

St. Catherine's Parish Council Meeting November 28, 2018

Present: Scott Betzler, Nancy Dudasko, Gracie Kayany, Fr. Ken Schmidt, Nathan Whiteford (chair), Gretchen Merkel, Brett Merkel, Barbara Walters.

Absent: Paula Hudson, Tammy LeFaive, John Munnelly, Colleen Semler, Jim Hoppe, Janet Ingersoll.

PRAYER of OPENING: The council opened the meeting by praying for grace and inspiration.

REVIEW of MINUTES: Members approved the minutes of September 18 with motions by Walters and Kayany.

REPORTS: Fr. Schmidt reported from the Finance Council that although cash flow is tight this time of year, the budget is sound.

BUSINESS

Council approves creating an ad-hoc committee to review Council By-Laws: The council agreed that Semler chair an ad-hoc by-laws committee to study the document and bring recommendations back to the council for a potential new draft. Whitford's research on Canon Law 536 outlining the roles and rules of parish councils found that they are to "assist" in decisions about material, social and spiritual aspects of parish life, and have a "consultative vote only."

Council sets next meeting for Feb. 13 at 6:30: Members agreed that setting the date about three months ahead was optimal for most.

Members prioritize Capital Campaign needs: Each member ranked items of possible capital expenditures in terms of priority. G. Merkel, for instance, ranked expenditures of maintenance as the lowest because those costs should be built into the regular budget. Parking lot repairs, however, are a high priority to her because of safety concerns. Other members said that items that improve communication, including improvements for hearing impaired parishioners, are important.

Council members also discussed the expense and relative value of new drop-down screens needed if we replace the out-dated related audio-visual equipment with digital. Arguments against spending the approximately \$48,000 for the system, according to Fr. Schmidt, include the fact that it's primarily the Gathering Band that makes use of it, and that it's difficult to get volunteers to operate it. In fact, the parish is now paying people to do that at some masses. Using song sheets is simpler and less expensive, he said.

G. Merkel and Walters, however, expressed support for the screens, in part because worshippers look up and outward instead of down at their song sheets. They have also been used effectively in the past for presentations ranging from financial explanations to vision statements. Betzler commented that some churches use screens to enhance the homily with scripture references, etc.

Council recommends approval for Kenya cathedral needs

After reviewing a \$5,400 request from Fr. Bruno Okoli , now administrator of St. Augustine Cathedral in Lodwar, Kenya, for help in equipping the cathedral's administration building, the council approved recommended the a partial funding of the request. The amount would cover six computers, two air conditioners, four standing fans and a printer. The 2018 carryover in St. Catherine's charitable giving account will provide \$4,000, according to Fr. Schmidt.

Parish Life recommendations

Council is positive re. Proposal for Mom/Dad Play dates in Stanley Center

Hudson has suggested that the parish host regular play dates for mothers and fathers of preschoolers in the Stanley Center. Members discussed this and a similar program, MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) which several council members said is well-established in the Kalamazoo-Portage area. The council agreed the programs were worthwhile looking into, in part to encourage people to come to the church for the activity and stay for additional programs.

Council discusses increasing activity for 20-40 year-olds of the parish

In response to a proposal from Hudson that programs be initiated or revitalized for the 20-40-age group range within the parish, Whitford described an emerging community calling itself "ReGeneration." The goal is to foster more vigorous spiritual and social life for that age group by creating a sense of community within the parish, he said. Already about 100 people are signed up on ReGeneration's Facebook page and a couple of dozen have shown up for service projects followed by a brewery visit. Several in the group have already helped Jay Landry move to Michigan and plans to host vespers are among the items on an agenda. Whitford said the possibility has also been raised of helping host refugees destined for Kalamazoo. Whitford said the Facebook site is being monitored to block postings based on rumors or inappropriate anger.

COMMUNICATIONS

Council members asked Fr. Schmidt if he had received much communications about the ongoing inquiry into allegations against Fr. Stan Witek. Fr. Schmidt said he had not, although the bishop was receiving many.

Q and A: In response to council questions, including concerns about the fairness of publicly accusing a priest before it's determined if the allegations are credible, Fr. Schmidt said he would post an explanation of the process on the parish web site. An explanation of the review board would be included. This is an ecclesiastically, not civilly or criminally-court, based body which determines the credibility of accusations.

Dudasko asked if there could be more times for Reconciliation scheduled for people with regular working hours. Whitford and B. Merkel said that a full display of scheduled masses and reconciliation times throughout the diocese is available through mega data and could be accessed online.

A brief discussion of parish logo tee shirts followed. The set-up can cost as little as \$20 and then \$10 per shirt, Whitford said.

Closing prayer: The council prayed in thanksgiving and in asking for God's blessing.