

St. Vincent de Paul Parish Council

January 14, 2020

Minutes

1) Attendance

- a) Present: Amber Hendricks (9:30 rep, Parish Council President); Fr. Ray Chase (Pastor); Peggy Meyer (Co-Chair, Social Action Committee); John Moore (Chair, Education & Enrichment Committee), Al Reichelt, (Co-Chair, Liturgy Committee); Corinne Agren-Barnes (9:30 rep, Secretary); Jim Casey (Chair, Ad Hoc Committee); Maureen Daly (ALIVE); Craig Thornton (Parishioner); Graham Yearley (Corporator); Alana Florio (ALIVE); Gerry Fialkowski (Co-Chair, Liturgy Committee); Dennis McMullin (Facilities Committee); Brigid Casson (Parishioner & Parish Secretary); Colleen McCahill (Pastoral Associate)
- b) Absent: Mark Palmer (Chair, Finance Committee); Ned Banks (9:30 rep); Anne Freeburger (Corporator); laisha Payton (11:45 rep); Peggy Shouse (9:30 rep, Vice-President)

2) Pastor's Report

- a) Nothing to report aside from the discussion of the reopening of the park

3) Pastoral Associate's Report

- a) Lighting in church: we are having a lot of trouble with it; last fiscal year we told council that we would be getting new lighting; there are lot of different types in the church but all of it is connected & runs through dimmer system; some of the older components are not working any more leading to questions as to whether we have to replace individual components thus buying an old new lighting system or bite the bullet and buy a completely new system; Hirsch Electric is working on these questions (we have worked with them in the past); It is a work in progress.
- b) Sent email out to random assortment of people asking about plans for lent; Please respond.
- c) Marianne Reichelt & Mary Strassner are working on a new ministry/single event that will provide parishioners with the opportunity to plan their own funerals. This new ministry/event has implications for related ministries around helping each other in our bereavement.
- d) The parish in in need of offertory counters on Monday Morning; Counters are divided into rotating groups of three unrelated persons; These volunteers take on the ministry of counting all money that comes into the church, not just the offertory.

4) Committee Reports

- a) Amber invited the committee representatives to consider to the following prompts when giving their reports about the committees' activities:
 - i) Is there work the committee has done that has helped you realize our Mission or Sacred Purpose?

- ii) Is there an area of the committee's work or life together where you have seen God's help?
 - iii) Is there a question or issue that you would like to bring to the Council for input or assistance?
- b) *Education & Enrichment Committee*
- i) *Nothing to add.*
 - ii) *Will contribute to the discussion of the reopening of the park.*
- c) *Facilities Committee (FC)*
- i) *The facilities committee was struggling to define its function; Over the course of two meetings the FC reflected on the following questions: Why does the FC exist? What do we do? Why do we do it? This discussion led to the creation of checklists for members of committee concerning the care of both the interior & outside of the church; The FC will get copies of these to council in the next couple of weeks;*
 - ii) *The FC saw God's help in the repairing of the kneelers a few years ago. They were able to repair all the kneelers that needed it on a Saturday with the help of other parishioners.*
- d) *Finance Committee*
- i) *Nothing to report.*
- e) *Liturgy Committee*
- i) *There are new candle holders--one for the ambo and one for the altar; There will be an installation ceremony and will be dedicated to Fr. Lawrence; This will occur on Candlemas (Feb 2); On January 26, Pope Francis wants us to accentuate the word somehow in liturgy → will be bringing up books to give everyone appreciation of our altar bible; theme for year (build a peaceable world) came out of a very prayerful discussion; it was very important that the banner represent who we are in terms of mission & liturgy as a community.*
 - ii) *Will invite parishioners to come up and take a closer look at some of the books of the Altar Bible.*
 - iii) *Will need to find oversized book stands in order to display some of the books of the altar bible.*
- f) *Social Action Committee*
- i) *The Red Line Exhibit (on mortgage viability) will be at Enoch Pratt until the 19—highly recommended.*
 - ii) *Ways SAC has seen God's help: Friday nights not enough dessert → dessert shows up; TRE → three moves coming up, no furniture, get a call about someone moving and donating their furniture.*
 - iii) *SAC is in need of some strong able bodied people for the committee.*
 - iv) *BRIDGE (congregation based organization for social justice) is working on passing the Home Act statewide; there is a new concern about minors being interrogated by police without parents present;*

v) *Craig brought up a Witness Protection Act that he is involved with trying to get to committee in the 43rd district; He will forward information to Maureen & Peggy.*

g) *ALIVE*

- i) *There will be five events between now & May.*
- ii) *The focus is around education around LGBT community & outreach; networking with other parishes that have or are establishing LGBT ministries*
- iii) *On Jan 26 there will be a mass in DC.*
- iv) *On Feb. 16 there will be a training session & workshop.*
- v) *There will be a Lenten prayer service sponsored by ALIVE but planned by other parishes.*
- vi) *On May 13 there will be an opportunity to view a presentation given by Fr. James Martin back in 2018 (48 min. video)*
- vii) *The Social Ministry Convocation is on February 29.*
 - (1) *Will be a workshop addressing the question of why should LGBT ministries form?*

h) *Ad Hoc Committee on Church Reform*

- i) *Haven't met since last meeting.*
- ii) *The committee is in the middle of discernment.*

5) Old Business

a) *Proposal to reopen the Park*

- i) *Since September the Ad Hoc Committee on the park have met 4-5 times.*
 - (1) *The members are Colleen, Fr. Ray, Brian, Joe Yingling, and Michael Kelly.*
 - (2) *They considered the park and the surrounding property at St V's.*
 - (3) *They approached the issue from a lot of different ways.*
 - (4) *They really considered any questioning in light of the Gospels.*
- ii) *These are the Proposals that the Ad Hoc Committee on the Park invited the Council to consider:*
 - (1) **Regarding the re-opening of St. Vincent's Park.**
Parish Council, January 2020

St. V's park presents both challenges to, and opportunities for, mission/ witness. Both the challenges and the opportunities require management or governance. Some of these are:

1. Property Maintenance of a small park. We own the park and there will always be issues related to its upkeep: keeping it clean and as green as possible, and keeping benches, fences, lights, signage, the Homeless Jesus plinth and other areas safe and in good repair.
2. Donors. For the last two years, we have attempted to form relationships with the many and varied groups who come to St. V's property in fellowship and charity. In a few cases, we have forged good relationships. Generally, donors are diverse and unaffiliated, and unresponsive to outreach from the parish.

3. Drugs. K2 (aka spice, stick, incense, potpourri) is a cheap, locally manufactured street drug. It is illegal but dealers are rarely arrested or prosecuted due to its ubiquity, and the real need to prosecute more serious crime in our city. The sale and use of K2, however, presents serious problems on St. Vincent's property. Dealers are territorial & some homeless people stay away from our park, either because they do not want to cross the dealers, or when there are a lot of users in the park. It is highly addictive and users can be unpredictable in behavior.

4. Parishioner engagement. The amount of direct engagement with the people who are found in St. V Park and on the property ebbs and flows over the years. At times, we've had as many as 20 parishioners deeply engaged in active ministry in the park. Generally, many fewer than this regularly spend time in the park when it is open, though many **are** engaged in direct service ministries (through the various StV's ministries) with poor and homeless people at and around St. Vincent's.

What does the parish desire for the long term?

To maintain the park as a park, green space in an urban environment.

To maintain the park as open to the general public as well as the parish.

The concept of an "open park" has become a part of the parish identity.

The parish is smaller in numbers by about 22% since the current governance model was established in 2009.

To make no attempt to make our parish property off-limits to poor people or people experiencing homelessness.

A mix of efforts are needed to manage these four concerns.

The Ad Hoc Park Working Group of Fr Ray, Colleen, Brian (Outreach Coordinator), Joe Yingling and Michael Kelly have discussed and examined several options. We have two proposals for the Parish Council.

Proposal 1

Keep the park open for 22 hours a day, closing from 7 – 9 AM, seven days per week, for cleaning.

Expect those who use the park to observe posted rules.

Allow (or Disallow) overnight sleeping in church doorways.

Disallow sleeping in parking lot, on sidewalks, or on Lexington Street verge (as previous policy)

Continue attempts to encourage donors to be in relationship with the parish.

Encourage parishioner involvement, with a weekend AM roster for waking & cleaning (as 2009-2012)

Strengths:

1. Basically the model we have used since October, 2009. When applied with consistency, most aspects function **both to** maintain the parish ministry of witness to the poor by a) allowing homeless persons to be present on our property and b) forming some caring relationships between these people and the parish, **and to** allow the parish to support its life in liturgy and other ministries.

Obstacles:

1. Not a change. The challenges raised by drug sales and use, especially with the un-monitored overnight activities, will continue.
2. Lack of oversight of parishioner involvement. No active ministry with leadership by parish volunteers exists.

Needs to accomplish this proposal:

1. Custodial services at least 5 days per week.
2. Waking service at least 5 days per week (could be same as custodial, though this should not be assumed as the best model).
3. Possibly: overnight monitoring service (a "security guard").

Proposal 2

Open the park during the day only, at least for a one-year period, with quarterly assessments to determine whether it is reasonable to re-open for 24 hours.

(Suggested hours: 8 AM – 6 PM winter, 7 AM – 8 PM summer.)

Strengths:

1. Does not require overnight governance. When the park is open overnight, very little sleeping occurs among those who are in it until well into the early hours of the morning: it is a very active place.
2. Keeps the park as a place for rest, for community, for witness, for ministry.
3. Maintains relationship between people experiencing homelessness (many of whom have enthusiastically supported this current closure of the park because of the drug activity) and the parish.

Obstacles:

1. Consistency. If a schedule is not consistently observed, parish expectations will not hold meaning for donors or park users.
2. Disallows sleeping on the property. This is likely a loss for some homeless persons who relied on our property as a place they knew they were welcome, even overnight.

Needs to accomplish:

Staffing needs. This requires both custodial services and a new hire or reliable volunteer to close the park every day.

iii) Concerning the staffing needs of the park:

(1) The parish does have a budget for custodial services for the park

(2) Will discuss outreach to Helping Up Mission and its Peer Counselors as a possible source of part-time employees for park.

iv) The council proposed that there be a Town Hall Meeting to discuss moving forward with Proposal #2.

v) Before then the committee will add details/rework Proposal #2 as needed

- vi) Amber & Fr. Ray & Colleen will meet to talk about going forward.*
- b) Discussion of the Constitution*
 - i) Tabled for later discussion.*