

**Parish Council Meeting
May 9, 2023**

Attendance: Joan Fulton, Peggy Shouse, Geri Sicola, Elizabeth Anne English, Mary Hennigan, Jim Casey, Mark Palmer, Anne Freeburger, Colleen McCahill, Ray Heil, Denny McMullin, Rita McMullin, Robin Whitlock, Aiden Helie, Catherine Mundy, Fr. Ray Chase

Absences: Lindsay Dierkes, Graham Yearley

April Parish Council meeting minutes were approved.

Pastor & Pastoral Associate:

Fr. Ray Chase:

Update on tower louvers: Priority is approval of CHAP of aluminum vs. wood. If CHAP does not approve the aluminum, we do already have permission from the archdiocese to move ahead with wood. The aluminum quote has been updated and is good until July 1st.

Update on the roof: Sealant has been applied and will be monitored as it is a stopgap. This sealant has been used elsewhere and comes recommended.

Fr. Ray shared that Craig Thornton continues to be unwell.

Colleen:

Sister André, Sister of Mercy, and frequent parish attendee (prior to Covid) has died this evening in hospice. She requested that the funeral be at St. Vincent's.

Jamar Blocker—a worshiper at Sunday Mass—is now homeless again (after he left his facility of 3 years). He comes to the rectory almost every day and spends the entire day with the staff. He offers to be useful and is given tasks as possible, but due to a traumatic brain injury, he does require supervision and there are interpersonal challenges. Colleen requests prayers for him and for the staff as this workplace relationship can be taxing and is unsustainable in the long run.

Committee Updates:

Liturgy Committee: No new updates.

Education and Enrichment: No new updates.

Peace and Justice: No new updates.

Social Action: No new updates.

Church Reform: See appendix.

Finance: Colleen and Ray will have a final budget draft to Mark Palmer by Friday so that the Finance Committee can meet and review. Ray H. asked if there was a line for the Strategic Plan process, to which Mark responded that there is one marked "strategic reserve" for those purposes.

Facilities: No updates.

Elections:

There are 7 nominees so far—Geri Sicola and Lindsay Dierkes (both re-nominated) as well as Jill Huppert, Leah Mank, Kevin O’Reilly, and John Gontrum.

Mike Jacko will serve as Chief Teller (assisted by Secretary Kate V. as needed).

Constitution Working Group:

Jim C. shared that during the group’s first meeting, they discovered inconsistency within the current constitution as it contains material both on how the parish should operate and on how the parish council should operate. The group determined it was best for the parish council to have its own constitution and that the parish will have its own document called “Articles of Governance” (or some such title—suggestions welcome).

Mary H. suggested someone else join the working group as Jim Casey will be absent for about six weeks to which he concurred.

Mark P. queried what is required/covered under canon law to which Jim responded that canon law says nothing about parish constitutions or parish councils; it requires only finance and incorporators. (Colleen later clarified that incorporators are actually more state-demanded.) Jim continued to explain that what the group will attempt to do is keep the language about laity sharing responsibility with the pastor, but that isn’t really part of a parish council document—it should come rather from the whole community.

Several questioned the necessity of separating the document into two. Jim responded that for practical purposes, it made sense. Colleen delineated further that the current amended constitution has a number of pieces that could be considered by-laws. A lot of material is more background, but it is background to how both the parish and the council function. The current constitution seems more a document for the parish (specifically the preamble), with other pieces that speak directly to council procedures; it is an understanding of how the parish sees itself and how it functions as a whole—not just the council. She suggested another way to do the constitution for the parish council would be to rename the larger document—which has a broader scope—out of which the council governs since it is part of the larger body.

Ray H. shared that having our own constitution speaks to our desire to take greater ownership and Peggy S. expanded that we have a parish constitution purposefully—because in canon law the pastor has all the authority and the council is only advisory. Mark P. added his observation that parish council constitutions are more common than parish constitutions.

Mary H. suggested that we wait until the next meeting so that council can view the draft of what the committee is proposing before we discuss.

Geri concluded that the working group examine the pieces relating to council and anything that could be by-laws and work on those; then there can be a larger conversation about the other material. Jim, as working group chair, acquiesced.

Strategic Planning Process:

Geri asked if anyone had final comments on her draft job description for project manager.

Ray H. acknowledged the amount of work for this position and suggested that a stipend be available—between \$2500-5000.

Geri clarified that even as a paid position, the project manager won't be a substitute for the work that the consultant will do. Each role has distinct, though weighty, responsibilities.

Fr. Ray asked that we consider what it means when we open up roles for pay within the parish. Mark P. agreed that we need to consider it relative to all the people already giving time and expertise to the parish. Fr. Ray continued that he does think there's a difference between someone within the parish with project manager skills who we hire versus paying a parishioner who does not have the credentials to be in that position.

In response to Mary H.'s concern and council's subsequent conversation about the interface between the working group, the project manager, the consultant, and the "advisors" (Geri, Colleen, and Fr. Ray), Geri proposed whether a working group was even necessary. A project manager and consultant are sure to call groups from within the parish; the PM and consultant will report to council; and they will go to the advisors when decisions need to be made. At this level, a working group seems extraneous.

Fr. Ray agreed and impressed upon the council the need to find a balance between complexity and simplicity in this process. If we complicate things, we tire people out more quickly.

Catherine M. asked who will write the actual SP as that work is particular and operose. Geri said it will depend on what our consultants offer: after discussion with them, we select what structure and process makes us comfortable.

Colleen noted that when we get to the budget point, we need to consider the sweat equity of implementation.

Mary H. emphatically suggested we consult the 2013 SP since it is a sound document and an excellent resource to guide our current process. She will email it out and it is on the website.

Geri reiterated that we will not have a working group, but to move forward we do need a request for proposal (RFP) for a consultant. (An RFP gives some idea of what you are looking for/general outline to which a consultant can respond with their proposal draft). No one volunteered to draft the RFP. Geri agreed to put that on hold, but added that she thinks the timeline for the SP could be abbreviated. She encouraged us to have it move along faster.

Geri requested we begin listing criteria in looking for the consultant. Council members suggested the following so far:

- Someone familiar with the synodal process and the challenges of the church at this time
- Very experienced in strategic planning
- Someone local/nearby to make the relationship more personal

New Items:

Music Colleen wanted to duly inform the Council that her brother Sean McCahill and his friend David Jacober who played with choir at Seder dinner may continue to play at St. V.'s episodically as paid hires. Sean's contract would be between him and Sherry and paid by the parish. Per her contract, Colleen's potential conflicts of interest don't really include family, but she wanted to raise the issue anyway. Fr. Ray said there is no conflict of interest as the contract is between Sherry and Sean and the rest of Council agreed.

Mary H. related that some visitors were upset during Mass that they could not hear the song numbers; she suggested bringing back a board to show them. Council agreed and Colleen said she will find one.

Orientation

New members of council will have a preliminary orientation before meeting with the larger council in June. Per Mary H.'s suggestion, the June meeting will be in person. Future meetings may take place in-person once a quarter. Lindsay and Geri will discuss the orientation procedure further.

Closed with the "Our Father".

Report of the Committee on Church Reform for the May 9, 2023 Parish Council Meeting

Our committee met on April 19, 2023. We will meet again on May 10.

The Maryland Office of the Attorney General released its report on Child Sexual Abuse in the Archdiocese of Baltimore on the Wednesday before Holy Thursday, April 5, 2023.

At our April 19, 2023 meeting, the committee discussed how St. Vincent's parish should react to the disclosures in the Attorney General's report. We agreed on a few points. The parish should be careful not to further traumatize anyone who had experienced sexual abuse (whether or not the abuser was a priest.) We should address the needs of our parishioners to express themselves and their feelings. We should make it clear that whatever the forum, St. Vincent's was not offering therapy. On the other hand, we should be prepared to make any needed referrals to health professionals.

The committee decided to reach out to the parish to solicit ideas on how we should proceed. Fr. Ray agreed to use a sermon period to have people write their thoughts.

Still to be determined is whether St. Vincent's, as a parish, should take some action responding to the information contained in the report itself.

Communications:

The Chair of the Working Group and the President of the Council will manage all communications between the Working Group and the Council.

Timeline

Friday, May 5: Scope of Work [PC mtg. Tues. May 9 for finalization)

Friday, June 9: First draft of articles of new PC AOG -- [PC mtg. Tues., June 13 for discussion]

Friday, July 7: First draft of By-laws (PC mtg. Tues., July 11 for discussion]

Friday, August 4: Second draft of AOG and By-laws [PC mtg. Tues. August 8 for discussion]

Friday, October 6 Final draft sent to PC [PC mtg. Tues. October 10 for acceptance)

Jim Casey