

Parish Council Meeting Minutes

In attendance via Zoom: Geri Sicola, Joan Fulton, Lindsay Dierkes, Anne Freeburger, Graham Yearley, Catherine Mundy, Mark Palmer, Mary Hennigan, Aidan Helie, Colleen McCahill, Gerardine Delambo, Craig Thornton, Kate Volpe, Denny MacMillan

Absent: Fr. Ray Chase, Peggy Shouse, Jim Casey, Peggy Meyer/Ray Heil

From this point forward, Catherine Mundy will be representing the liturgy committee.

Geri S. opened with a prayer from her heart.

Procedural Check-In:

Mary Hennigan asked how often updates from committees were required. Geri answered that chairs should report when committees meet, then share their committee notes a week prior to the council meeting so that council members have time to read and highlight important issues. Joan Fulton shared that the Finance Committee generally reports quarterly and Catherine M. shared that the Liturgy Committee follows the same protocol (meeting quarterly) and that there are no new updates.

Committee and Other Updates

Pastor:

Fr. Ray is at the Archdiocesan congregation for the clergy and shared he is with us in spirit.

Pastoral Associate:

Colleen shared that some of the louvers in our bell tower are falling out of their spaces, and this past week an Archdiocesan facilitator and Worcester-Eisenbrandt representative (this firm has done other repairs at the church) visited to take a look. More information is to come. Repair, restoration, or replacement work will be needed as fixing the louvers are important both in terms of safety and water damage prevention. She reminded us that we do have permission (as required) from the Archbishop to move forward with this project, but *how* we proceed is the next step. Work will not begin in the winter due to the type of work it is. In response to Geri's question, Colleen confirmed that the historic trust was built for this kind of project, but cannot be tapped until we have a cost projection.

Colleen shared that several parishioners have come down with Covid, and encouraged us to take care of ourselves and each other.

Education & Enrichment: No committee updates.

Facilities: No committee updates.

Social Action: No committee updates.

Liturgy: No committee updates.

Church Reform: No committee updates.

Finance: No committee updates.

Visioning Project/Finding Our Why:

Mary Hennigan shares that participation is up.

She reviewed the steps of the visioning process (from survey, to vision statement drafting process, etc.). She asserted that people's participation has been/and will continue to be supported (through online and hard copies, announcements, homilies, etc.). The group encourages people to participate in all ways as we move from an individual to a communal vision.

The vision drafting session will have four rounds. Each will be a 2-hour session and hopefully engage 24 participants. It is important that as a vision statement is drafted, it aligns to the three pieces of this question: Does this vision support the gospel, the parish's mission, and our own commitment? Elected representatives from these sessions will take part in another, larger envisioning session. These same elected reps will bring the final draft to the entire parish.

Mary reiterated that they hope this process honors our council's consensus-building methods even if it doesn't have 100% participation. She concluded with her hope that this is a true practice of listening.

Geri commended her (and the committee) for doing such excellent, spirited work.

In response to a concern of Geri's, Mary clarified that yes, each component of the process will be elucidated and explained (including why we need a vision statement, etc). Mary added that the committee would like our vision to be something tangible and do-able. Geri asked that the council members be champions of this process, embracing it and moving it forward.

Geri asked how facilitators would be chosen and trained. Mary responded that GLP will train three facilitators (Catherine, Aidan, and Lindsay). Their special, hands-on training will be November 16. GLP suggests we have a total of 12 for that session, so seven more representatives are needed, in addition to Fr. Ray and Colleen.

Mary asked if we needed to consider child-care. This was dismissed as unnecessary.

Geri then queried whether we as a parish are prepared to fully commit to the vision statement we create—a commitment upon which the parish will act, not an "I wish". Can the community agree to make this happen? Colleen supplemented that it should not be our vision statement if we are unprepared to make it our vision; it needs to be a vision we think we can achieve.

Seek the City/Spirit of Curiosity:

Geri would like to start the conversation about these separate pieces and reflect on them together.

Denny noted that there is close similarity between the Seek the City process and ours—of listening and gathering information (from parishes and parishioners, in their case).

Mary commented that the FOW building blocks have put us into a good position to do the Seek the City process.

Colleen reiterated that yes, there are similarities, and this too needs to be a vision that we can achieve. In all probability, parishes will close—the data recently provided by the archdiocese supports this. However, the AD is aware that there are urban parishes losing parishioners faster than suburban ones and that rebound has been slower. Urban parishes have also been the oldest and most expensive to maintain. The AD is not taking a top-down approach of who needs to close—in other words, based on fiduciary issues. The AD is asking parishes to reflect on themselves, so our visioning process is important so that we can be prepared to answer their questions about ourselves. Mary added that Phase 3 will be crucial to the forward-motion of this.

Committee/Ministries Parish Council Representation:

What other non-elected committee/ministry members need to represent at the council?

Geri shared that this is an essential issue (it's one the council has discussed for several months) and invites us to make this decision in light of the urgency and need for representation in the context of the city, the synod, and the church. She shared her criteria for consideration which the council reviewed together. Lindsay queried how we separate ministries from the larger umbrella category of a committee (e.g., TRE under Social justice, music under Liturgy). Geri responded that ministries are increasing, particularly in Social Action and that the council needs to be aware of what's going on, especially if it has St. Vincent's name on it.

Mary asked that we clarify what the council needs/expects from those ministries, or if we need to meet with each of them every month.

Colleen added that we look at it as to whether they should be present because they are intrinsic parts of the parish and therefore the council should have an integrated understanding of their work in the context of the parish. Not just that these groups report—but to be a part of the council at large; not just to be heard, but to be part of the conversation about what happens next. Geri responded that this resonates, that the reason for presence on council is not just to report, but to incorporate certain things across the parish in what we do.

Lindsay shared her concern of making parish council “extra homework” for already busy parish members. Is the expansion extra work for people already meeting?

Colleen expressed that fiduciary responsibilities should not be the criteria for reporting to the council, but it should be considered. Geri assented and added it to the criteria. Colleen went on to illustrate several ministries/volunteers who contribute in order to emphasize that the relationship between the life of parish and the life of the council are intertwined. Lindsay suggested here that this may be a separate issue—that major changes and programs do need to be “reported,” but the other issue of knowing what's going on in parish life may not be solved by people “reporting” to the council. Mary suggested these committees be given designated time perhaps quarterly.

Geri concluded that we commit, based on this criteria, in order to allow more representation and engagement as we go into the next year, knowing that parsing out Social Action will take more time and that we still need to determine how often others are invited to council meetings. Based on this criteria, as we move into a strategic plan, we are inviting representation from these committees. How often may change, but we'd like to make sure ministries (not individuals) are represented.

Council did not seem to be ready to make a decision, so Geri agreed to postpone for one month, but urged us to really move on this issue. In response to Denny's question, Geri said if we agree on the criteria, we will invite different committees.

New Business

Lindsay asked if Fr. Ray had touched base with Anne Freeburger. and Graham Yearley about continuing as corroborators. Anne confirmed that yes, Fr. Ray did have a discussion with them.

In response to Geri asking if there are new issues coming to PC members staying after Mass: Craig said they did share the FOW survey. Mary reiterated that some PC member photos were covered and that we should have some guidelines about where people post. She also shared we did pick up new email addresses through the survey request.

Craig shared the idea of having a CYO for Catholic youth in the area. Geri suggested Craig brief us more at the next meeting about this.

Craig shared about the need for election judges and encouraged people to get involved.

The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.