

Parish Council Meeting Minutes

November 11, 2022

In attendance via Zoom: Peggy Shouse, Albert Reichelt, Graham Yearley, Lindsay Dierkes, Catherine Mundy, Ray Heil, Geri Sicola, Fr. Ray Chase, Mark Palmer, Aidan Helie, Denny McMullin, Colleen McCahill, Joan Fulton, Kate Volpe, Anne Freeburger

Absent: Jim Casey, Craig Thornton, Mary Hennigan

Mark led us in prayer.

Council approved last month's meeting minutes.

Procedural requests: Geri Sicola determined she needs to send the zoom link each time. A request to change the meeting time to 7 was seconded. The question of returning in person is postponed until another time.

Committee and Other Updates

Pastor: Worcester-Eisenbrandt has submitted 4 different proposals to address the louver issue:

1. Remove damaged louvers and repair in-shop, then reinstall Cost: \$96,120 This is the least expensive but doesn't project future louver repairs and costs.
2. Remove the entire frame with 24 louvers; place plywood over openings, examine casing and louvers themselves, and do repairs Cost: \$186,240
3. Replace louvers—remove frame with louvers and cover empty space with plywood—and replace louvers with new timberlane wood louvers Cost: \$183, 888
4. Same as #3 but rather than replace individual louvers with wood, replace with aluminum \$178,790

Denny McMullin asked about timberlane wood; Fr. Ray clarified it would be made from a hard wood (not composite, nor cedar or cypress) called Sapele in a paint that matches the existing color. Geri asked if there were any restrictions with the Historic Trust, but Fr. Ray said there seems to be none for this. St. Alphonsus—another historical site—did recent similar repairs using aluminum and shared it would not be problematic. Colleen McCahill mentioned that the firm shared life estimates of the materials: sapele wood is 20-25 years and the aluminum is 50 years. Lindsay Dierkes asked about the look of the aluminum and Fr. Ray said they would be painted so we shouldn't notice the material. He also clarified that the historic trust will be used for this purpose. The council's majority opinion was that we move forward with aluminum louvers; Fr. Ray and Colleen agreed to take this opinion into consideration.

Pastoral Associate: Nothing to report.

Education & Enrichment: No updates.

Facilities: No updates.

Social Action: No updates.

Liturgy: No updates.

Church Reform: No updates.

Finance: No updates.

Finding Our Why: Lindsay shared that we are on the eve of our vision drafting sessions taking place next Wednesday (which is also facilitator training), Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. There have not been enough responses to merit a second zoom session. Everyone will get materials and confirmation this week in preparation and reminders, as well as the powerpoint that summarizes the survey to help people prepare. The prep stresses what is *attainable*. The powerpoint, which Lindsay shared, summarizes our parish strengths, weaknesses, and threats as well as what use these results can be for the visioning process. There are currently 46 participants. To Geri's query about why we might not be getting more participants, Fr. Ray said some may have confusion about what a visioning statement is, and also that we need to encourage others to join (as well as join ourselves). Rita MacMillan shared that she feels like she is on overload with soul-searching discussion between this and Seek the City coming right after the pope's request for the synodal process, and that the conversations seem redundant and exhausting. Lindsay said she has heard the same. Catherine Mundy shares that not everyone understands the importance of having a vision; she has looked at other parishes' vision statements, and they either don't exist or they aren't good; they have good *mission* statements, as we do, but it makes the need for a vision statement seem extraneous. Also, she asked, if people don't like the vision that comes out, then what do we do? Geri asked for input about how we respond to these concerns and how to motivate interest; those who feel it is important already see it as a necessity for the life and health of the parish. Catherine sees that our visioning process can't be done separately from Seek the City—and that we need to clarify how the two are conjoined. Lindsay suggested that perhaps we haven't made it clear to people that this is prep work for a strategic plan, to which Geri added that people may not understand the need for a strategic plan. Colleen shared that perhaps we haven't made this process practical to people, including even the difference between a vision and a mission statement, let alone the reason for having one. Geri stated that it is about the future generations of the city, and that it's our sense of responsibility for the ones coming behind us—that we need to pitch this to everyone. Mark agreed, and said this has to keep being reiterated and that it's most effective coming from Fr. Ray and Colleen—that our leaders are making the point about what our parish needs and needs to do. He questions whether a strategic plan is something the congregation knows happens but cannot see tangibly how that impacts the parish. DO they know a strategic plan makes a difference? Fr. Ray agrees, and a strategic plan was written in 2014 –pretty recently—and so much of it was never implemented (as he heard), so perhaps the feeling is why do this if we can't apply the hard work to what comes out? Colleen says another thing that hasn't been explained well enough is that we aren't just talking about the future, but a strategic plan for 7 years—there's immediacy involved. Geri asks that the FOW committee create some concrete talking points to boost

participation to safeguard—and hopefully grow—this parish, and that obviously we need to designate significant time to how we move forward with this.

Seek the City update: Fr. Ray says they have been doing the listening sessions and that they've been productive—people are sharing. Again, the diocese is approaching this with no judgements, just gathering information like the synodal process. Formal parish visitations will begin taking place; ours will be in March 2023, on a Tuesday, date unknown. The agenda will be as follows:

Liturgy with Bishop Bruce

Meetings with Archdiocesan reps and council

Meetings with pastor

Meetings with staff of parish, independent of Fr. Ray

Tour of the parish, guided by pastor and/or staff, including facilities and grounds

Working dinner with pastor, parish staff, and volunteers, parish council/pastoral council and 8-10 invited parishioners

Evening prayer

Al shared his experience at one listening session. He was impressed with the openness of the diocese and Bishop Bruce—his (the bishop's) mindset is that we are making a new paradigm for the Church. The needs of those on the periphery—LGBTQ, Black Americans, Immigrants—were most on the mind at Al's table. Lindsay (who was there) added that there was a definite concern over the reality of old, expensive buildings and fewer people—and that that dilemma prohibits better pastoral care. The consensus among the attendees was that people are more important than buildings—re-visioning how we are a parish in the city is a necessity.

Geri used this point to segway to the question of what STC has to do with FOW. Geri shared Mary H.'s thoughts on STC being limited in its scope of what parishes offer—more than just people in the pews. Fr. Ray shared that the archdiocese is engaging with Catholic Charities and others and asking how we engage a city that is in crisis. Catherine asked if we are looking for a different model of the church other than traditional parishes; Fr. Ray said we are looking “broadly at what it means to be church in Baltimore City.” Al assented, that this and inclusivity were major at their session's table. Geri guided us to ask what's the next step after blossoming our curiosity. Lindsay said we need to ask both what does our city need from us and what do I need from my church, and the doing is how those two align and reach for solutions that meet both needs. Ray H. expressed concern about the larger issue of closing churches, and Fr. Ray responded that the presence of closed churches will remain, but it will be re-imagined. Al said this is a culmination of a lot of issues that are calling for change—loss of priests, the reckoning with abuse, etc. Ray expressed worry this will result in one wealthy suburban parish and one poor urban parish—and that closing churches is the reason the diocese is doing this. Geri asked Ray and council for creative solutions to this. Colleen shared that the older buildings do tend to be in urban areas, and that the urban area has fewer Catholics; we talk about closing parishes, but that's not the same thing as closing a building. The question is: Is there some way to keep that parish a parish *in that location* or not? Compounding this concern are the issues Al brought up—fewer religious. What is the Archdiocese of Baltimore doing to encourage Catholics to live

in the city? Mark added that we've thought about the growth of our community as those sitting at Mass on the weekend, but that there are other ways to broaden our community without pulling them in the front door. Also, the issue of technology has introduced the question of how we advance/can advance the parish/archdiocese and what that looks like.

Geri concluded this conversation with hope that it will invigorate our own ideas as we envision and vision and how we pull the two processes together. As Ray asked, Is there a mutuality between the urban and suburban parishes—diocese and rest of archdiocese? Fr. Ray confirmed this has been brought up in every meeting; it is being asked and acknowledged as an important issue. Colleen added that really all questions are on the table at these sessions.

Old Business

Approval of the Corporators: Fr. Ray has asked Anne F. and Graham Y. to continue for the next period (5 years) and they both replied as willing, so he is putting them forward for that position. This requires a vote from the council. Geri called the question of renewing them and council approved.

Committee Inclusion and Reporting: Geri queried whether we would like committees to report each month. Denny said it's nice to receive a report "in person." Colleen reiterated a previous policy of not reading the whole report but highlighting key issues or areas of concern, and Geri confirmed this is the current policy as well and is a constant agenda item. Colleen shared that there was once a procedure of each chair sharing something at each council meeting which was found to be problematic and burdensome to some extent, but that it did create the expectation to be prepared to speak. Fr. Ray suggested chairs make sure to inquire of their individual committees if there is something that they need to share with the council or on which they need input. Geri said this has been an issue; she will set a proposal (from practice and our constitution) and reach out to committee chairs about this ongoing conversation. She also pointed out that committee reps should be separate from parish council reps; so committee reps should be different from parish council even if one is a member of both. This will be explained more in the write-up. Denny agreed that this appeases any concern of conflict of interest and for personal representation (rather than just a written report). Catherine brought up the question of ministries being invited to council, and Geri said that this is part of the discussion. Colleen reiterated that individuals and groups are always invited to council meetings and can ask any council member to be added to the agenda.

New Business

There was feedback from a parishioner that the music seems to have drifted back to old-fashioned and that perhaps the variety hasn't been kept up. Numerous council members agreed that this has been shared with/thought by them as well. Tempo has also been an issue. Geri and Colleen both share that this "slowing down" or going more traditional had started earlier. Colleen says she and Fr. Ray will come up with a way to address this.

Geri got an envelope with a printed bulletin from St. Leo's, with the message being a "request" for a printed bulletin.

Al's pitch: Next week, the bishops are meeting in Baltimore. Bishops may be offering an apology or doing something in concert with the survivors of abuse as urged by The Watch petition. He asked if the parish could provide Watch members with a place to come during off hours, to noon Mass or communion service, lunch, or to watch the sessions in the classroom. Al will also be hosting someone to stay from outside of Baltimore and asked if anyone is able to provide brief housing to a visitor.

The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer.