

Parish Council Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2023

In Attendance: (in person) Colleen McCahill, Lindsay Dierkes, Kevin O'Reilly, Kate Volpe, Fr. Ray Chase, Tony Lassiter, Denny McMullin, John Gontrum, Barabara Bowles, Catherine Mundy, Jill Huppert
(virtual) Jeri Delambo, Mary Hennigan, Graham Yearley, Aiden Helie, Rita McMullin, Leah Mank, Geri Sicola, Peggy Meyer, Mark Palmer

Absent: John Moore, Jim Casey, Anne Maura English

Meeting began with the Vision Statement and prayer from Lindsay Dierkes..

October minutes were approved.

Lindsay D. acted as meeting chair as Council President Geri S. had just returned from out of country.

Aidan H. will be departing from council due to acceptance into law school in another state.

Parishioner Feedback

Lindsay shared that someone was concerned about making *presidents* of committees come to council; however, as it stands, only someone has to come, not the president.

Pastor and Pastoral Associate

Fr. Ray: We've received notification that the interest rate for our IPLF has raised from 3.5 to 5.0%. We have begun the transfer of \$100,000 from the IPLF to the Christian Brothers combined fund for the next three months.

"Seek the City" is in the second phase and already had a half day process of looking at a city map and determining where parish ministries and places of worship should be. There was also a subsequent evening opportunity to be part of this stage. About 200 people represented parishes at the second phase as opposed to the 3000 folks during the original session.

Chapter 11 update: The ArchBalt has representation. Colleen and Ray attended a presentation; each parish being a separate corporation needs their own legal representation as well, and it will be handled by separate lawyers to avoid conflict of interest. Our parish's attorneys will be Ford Elsaesser (from Idaho) and Irving Walker (of Baltimore's Cole Schotz firm). They need to be retained but the fee is as of yet unknown. They will work out something that allows all parishes to be represented. Colleen and Ray were asked to sign the retainers without time to read or consult the council; Colleen and Ray made the decision, then communicated as soon as possible with Geri, Lindsay, and the incorporators. The retainers may be adjusted, and so we have not yet received them. There is a liaison between the lawyers and the individual parishes. Each parish will contribute to a fund which will be drawn upon quarterly to pay any legal fees.

Ray asked who was able to attend the webinar about the Chapter 11 process; Mary H. and Catherine M. both attended.

Catherine asked how some parishes are expected to contribute. Ray answered there is a fund for this purpose, and the Survivors Committee is determining which assets will be used for the Survivors Fund. On average, the payout is typically about \$300,000 per victim/survivor. (This estimate is a conglomerate of all the dioceses one lawyer has served for this situation.) All parishes will be assessed, and 45% of the Fund is expected to be paid by the insurance company; the Archdiocese is responsible for 55%. Fr. Ray continued to explain that the ArchBalt will pay with any liquidation of assets that courts determine will be utilized, and the leftovers will be used for parishes. He assured, no parish will go under due to the payment of retainers. None of this should impede the normal functioning of each entire parish.

Kevin O'R. clarified that each parish is a separate corporation thereby maintaining a certain liability, but most of the physical assets are controlled by the Archdiocese.

Mary H. shared that the presentation she attended via Zoom was very well done—clear and professional; she hopes it's available to those who could not attend. Catherine responded that they asked that nothing be recorded, so it will not be shared.

In terms of suing the individual parishes, there is a petition presented to court to put those on stay with the intent that those be absorbed into the Chapter 11 process. An extended stay was put in place last week; it allows the ArchBalt to pay the bills necessary for the normal operation of the archdiocese.

A summary will be given to the parish, and the ArchBalt website provides a lot of information about the process. The evaluation of assets for the ArchBalt will take time and then subsequent notifications will go out to victims/survivors. Actual determination of the allocation of funds will not be until two years from now.

Jeri D. asked for the bankruptcy case number; Fr. Ray looked it up for her.

Geri S. commented that if we were sued, that retainer will not be helpful as it is not going to cover legal costs if we're sued. Fr. Ray agreed, but added that the ArchBalt has clearly enumerated that parishes will not be responsible for covering the cost of individual suits.

The ArchBalt also cannot touch anything other than what's in the cathedraticum. Any excess some parishes pay will offset those who cannot meet the cathedraticum.

Colleen: Update on the audit: An independent auditing firm has been hired by the ArchBalt; they had a lot of questions and forms. It was a thorough process, and they now have all the material from our parish; Colleen feels confident about our accountability. A document saying how we're doing is forthcoming and then there will be a sit down with both the pastor and pastoral associate in December, after which another document will require a response in January. They will ask us to do things that we currently do not do (we already know what some of those are), and for some of them, we will be more contentious. For example, there will probably be a request for 3 collection counters, and current teams are in two. Since this is working, we may push back on this particular issue.

Colleen received via email a request to be an agency for a Jesuit Volunteer. Council agreed that she should apply.

Committees

Facilities: Tony Lassiter was present to update about the roof. The roof was installed in 1978 and is now leaking prodigiously. ArchBalt recommended Fick Brothers Roofing; they have already come out to examine. It will take over a million dollars to repair (using St. Ignatius' roof for comparison). In order to avoid complete repair, Fick brothers suggested Gaco roofing finish—a Firestone product—that is a silicone coating, like rubber. It goes everywhere, including on the metal roof. An approved applicator came and said our location works for this type of coating. It comes with a 20 year warranty. We're already paying a lot to patch, and the cost of this is \$132,000; it will cover the entire roof. The surface will be slippery, but there will be safe zones where you can walk. It isn't heavy in terms of density, and the components of the roof seem intact, but the leaks themselves cannot be sealed. The metal is not leaking, but the seams where they are sautered have worn down over time; it cannot be re-sautered as the metal is too fatigued. There is consensus to move ahead with this step.

Peace and Justice: Peggy Meyer introduced to council the Global Peace Foundation, an international group that promotes a values-based approach to peace-building. GPF has reached out to Project Pneuma (Baltimore-based non-profit) and hired them for local knowledge. They want to work for Baltimore and have already formed a community-based peace committee for when future racially-charged challenges occur.

A cross-community reconciliation committee is the next step and, due to our reputation, GPF has asked for a representative from St. Vincent Parish to be part of the committee. Peggy asked if we would consider being a stakeholder in this committee, and if we have recommendations for who might be good to work with in this project.

Geri S. asked how they heard about us but if she can do more research on them. Geri also wonders if the violence in our city is a racial divide, and that we shouldn't assume that it is, nor should GPF. (Mary H. concurred.) Peggy doesn't remember how they heard of us or how they were led to our parish. Mary H. wondered if we have too much on our plate and if we have enough information to consider becoming a stakeholder. Catherine M. agreed that she would like to hear more from these people about their plan to work with Baltimoreans. Peggy responded that they plan to use the leaders who have already met to build a peace committee, and another group later, and that they have already adjusted aims based on feedback from leaders in the group.

Geri S. drew attention to the difference between violence in the city versus the racial divide (which is not necessarily violent). She is open to giving more attention to the latter. Peggy clarified that it is about the racial divide.

Geri concluded that we should know more about them before signing on. Mary reiterated her concern that we have a lot happening already and we need to research it a bit. Fr. Ray expressed concern about an outside organization coming into Baltimore as well as about going outside of our local people and parishioners who are already invested in the city and trying to collaborate with others. Before a decision, Peggy and/or Fr. Ray will share information with the council so that they can make a more informed decision.

Constitution

How will we bring this to the parish and approve it?

The annotated version will be going out to the parish, though there is another version where the changes are highlighted and that will be shared with council.

Council agreed to send out the draft via e-newsletter and hard copies at church by the end of November. Mary asked how ratification will work, to which John G. suggested that it be given to parishioners; we receive feedback; we discuss; we put together a final draft with responses to feedback; parishioners vote, then we approve.

Geri suggested we need to build up the communications around this. Mary offered that the constitution group will come up with the "how" of the messaging process. In early January, it goes for ratification.

Due to time, the strategic Plan/Scope of Work will go to top of the agenda next month.

Meeting closed with "Our Father".