

Minutes of the Meeting
of the Parish Council
of St. Vincent de Paul Church
October 11, 2011

The meeting was brought to order by the Council President, Jim Casey, at 7:31pm and a prayer was offered by Chris McCullough. In attendance: Fr. Richard Lawrence (Pastor) Jim Casey (President), Christopher McCullough (Pastoral Associate), Audrey Rogers (Acting Chair Communications and Outreach Committee), Maureen Fitzsimmons (Finance Committee Chair), Teresa Payne (7:15 Mass Rep.), Jack Bonner (9:30 Mass Rep.), Jim Lochner (9:30 Mass Rep.) Bill McNamara (Liturgy Committee Co-Chair), Pat Ball (Facilities Committee Chair), Peggy Meyer (Social Action Committee Chair), Peter T. McDowell (11:45 Mass Rep.), Kevin O'Reilly (9:30 Mass Rep.) and Graham Yearley (Corporator and 12:15 Mass Rep.).

Absent with notice: Colleen McCahill (Education Committee Chair) and Anne Marie Freeburger (Corporator)

Pastor's Report

1. Re-Zoning of the City. Fr. Lawrence passed out maps of the proposed changes in zoning proposed by the Planning Council of the City of Baltimore. Currently St. Vincent's property would be zoned TOD2 which indicates we are near a source of rapid transit and, therefore, our property is more valuable. This zoning would permit development up to 100 feet high or the height of an eleven storey building. Since the future of the central post office is uncertain, the possibility of large scale re-development across the street is within reason. Fr. Lawrence proposed that we seek a re-assignment of zoning from TOD2 to OS (Open Space) like the property surrounding the Shot Tower for our property, bound north and south by Lexington Street and Fayette Street and east and west by Front Street and the Fallsway. While we already have some protection from being torn down and redeveloped due to the historical value of our church, this change in the zoning would add a further layer of protection. The Council agreed that this re-zoning should be sought.

2. The pastors and representatives of our cluster of five downtown churches (St. Alphonsus, St. Vincent de Paul, Corpus Christi, St. Ignatius and the Basilica) have been meeting since June of this year. On October 6, the team met with the Archbishop who approved the putting together of a plan for the future of the downtown churches where we would decide locally how to share our personnel, mass schedules and resources. The plan will be submitted by Easter 2012.

Finance Committee Report

Our checking has \$26,000 currently, but all but four thousand is committed already. Much of the twenty-two thousand is directed to charitable causes already approved by the Parish Council. There is a five thousand drop in offertories from this time last year, but,

surprisingly, the summer months' offetories were almost the same despite the lack of air conditioning.

Air Conditioning Repairs

The goal of this sub-committee has moved towards building a new system, rather than repairing the old. The committee will meet this week with a representative of the Archdiocese to get his recommendations.

Financial Priorities

Fr. Lawrence estimates the new air conditioning system will cost \$180,000 to \$200,000. The south wall windows of the church will cost about \$30,000 each to repair for the estimated total of \$150,000 to \$ 180,000. We can afford to undertake the air conditioning purchase and two or three windows each fiscal year. It is hoped that one window can be done this fall, but the artisan we believe is the best for the job is recovering from an injury and has not appeared yet. The proposed font project Fr. Lawrence believes will have to be postponed to 2014. While he is devoted to the project and its design, he doesn't believe it needs to be completed before his retirement as he will still be coming to St. Vincent to celebrate mass. Both Chris McCullough and Bill McNamara had suggestions for people to consult about the leakage in the "bridge" between the church and the rectory.

Ad Hoc Sign Committee

Chris McCullough reported that the ad hoc committee has been discussing the placement of a sign, the need for it to be readable from across the street, what height it should be, and how much information should be permanent and how much room should be left for changing messages. It must also meet historical district restrictions and C.H.A.T. standards. Audrey Rogers urged that an icon showing we have full handicapped access to the church and rectory should be included on the sign.

President's Report on 2010-2011

This report has not been completed Jim Casey reported, but when it is it will be posted on our website and used to kick off a new Question and Answer for the Parish Council feature.

New Business

These proposals were not presented at the same time, but both fall under the category of new business.

1. Audrey Rogers proposed two new projects which involve no expense to the parish. First, that a new feature on our website should be a Question and Answer area for people to address their questions and concerns to the parish council. Jim Casey said he would

serve as the initial point of contact and would ask council members for their expertise when needed. Secondly, Audrey proposed that the Greeting ministry, already in place for the 9:30 mass, should be extended to the 7:15 and 11:45 masses. She acknowledged that newcomers at the midnight mass were already getting personal greetings from the pastor and the parish council representative for that mass.

A third proposal from Audrey would involve expense to the parish. To attract young families to the parish, we must step up and offer services they need to be parishioners. She proposed that a paid babysitter for young children (the ages to be set) be hired to allow parents to have free time to worship. All sitters would have to undergo the standard background checks and training the Archdiocese demands for people working with children. She estimated this project would cost \$2,500 a year. Both the Pastor and the Finance Committee Chair agreed that the funds were available and the council gave its approval to the ministry.

2. Jack Bonner proposed that a reunion of current and former members of the parish be arranged, perhaps for next fall or this spring. He added he had a possible candidate to run it in mind.

Committee Reports

Note: Last month the Parish Council supported the idea of committees submitting their reports to the Council President who would send them out before the meeting to all council members, so they could be read in advance of the meeting. Consequently, the reports are much shorter as only the most important business is brought up at council meetings.

Liturgy Committee

Bill McNamara handed out samples of the cards which will be placed in the pews starting the first Sunday of Advent with the changes in the prayers indicated in boldface. Members of the council preferred the card with the background photograph of our church tower. Although the theme of this year's Advent season has been employed before, the banner will be new.

Education Committee

The Retreat for the Education Committee will be held this coming weekend in Cape May, New Jersey. Small discussion groups using "A Holy Longing" as a stimulus for discussion have already begun to meet across the metropolitan area.

Social Action Committee

Sunday afternoon, November 6 from 1pm to 4pm, was chosen as the date for chopping vegetables at Our Daily Bread. Volunteers can work all of the hours or any portion of them. Volunteers are needed for the Habitat for Humanity workday on October 29. The

Resource Exchange is looking for storage space; they hope to start accepting donations November 1st. We were cautioned that donations of furniture were expected to be of a higher quality than items often donated to Good Will.

Communications and Outreach

The committee met on October 9 to address its mission areas: inviting and welcoming new people, encouraging and engaging new parishioners, and retaining current parishioners. Last years' projects included new formatting of website and bulletin and establishing a process to contact and engage newly registered parishioners. We have asked Council for attention to exterior signage, providing a nursery at the 9:30 Mass, front door welcoming at all weekend Masses, and establishing a Council Q+A function on the website to increase communication, responsiveness, transparency, and accountability. This year our focus will be on publicity for our events and programs for which we are developing procedures.

Facilities Committee

The committee is looking into replacing the carpeting in the balcony of the church.

The Parish Council Meeting was adjourned at 9:16pm with the recitation of The Lord's Prayer.

In the Peace of Christ,

Minutes submitted by the Council Secretary, Graham G. Yearley