

Parish Council Meeting Minutes
October 10, 2023

In Attendance: (in person) Colleen McCahill, Denny McMullin, Rita McMullin, Geri Sicola, Lindsay Dierkes, Leah Mank, Kevin O'Reilly, Kate Volpe, Fr. Ray Chase, Graham Yearley, Jim Casey

(virtual) Jeri Delambo, Mark Palmer, Mary Hennigan, Ray Heil, John Gontrum, Anne Freeburger, Anne Maura English, Mary Catherine Bunting, Jill Huppert

Absent: Aidan Helie

Meeting began with prayer from Graham.

September minutes were approved.

Pastor and Pastoral Associate

Fr. Ray: As part of the Seek the City process, the ArchBalt put together a dashboard for each parish, which we have received. Colleen and Fr. Ray sent in some responses to the draft, after which it will be shared with the parish. **This will be put on the agenda for the next meeting.**

We have signed a contract for a redrafting of the fallen station (which is being recast), and the others will be remounted. The cost is \$24,000, of which \$14,000 is covered by insurance. This will probably be completed in December.

Parishioner Feedback

Kate V. shared that the anonymous feedback box will be stationed next to the table of gifts in the back of church. An announcement will be made at Masses this weekend explaining the new method of contacting the council.

Rita: The E&E committee is starting something new: rather than interviewing a person, they will interview an endeavor or person, and Ray Heil will begin with the Gardening/Restoring Creation project.

Committees

Racial Equity/I Have a Dream: The committee is looking for ideas such as partnering with/getting to know an African American parish. (St Bernadine's was mentioned.) Msgr. Rich Berselli and Geri S. recently had a conversation and Geri suggested to Peggy and Skip that we invite him to the next meeting so that he could share his thoughts on the subject.

Colleen added that when Pat Ball led her study circles to women in the church, several members of St. Bernadine's were members of her study circles. She suggests there are some relationships that have been built up and could perhaps be further explored.

Decisions about recent parishioner feedback

Regarding Marureen Daly's desire for Narcan training, how should we proceed?

Marcan is available free of charge, and our staff is trained. It is very simple training, and the biggest concern is that you need to wait a full 2-3 minutes before administering the 2nd dose. Kate suggested we put it together with CRP training and offer it to anyone interested. Lindsay offered to reach out to the BCHD to find out if trainings are available. Fr. Ray and Leah added that AHA and Red Cross may offer training. Rita also suggested we have someone at Friday Night Dinners who is trained.

Constitution

Jim C. presented.

The committee did NOT do the bylaws by deliberate choice. This is a constitution for the PC, not the whole parish. There is much that goes on in the parish that is not included, and that's intentional. They've distinguished between the role of the constituent vs the role of the bylaws—the Constitution will govern how the PC works and lay out how their function is carried out.

The bylaws are created by the PC, saying this is how we'll govern ourselves. This way, amending the constitution is difficult, but the bylaws can be changed by the PC.

Geri opened for clarifying questions:

Fr. Ray said it seems corporators cannot be members of the parish council—they cannot be elected or voters. After discussion with Fr. Biselli, it seems that is correct. He has asked the ArchBalt chancellor to confirm.

There are a total of 7 elected members=President, Vice President, Secretary, plus 4 elected delegates. Elections will be staggered, and candidates can self-declare or be nominated.

Officers: elected by the entire parish, separate from representatives of the PC, run for a two year term

Delegates: those who are elected other than the officers, run for a two year term

Members: heads of functional committees, but not necessarily voting.

Concerns/Rationale, Piece by Piece

Council decided to go through the document and adjust inconsistencies as needed. Jim shared that the committee plans to open it to the parish for comments/feedback and then bring it back to PC to accept it or not.

Mary suggested we include an annotation for each article when it goes out.

Preamble

Regarding Anne Maura's suggestion that we add something in the preamble to reflect the ever-evolving living church in light of the synodal process:

Jim C. said the preamble is the result of discernment, so to place future-oriented things isn't discernment. Fr. Ray thinks "Communion with" covers this. Kate suggested a one word modifier there to clarify would suffice.

Kevin O. drew attention to the fact that our situation as a parish and our relationship with the ArchBalt is not an equal relationship. Jim C. responded that we understand that under canon law, the bishop/pastor makes decisions, but we have a tradition of the priest and laity making decisions. We want to have laity involved and we do want to push things. Geri added that canon law may very well change after the Synod.

Article 1

No comments

Article 2: Membership

Fr. Ray again posed his question re: lay corporators as members. They *cannot* be members. Colleen added they are not *voting* members but they should attend meetings. This eliminates the question. John G. proposed designating them as ex-officio members, like Fr. Ray and Colleen. Jim responded how it brings up a discussion that this document pushes consensus, and the document is trying to avoid a voting model.

Geri S. expressed concern that there are only 7 representatives, and if half are not present, it could be difficult to get a quorum of *elected* reps. Jim responded this is a minimum, but bylaws can stipulate preferences, allowing for more as needed. These are the ground rules, allowing for flexibility with bylaws.

Geri asked about calling the committees "Foundational" (Liturgy, Finance, Education, Facilities, Social Action) as that means "first". Jim explained that more committee members than elected officials was undesirable, which is why some committees are not included as "foundational."

Geri stressed that they need to be included if they are doing critical work that is strategic to the parish. Fr. Ray said "foundational" could be those upon which we stand rather than "first"; Colleen shared that that is exactly why that word was chosen—as the roles upon which our church is built. Geri argued Church Reform should be considered a "foundational committee"; Kevin said having this as a foundational committee could be an attraction of our parish, a mark of its uniqueness. Mary H. put forward making this be part of the strategic planning process. Jim added there are many important committees that are not considered "Foundational." The Church Reform's scope has expanded (described in their charter) and may need to be reconsidered for its growing role. This decision will come later as we have no current consensus and will be included in the annotations to the parish.

Kevin O. asked if one has to be a Catholic to be on council, or even a member of the parish? (This is specified later).

Article 3: Definitions

Some issues with specific definitions were broached during later sections of the document.

Article 4: Responsibilities and Functions

#4 Jim noted that what's important here are the limitations. Anything not here is the responsibility of the parish as the whole, but not the PC. (Example: employment/hiring practices)

#2 Fr. Ray asked for clarification of "general meetings" and Geri responded that it is calling for a town hall.

Article V: Meetings

In Article 3 and here it should be clarified as even if we aren't *physically* present; some meetings will not be hybrid. There will be at least one annual meeting with required physical presence so that the council knows each other and gets together as a single body. Mark P. suggested adding this distinction in the by laws. (John suggested V.4 be removed as that line is the one that needs most clarification/correction in this matter.)

V.7 Geri queried whether a quorum should be of elected reps or just members? John G. provided the following solution: 1. If there are 8 members, 4 have to be elected and/or 2. Up the number of delegates since we've lost two corporators as voters (due to their fiscal, HR responsibilities)

V.6 John G. strongly suggested eliminating RRO; many agreed.

Article V.I: Elections

John G. noted that the idea of staggered elections needs to be clarified here or in bylaws. The committee added that the rationale for moving elections to the Fall is because elections near Easter were too overwhelming.

Article V.II: Standing Subcommittees

The role of the Parish Engagement Committee was clarified as being responsible for finding ways of engaging people and making sure we are inclusive and engaging all. (Example: taking some of the responsibilities of letters to the deceased, newly baptized, etc.)

The "Governance" and "Parish Engagement" committees need to be added to the Definitions section.

VIII: Elected Reps

Graham elucidated how the "no term limits" can be a positive thing; we can keep those whom we appreciate.

John G. proposed that since the term of office is in the constitution, it should be added how it can be adjusted or changed. He suggested giving self-authority to amend for extenuating circumstances (someone becomes sick, leaves, etc) so that council doesn't have to go back to a whole parish election in these cases.

Fr. Ray asked for the rationale in making the change to parish elected officers (as opposed to council elected). Several people responded that no one seemed particularly fond of the current process of council elected, and that it was shrouded in privacy (non-voting members of council have to leave). Mary H. added that there is also a synodal, transparent tone to it.

Geri liked the idea, but added that the flip side is that council has to live with the president that the parish elects. Fr. Ray queried that criteria allowing for the parish to make choices about

elected officers needs to be addressed so that responsible judgments can be made by parishioners.

Article IX: Committees and Ministries

9.2 again raised the issue about “Foundational” committees

Colleen noted that it has to do with how committees are representatives on council; we strive to avoid random grouping of reps at any one meeting which interrupts linear flow of information.

X: Decision Making

John G. expressed concern that consensus building takes time and effort, and waiting for unanimity seems impractical. Geri clarified that during consensus, anyone who feels too strongly is asked to step aside so that unity—not unanimity— can be achieved. Colleen furthered that it is more in the spirit of “willing to accept” rather than “willing to support.” Anne Maura submitted that there will be times when one person cannot see themselves supporting something; therefore, we can have it as part of our procedure to use voting in those extreme cases. An alternative needs to be in place to let you move ahead if a genuine attempt at consensus has been made but cannot be reached. Lindsay wondered if the language in item 3 could be “seek mediation or vote” to allow for the potentiality. Fr. Ray responded that we then have to define what constitutes the vote.

3 It is noted that external mediation takes time when there are urgent situations. Geri S. suggested that this is when voting becomes necessary.

XI: Adoption of the Constitution

2 In response to John G. question about who gets to vote on the adoption of the constitution, it is answered anyone who is registered. He continued, How do you count votes? Does a majority need to be 50% +1 of everyone on register or only those who have *voted*? Colleen clarified that those who have registered are in no way active; they get listed as inactive but remain part of our parish since they have not registered at another parish. Fr. Ray wondered whether we could say “active registered”, but Colleen replied that if they aren’t “active,” should we still reach out to get them to vote. John G. suggested using a “simple majority,” meaning a super majority, or two thirds of those who care enough about the issue to vote. This is the same basic voting criteria as for amendments in Article XII.

XII: Amendments

No comments

Closing Items:

We did not get to the PM SOW, so Geri suggested that since it has already been reviewed by several members, **it will be sent out and we can respond to it by email.**

Our next meeting will be hybrid, on November 14 at 6.

Meeting closed with the “Our Father”.