**Parish Council Meeting Minutes**

**September 10, 2024**

**ACTION ITEMS**

* **Future agenda item: allocation of rebate**
* **Fr. Ray will seek clarification from Bishop Bruce about the alleged “promise” to Fr. Bernie/St. Leo’s**
* **Prepare for Doors Open–volunteers needed.**

**Attendance: (virtually)** Kevin O’Reilly, Mark Palmer, Kate Volpe, Leah Mank, Mary Hennigan, Geri Sicola, Catherine Mundy, Lindsay Dierkes, Mary Forrester-Whipps, John Gontrum, Pat Ball, Fr. Ray Chase, Colleen McCahill, Al Reichalt, Denny McMullin, Jim Casey, Rita McMullin, Ray Bahr, Dan McCarthy, Mary Bunting, Kevin Daly, Audrey Rogers, Graham Yearley, Gerry Fialkowski

Absent: Jill Huppert

Meeting began with prayer from Colleen McCahill.

August minutes were approved.

**Parishioner Feedback**

Catherine M. encountered someone who was so upset with the Catholic church that she has almost decided to leave the church. Catherine advised her to chat with Colleen, but she is not sure of her name or whether she is a regular parishioner.

Geri S. shared that there is a recurring theme that some people want a chance to express their anger and frustrations, perhaps through a town hall. She wondered if this should be an action item for the soon-to-be Task Force. Mary H. concurred that the Task Force should take responsibility to maintain organization and prioritize.

**Pastor and Pastoral Associate**

**Fr. Ray:** The park and steps have been closed in an attempt to make a statement around the recent increase in violence. St. V has made contact with Sgt. Torres as committee liaison to gain insight and with Bill McCarthy, head of Catholic Charities, who gave the name of the head of Safe Streets, in order for us to gain perspectives of what might be useful. The park remains open for one hour on Sunday for food distribution, etc. and to explain to the community why this has happened. Fr. Ray chats with folks in the park to gain ideas about how to increase safety. An internal group will also discuss messaging around this issue and what we can do to problem-solve.

Rita McM. relayed the opinion of one homeless person who said we were only punishing the ones just trying to escape or socialize. Some other parishioners have heard similar. Fr. Ray said there is some truth to that, but this has been deemed a necessity for the safety of those who come to and work on our property.

Al R. shared that the NE Council on Sept 20th will have a session with Safe Streets people, and he encouraged people to attend.

Colleen mentioned that since the closure, drug dealers of K2 are no longer hanging out and that their absence has been noticeable: she feels safer for herself and the staff. Also, respect for the park and steps means one staff member and a volunteer have been relieved of significant garbage pickup.

Fr. Ray added that the mayor’s office will provide a representative to deal with the donor issue.

**Colleen:**  Job postings are about to go live. Our new JV started, but he came in sick, so it has been a gradual start.

**Committees**:

**Finance**: The fiscal year 2025 has already begun, and Mark P. shared some reports. The FY24 average attendance was up, but the offertory was down. Next, he shared the proposed budget coming from the committee. They expect $290,000 in donations (outside of the offertory). The Historic Trust will pay out for roof repairs and there is an expected revenue from them for future undercroft work. The expected overall revenue is slightly higher from last year. Within the operating budget, there is an inclusion for AC and landscaping, along with Facilities special projects–for example, the remaining balance for the completion of the roof. The operating budget is proposed to be higher. Employee benefits allow for a 3% increase in compensation for the staff, with a big increase happening in medical insurance. There is a further addition for one new part-time employee for Communications and Evangelization, along with an allowance for projects that fall under that position. Also included is an allowance for the to-be-identified Seek the City facilitator. Considering the large payout from last year’s Archdiocesan Appeal, this year we can expect a proposed deficit of $16,00ish due to the taxes on that payout.

Ray H. suggested we set up a committee (à la former Architectural Committee) to help plan for undercroft changes and design. To this point, Geri S. shared that she considered having a fundraiser or appeal for capital improvement, but that this would be a separate agenda item.

John G. praised the work of the committee. Since we are responsible for half of the StC facilitator, he wondered if that line item needed to be higher than the proposed $10,000. Additionally, he questioned whether we should budget more for interparish dinners, events, etc.

Geri added that our Task Force may decide that it, too, wants facilitation and so that line item’s budget may need to increase.

Ray H. suggested setting a facilitator limit and pled the obligation of the ArchBalt to pay a portion for the StC process.

John G. proposed $4000 for social events and $15,000 for strategic reserve. Colleen reminded that the line item is “strategic reserve” so it may be needed for other things, too. The suggestion was approved.

Mark P. moved on to the charitable budget–those funds *not* subject to the cathedraticum)--and shared that everything balances out between expenses and revenue.

Geri S. noted that a future agenda item will need to be the allocation of the rebate and how it will be deployed.

**Elections** Lindsay D. alerted that nominees will be taken theweekends of September 14-15 and 28-29. There are currently 9 elected reps, but the new constitution states we can have a minimum of 7. Council agreed to continue aiming for 9.

Mary Henningan and Catherine Mundy are up for reelection and are willing to run again. Kate Volpe will not seek reelection. All others are halfway through a term and need to share with Lindsay if they cannot serve out their term. Geri S. shared that she will not be fulfilling her final year; this incurs 4 vacancies. Leah M. and Kate V. were named to join Lindsay on the election committee.

**Seek the City**

Regarding the meeting with St. Leo’s and ArchBalt folks to structure the Interparish Committee:

Mary H. shared that she left there more hopeful than before due to Bishop Bruce’s clear dictation of openness; Kate V. shared that St. Leo’s people seemed confused by Bishop’s pronouncement that all possibilities would be considered (thereby making their closure a possibility). Catherine M. was shocked by the AoB’s desire to be on the Interparish committee; Colleen agreed there is a risk due to the imbalance of power. Fr. Ray was surprised, too; but, he does suggest this is a way for them to learn about these two parishes during this exploration. Moreover, we are part of the AoB, and their being part of the dialogue makes sense. *How* they participate, however, should be clarified and restricted as needed. Ray H. reminded that Bishop Bruce said no ordained ministers will participate. He also stressed that Bishop Bruce *promised* Fr. Bernie that St. Leo’s would stay open, which Fr. Bernie announced to his parish. Ray H. wondered how we can continue this process in fidelity if this is a true/accurate representation. Fr. Ray is surprised by this as it sounds inconsistent with what Bishop Bruce has been saying– so he will get clarification.

Jim C. considered it made sense for AoB to be there, but he thinks they should have one member as opposed to 3 on the committee; also, practically speaking, it will prove difficult to schedule with three busy AoB people.

Al R. thought Bishop Bruce equivocated about AoB putting out a notice of who is closing. Fr. Ray countered that there are expectations of what will happen, i.e. an article in the Catholic Review. Colleen agreed with Al that this question suffered prevarication.

Mary H. suggested we let it play out/trust the process before we try to rearrange how many members of AoB join; what matters is who the facilitator is. Colleen added that the priority is setting a meeting.

Geri S. shared she has asked people who were put forward by council during the recent retreat and they have agreed: John Gontrum, Al Reichalt, Mary Hennigan, Mike Jacko will be on the Interparish Committee. The group was approved by the council.

**Task Force**

Geri shared we may need to wait until elections to nominate members to this group. According to the proposal it needs to consist of 3 people not on council, 3 people from council, and someone from staff (Fr. Ray or Colleen).

The following people have been suggested: Corrine Agren-Barnes, Ted Miles, and Megan Tschudy (alternate: Sofia Taouqi).

She admitted to having trouble finding council people due to the expected workload and individuals’ lack of confidence in their gifts.

**Other Issues:**

Doors Open will take place on October 26. The organization provides 1-2 volunteers to help welcome guests, etc. 4 parishioners with background architectural and historical knowledge are needed in addition to Dan, Fr. Ray, and Colleen. Fr. Ray would like to know about participation numbers; Colleen said she would find out. Ray H. contributed that snacks and drinks would be a nice gesture, as well as a follow-up to thank them and invite them to worship with us. Catherine M. suggested using the visitors’ book.

Meeting closed with the “Our Father”.

**APPENDIX**