

St. Catherine of Siena parish Pastoral Council Minutes
February 13, 2019

Present: Colleen Semler, Nancy Dudasko, Gracie Kayany, Gretchen Merkel, Fr. Ken Schmidt, Nathan Whitford, Paula Hudson, Barbara Walters.

Opening Prayer: Council members prayed for God's presence at the meeting, thanked Him for his personal love of each of us and acknowledged their trust in and adoration of Him.

Minutes: Members approved minutes from the Nov. 28, 2019, Council meeting.

Next meeting: Members set 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 8, for the Council's next meeting.

Report of Finance Council from Fr. Ken: The parish budget is on target. However, since mid-November, Sunday contributions have been down about \$2,000 per week. The reduction is despite positive census numbers during the same time period, including 26 households added and 10 lost due to death.

Possible factors contributing to the drop include the new federal tax law as well as the withholding of contributions by some parishioners to protest the suspension of Fr. Stan Witek. Following complaints from several adult women of inappropriate behavior by Father Witek, Bishop Paul Bradley in November removed him from ministry in the diocese pending an investigation. Although the diocese announced Dec. 13 that the investigation had found the complaints to be credible and that Fr. Witek was being released from his diocesan ministry, some parishioners are unconvinced. Expressions of that doubt include envelopes with messages that contributions are being given to Fr. Witek instead of the church until he is "treated justly".

Meanwhile, though, work is progressing on several capital projects with most of the allotted funds spent. The largest expenditure has been about \$12,000 for sound system updates. Work is also being investigated re: plumbing at the rectory where lead pipes are deteriorating both interiorly and exteriorly. Planning for renovation of the kitchen in Marian Hall is ongoing and assisted by donors. A contract for the kitchen wall and the shelves is ready to sign. The wall will reach only partway to the ceiling to avoid the cost of rewiring.

Review of Parish Council By-laws as updated by ad-hoc committee chaired by Colleen Semler: The council voted unanimously to approve changes to its by-laws, including:

PREAMBLE – Edited for clarity.

MISSION -- Added or expanded items to read: *Listen attentively to parishioners, and then discern the movement of the Holy Spirit in our parish;* and *“Review whether the parish’s existing programs and services align with our parish visions and the responsibilities of a vibrant parish.”* Deleted two items listed as Council roles because they are staff jobs: *To enable parishioners to assist the pastor in fostering pastoral activity,* and *to search out the movement of the Holy Spirit.* Changed *Christian faith* to *A Catholic parish* in the item that now reads, *Encourage parishioners to an all-embracing vision of a Catholic parish.*

MANNER OF OPERATION – Confirmed that *ad hoc* committee members can include people who are not on the council.

MEMBERSHIP – Removed associate pastors and parish staff from being Council members.

SELECTION OF MEMBERS and TERM OF OFFICE – Moved start of the term of membership from Jan. 1 to April 1. Soliciting members will occur in late winter and early spring instead of the busy Advent season.

MEETINGS: Removed the item listing the Council's role of receiving staff reports. Shortened from two weeks to one the time required for non-members to seek permission to address the council.

Gretchen Merkel suggested that a 1.5-hour cap be placed on Council meetings. Barbara Walters reported that the most recent minutes from past Council meetings posted on the parish website are more than a year old.

The motion to approve the changes to the By-Laws and move the beginning of Council terms to April 1 was made by Gretchen Merkel and seconded by Nancy Dudasko.

Capital Campaign Update by Fr. Ken: The current emotional tone in the parish over Fr. Witek's departure makes this a bad time to launch a capital campaign. On a positive note, Recipes for Change has offered to solicit money for the kitchen project at its fundraising event on March 9.

Parish Life: Under current plans, MOPS (Mothers Of Preschoolers) will alternate with the Playdates program at the church on Tuesday mornings. Good progress is being made on figuring out logistics, with Debra Dozeman overseeing the project.

Nathan Whitford reported that the new group ReGeneration, gathered over the Christmas holidays with more than 40 people attending. ReGeneration aims to help meet the challenge in a large parish by creating more opportunities for meaningful social bonds among people in their 20s, 30s and 40s. Small groups are among the options being considered. Nancy Dudasko said that the group is welcoming to any age group as she and her spouse have discovered, and that people should not feel they are in "silos" separated by age or any other factor.

Rachel Ogrin has been hired as the new Director of Human Resources of the parish. Staff will report to her as the Pastor's Delegate, freeing the pastor from some day-to-day details of managing the parish. She is formerly of Stryker Corporation and begins part time Feb. 18.

Fr. Ken distributed a flow chart showing that in the administration of the parish all the roles overlap. Job descriptions are being updated.

Q and A Time with the Council and Fr. Ken: Fr. Ken clarified the status of Fr. Witek in response to questions that he and council members are receiving from parishioners. In response to rumors that Fr. Witek is destitute, Fr. Ken said Fr. Witek is receiving his salary from the Diocese of Kalamazoo following the end of the diocese's investigation, and was receiving his salary from St. Catherine's before that. Fr. Ken said it is extremely unlikely Fr. Witek will be returning to the

ministry in the diocese. His former diocese in Indiana has also been notified of the findings, and it is also unlikely he will be hired as a priest there.

The diocese's announcement Dec. 13 said there would be no further public comments at the time from the diocese because of an ongoing investigation by the state Attorney General. Privately, however, Bishop Bradley has been receiving many messages, many of them critical, and has been trying to be as open and fair as he can. Fr. Ken expressed solid support of the bishop and of his handling of the issue.

Closing Prayer: The Council closed with a prayer for God's blessings on its endeavors.

Barbara Walters

Pastoral Council Secretary