convening the Meeting had been distributed and taken as read.

**3. Messages of Excuse**

As given above

**4. Obituaries**

There were no obituaries recorded since the last meeting.

**5. Correspondence**

Mr. Ed Rowlands had sent a preliminary shipping list for the computers etc, to be shipped from Australia.

**6. Headmaster's Report**

The Headmaster chairing the Ex-Co Meeting for the first time expressed that it was nice to be with the OBA and expected to have a long and profitable relationship. He thanked Mr. Jacques Huyghebaert for addressing many problems, before he took over and reported the current status as follows:

There were over 500 students now, breaking even financially. The College was not yet out of the woods and was like a patient who had been transfused with blood for the time being. Discipline was improving. Strong action had been taken

to stop the Year 10 and 11 fights. Year 8 and 9 had started similar rivalry and again strong action would be taken to prevent its development. House system had been introduced, with the help of Rev. Goodchild, but the division to dormitories would happen only in January 2008. Sports suffered badly due to lack of equipment. STC Mt. Lavinia had sent some used equipment. At present the team members had to bear part of the expenses, when visiting other schools for matches. The swimming pool was operating well, thanks to Mr. M.P.D Perera, who had donated the cleaning equipment. A Swimming Meet had been held, based on the House System quite successfully and Hayman House had won.

Societies and Clubs were non-existent. The school magazine would be revived. The school would be moved away from the present trend of following the Government schools, even the school leaving certificate being a Government document.

An expert had presented a report on improvement of English. Mr. Panini Edirisinha was in charge of the Amity Programme. The Board of Governors had sanctioned the renovation of several staff quarters and buildings. Church of England had sent a donation of Rs.150,000.00 and it would be used to buy an electricity generator to give power to office, dining room and kitchen, as there were regular power cuts, disrupting operation of important areas of work. The accounting system would be computerized.

Mr. Jacques Huyghebaert and the Headmaster had prepared a report on Infrastructure Rehabilitation with a total estimate of approximately Rs. 26 million, for presenting to the Board. A copy would be sent to the Ex-Co. Phases 1&2 included rehabilitation of dormitories and classrooms. Ladies College had offered to fund the rehabilitation of Keble section. The old dining room would be converted to an auditorium. The old buildings like the laboratory would be preserved. Farm development was not in the agenda at the moment and would be considered for a later phase. The bakery had been re-commissioned.

S. Thomas' Colleges of Mt. Lavinia, Colpetty and Bandarawela had offered to give 15% of the admission fees to Guru. The Board of Governors had approved the construction of a large water tank and the funds would be made available. Mr Huyghebaert had proposed that it be located near the S De S Jayasinghe dormitory.

The Headmaster intended creating a Trust Fund for STC Guru, with the OBA support. He requested for the OBA for the immediate needs of sports equipment and facilities and prizes for the prize giving, on October 4, 2007. The Headmaster had found out that the students had contributed towards their own prizes in the past and this was shocking news to everyone present.

Mr. Bandu Wanigasekera advised that the scholarships were not awarded in the last two years, and suggested that the unused scholarship funds could be used for the prizes. This was confirmed and supported by last year's treasurer Mr. Chandana De Silva. The Ex-Co approved this award and the Headmaster agreed to send the details of requirements, once finalized.

Mr. Bandu Wanigasekera then addressed the issue of a very severe remark made by the Chairman of the Board of Governors at the Assembly after Induction of the Headmaster, concerning the OBA. He inquired from the Headmaster whether he knew the background to it and also whether the Headmaster also entertained a similar view.

The Headmaster said he was unaware of the reasons for the statement and that as far as he was concerned, he looked forward to the OBA for their support to bring the College to the highest level. He also asked the Old Boys to express their views to him direct.

However, Mr. Wanigasekera said that the open forum in which the remark was made had distressed the members and hoped that the Headmaster and all concerned would realize the extent of commitment put in by the Guru Old Boys as distinct from the other three Colleges in the Thomian family. Each trip to Guru at a cost of over Rs.5000/- made it difficult for the younger Old Boys to travel and hence were scarce. Those who came and were active, had to be exceptionally committed without seeking any benefit for themselves. Attending meetings and visiting Mt. Lavinia and Kollupitiya, was of the least expense while Bandarawela also had many Old Boys in and around the vicinity. Also they maintained close relations to have access to enter children to these institutions.

But, he said that the Guru Old Boys did it for the sheer loyalty and great spirit enthused on them by the previous generation of Teachers who instilled these same values by their own commitment. Mr. Wanigasekera referred to the Headmaster's earlier statement, that the College was not yet out of the woods and was like a patient who had been transfused with blood for the time being and said that had not the OBA highlighted the deficiencies, even ("interfered?") and done much in the past few years, there would unlikely be a patient to be given blood at this point of time.

The Headmaster said that at this juncture, we should consider the future of the College and put the past aside and that the OBA must give support for a common purpose.

Mr. Wanigasekera hoped that the OBA would have the highest confidence in the Headmaster, and the current Manager, Mr. Christo Gonawela, and that in all good faith, the OBA would render their fullest support in the future as well, as the College was the most important thing, and all they had done in the past, was solely for that reason.

At this stage, it was pointed out that one of the reasons for these misunderstandings was the insufficient Guru representation of Guru Old Boys in the Board of Governors. Mr. Mano Gnanaraj was an extremely busy person and only Mr. Gonawela filled in with contact with the OBA. The current single representative for three Colleges (Gurotalawa, Bandarawela and Colpetty), all being secondary schools now, was unsatisfactory, as the Guru OBA had been completely left out for the past many years.

The Headmaster said that some ways must be explored to clear any concerns of the OBA in this regard. It was agreed that the Ex- Co would discuss the proposal to have separate representatives for the three schools with the OBA's of Bandarawela and Colpetty and make necessary proposals to the Board of Governors.

Mr. Mahen Ranasinghe explained that everything done by the Old Boys in the past had gone to waste and the Old Boys had lost faith and trust. Accordingly the Master Plan clearly indicated how the OBA could be involved rather than interfering. He added that the whole concept of the Master Plan was to get the help from the Old Boys once and for all to develop the farm and the cooperative stores on a commercial basis, where there was potential to generate income in a very short term and use the income to develop the infrastructure, rather than asking the Old Boys to pocket out for every project, which would be difficult with the present loss of faith and trust. The Master Plan proposals were for short and medium term development within just 4 years and 3 months had already passed since submission, for acceptance in principle, by the Board. In reply to Headmaster's advice that he expected to give his comments to the Board in October, Mr. Ranasinghe stated that if accepted, it would take several months to prepare a feasibility report for forwarding to the Members of the OBA, for funds and any implementation would not be possible within the term of this Ex-Co.

Regarding the bakery Mr. Mahen Ranasinghe had heard that the bread was still hard and needed much improvement. Mr. Rajmohan suggested that advice is sought from the Marketing Section of Lever Brothers.

Mr. Panini Edirisinhe stressed that the quality of education must improve.

Ex-Co was happy that the School Magazine would be revived again and Mr. Mahen Ranasinghe reminded that it was revived at the initiation and funding by the OBA in 2004, after a lapse of 15 years.

#### **7. Adoption of Minutes of Previous Meetings**

Mr. Painini Edirisinhe commented that the Minutes were received too late or at the next Meeting, as was the case in the last few Meetings. Mr. Mahen Ranasinghe apologized for the delay, which was due to pressure of work and agreed to improve on it.

The Minutes of Meeting No. 6 of 2007/2008, held on August 4, 2007, was accepted as a true record, proposed by Mr. Nihal Wanniarachchi and seconded by Mr. Kuru Utumpala.

#### **8. Matters Arising**

- a. Mr. Mahen Ranasinghe advised that arrangements were in hand to obtain necessary documents for duty free clearance, from the Dept of Imports and Exports with the help of Mr. Nanda Matthew, The Governor of Uva Province.
- b. The Headmaster advised that from the information available, the cost of refurbishing the Administration Officer's present quarters was around Rs.5000.00. Mr. Mahen Ranasinghe offered to send him details of costs in his possession, amounting to over Rs.40,000.00.

#### **9. Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer, Mr. Ranjit Lowe had sent his resignation, as he was unable to devote much time, due to his other commitments. Mr. P Dhayabaran was appointed to fill the vacancy of the Hony. Treasurer, proposed by Mr. Mahen Ranasinghe and seconded by Mr. Nihal Wanniarachchi

The balance in the current account at Standard Chartered Bank was not available as the statements had not been received by the past treasurer, Mr. Chandana De Silva or the present Treasurer, Mr. Ranjit Lowe. The process of changing signatories and Treasurer's address was still a problem, due to stringent conditions by the Bank. The difficulties in traveling and parking in Fort, where the Bank was, made matters worse and with low interest rates and no other advantage, it was decided to open a current account with Commercial Bank, at a convenient Branch.

Accordingly it was resolved that the a current account be opened at Commercial Bank, Mt. Lavinia Branch, proposed by Mr. Mr. Nihal Wanniarachchi and seconded by Mr. S. Rajmohan.

#### **10. Master Plan**

Covered under Item 6 above..

#### **11. Reports from Sub Committees**

##### Farm Development

Dependent on the proposals of the Master Plan being accepted, by the Board.

##### Membership and Directory

It was agreed that all advertisements to be included in the Directory should be given to Mr. Shervon Fernando by August 10, 2007.

#### Fellowship Dinner

Mr. Rajmohan requested all Ex-Co Members to make every effort to sell the tickets. The Dinner Committee Meeting was fixed for Thursday, August 9, 2007 to finalize the arrangements.

#### Family Outing

The exact date (end October or early November) for the family outing would be decided after checking the availability of the Wadduwa resort.

#### Finance & Constitution

No further action.

#### Newsletter and Advertising

Mr. Mahen Ranasinghe advised that the second newsletter would be issued in September, whether any comments/acceptance of the Master Plan was received or not. The Headmaster wished to send a report to the Members of the OBA and it would also be incorporated.

#### Turf wicket

No further action

#### Land Surveying & Improvements to Buildings at College

Dependent on the proposals of the Master Plan being accepted by the Board

### **12. Membership**

List of new Members would be provided after completing the Membership Directory.

### **13. Any Other Business**

The Headmaster confirmed that the Feast of Felicitation of Staff and the Prize Giving, with Mr. Frank Jayasinghe as the Chief Guest, would be held on October 4, 2007. He also wished to see the Old Boys visiting College more often.

He had been advised by the Ministry of Education that the facility for website 'School Net' was not for private schools and requested for any support to get included.

The date for the next AGM was fixed for February 16, 2008.

### **14. Next Meeting**

The Meeting adjourned at 8.00 pm. Next Meeting on Saturday, September 1, 2007 at 9.00 am, to enable the Headmaster to be present after attending the Board Meeting on Friday August 31, 2007 and to return to Gurutalawa on Saturday itself.

Confirmed as correct.

Chairman.