

**St. Vincent de Paul Church
Parish Council MINUTES
February 10, 2009**

The meeting was brought to order by our president, Colleen McCahill, at 7:37pm. Prayer was offered by Barbara Murphy. Present were: Fr. Richard Lawrence, Colleen McCahill, Brian Loughlin, Joan Campbell, Pat Ball, Joe Cronyn, J. Edmond Guy, Dennis Moore, Anne Marie Freeberger, Barbara Murphy, Steve Bosse, Audrey Rogers, Kevin O'Reilly, Mary Kate Fries Hershfeld, Nancy O'Neill, James P. Casey, Raymond L. Heil, and Graham G. Yearley

Pastor's Report

1. Queen of Peace Schools Fundraising Campaign is now complete. Our parish has raised in excess of \$100,000, enough to save the schools for the time being in itself. As of yet, we do not know what the other parishes are contributing. St. Ignatius may have to delay their contribution as the parish has been flooded in a water main break in the last few days.
2. Today Fr. Lawrence attended an Archdiocese wide meeting to discuss the future of the Catholic schools. He felt reassured by the attention paid to looking after the poorer schools in the east and west intercity districts. A blue ribbon commission was formed to study and make proposals next year on the future of the Catholic school system.

Financial Report

1. Offertory is below budget this month, about twenty thousand below budget for the year so far. On the whole, however, our situation is not dire. There is only \$8, 000 left to pay on the tower project.
2. Historical Trust Fund: While interest and dividends continue to come in, the fund has an accumulated deficit of \$65,000 in the endowment proper due to unrealized losses in the market. When (who knows?) the market turns up again, this should right itself.

Discussion on *On Consensus*

Colleen led the council through a review of the document, *On Consensus*. Some ideas for changes were brought up in the discussion. Audrey Rogers suggested a re-wording of the "Primary Understandings" section. Graham Yearley argued that having all options in a given issue open to discussion and action is a necessary component of consensus making. Ray Heil (and others) felt certain issues demand a wider exposure to the parish community before the council can make a final decision. At community wide meetings, the facilitator must be completely non-partisan. When consensus seeking breaks down, there are professional facilitators that could be brought in to help. Jim Casey reminded the council that consensus making does not require complete unanimity; Fr. Lawrence added, indeed, complete agreement on a parish wide basis is probably impossible. There was discussion on when a vote (in place of consensus making) might be used; Fr.

Lawrence said the intention of the Parish Constitution was to hold votes only when there is a severe time pressure and, then, a two-thirds majority would suffice to pass a proposal. The so-called "Doomsday Clause" is not really a part of consensus making; in fact, it is to be used only if there is an unalterable failure to reach consensus. As forbidding as the clause may be, it also shows the respect that is held for the laity and the authority granted to it by this parish. Colleen urged that members either submit their suggestions or changes by email or regular mail.

Committee Reports

Peace and Justice: The P& J Committee granted \$1,500 for the African Scholarship fund. The committee decided to reduce their financial commitment to Habitat for Humanity from \$5,000 to \$3,500. Barbara Murphy asked the Parish Council to approve this change. The council discussed whether this allotment could be changed mid-year or, even, if this is a matter of the Council to decide. In the end, the Council did give its approval. The Council asked that Peggy Meyers, the chairwoman of the committee, come to the next meeting. The committee would also like to give \$2,400 to the pastor of our sister parish in Limas as they have in the past.

John Connors, the founder of the Grassroots Coalition for Environmental and Economic Justice, asked to hold a meeting to attract membership for that group at St. Vincent's. That meeting has been scheduled for March 21.

Education: will meet in two weeks. The major project currently is the discussion series on *Quest for the Living God* which will begin next week on February 18 at 7pm with a lecture by Fr. Lawrence.

Liturgy : met in January to discuss and formulate plans for Lent.

Park Working Group : Baltimore Homeless Services has terminated their "Street to Home" program in our park. Twenty people from our park have received vouchers and have been moved into housing in the last year. The PWG will ask the St. Vincent de Paul Society to remove the clothing bin as it has overflowed with excessive donations. Regular cleanings of the park by church volunteers continue. The PWG will meet Tuesday, February 24; all are welcome.

Social Action Committee: on January 30 the Maryland Historical Trust wrote that they would allow construction in the park within certain parameters. Now the next step of giving out information on the project and holding a town meeting will commence. Fr. Lawrence felt the process was moving too fast and should not be scheduled in March; Brian Loughlin added that this issue would divert attention from the more important celebrations of Lent and Holy Week. The schedule was pushed back to April. The first insert will go into the bulletin April 19th. The next week a second insert will go in and informational meetings will be held between the Sunday morning masses. Joan Campbell asked that something be planned to bring this information to the other two masses beyond the inserts. A Town Meeting was scheduled for May 3rd. This schedule will allow for two council meetings to go over the inserts and to plan for the town meeting.

The meeting closed at 9:45pm with the recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

Minutes submitted by,

Graham G. Yearley, secretary of the Parish Council