

Creating a Pastoral and Administrative Center for Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish

BACKGROUND

In anticipation of the merger of our four parishes, Fr. Rushofsky believed that all administrative and pastoral operations of our new parish would be best served if all of the offices were located in a single place. Because the former school building at St. Teresa of Avila was both large enough to accommodate all of the operations and was being underutilized, Fr. Rushofsky determined, after consultation with staff and councils, to house the offices at this location.

An architect was hired to develop the necessary plans. This included meeting the code requirements of Ross Township to occupy the building as offices rather than as a school. Thus, in addition to installing the necessary electrical and computer wires, adding air-conditioning, and upgrading restrooms, the architect had to include life safety upgrades such as updated fire protection. Currently, the estimated cost to convert the school to offices is approximately \$534,000. It should be noted that this is the minimal cost to make the building functional. It does *not* include any “aesthetical” improvements such as new lights, new flooring or new furniture. Because these costs are estimates, a conservative 25% contingency of approximately \$130,000 has been added at this point to forecast the total project cost.

FUNDING THE PROPOSAL

Fr. Rushofsky has two options to fund this building conversion, namely ordinary savings and capital campaign savings. He would prefer not to use ordinary savings since this is a capital investment and capital campaign funds are specifically collected for such a purpose. The good news is that there are funds available from the *Campaign for The Church Alive!* at St. Sebastian to cover the costs of this project. However, because the funds collected for the *Campaign for The Church Alive!* were based on a specific set of projects set forth in the campaign case statement, Father must obtain permission to re-purpose those

funds. This involves consultation with the parish finance council, parish pastoral council, Regional Vicar and, obviously, the donors to the campaign, as well as approval by the Diocese.

THE PROPOSAL

That the current balance of \$636,137 from the Campaign for the Church Alive! for Saint Sebastian Parish be re-purposed to fund the estimated renovation cost to convert the top floor of the former Saint Teresa of Avila school building into a pastoral and administrative center for the new parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

WHY SAINT SEBASTIAN FUNDS?

St. Sebastian conducted a highly successful campaign with pledges made in excess of \$3.5 million. After providing the Diocese with its agreed to portion of the donations, St. Sebastian Parish was able to accomplish a number of projects in accord with its original case statement. These included: three-floor elevator in the school building (now Holy Cross Academy), renovation and expansion of the church narthex, ADA approved handicap parking lot, and new cost-effective LED church lighting. The remaining two projects in the original approved case statement were (a) to build a school access roadway from the upper parking lot that would provide improved access to the school and (b) to build new residence for the priests and renovate the rectory into an office building.

The cost of the roadway project was severely underestimated and it probably would now cost tens of thousands more than is now in the fund. Besides costing much more than the funds available, the roadway is not as critical a need because, by moving the offices, there will be less congestion. Further, while the new parish now has three rectories, it is not necessary to build a new priests' residence. The objective of improving office space is preserved in the proposed re-purposing of these funds.

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WHAT IS THE STATUS OF CAMPAIGN SAVINGS IN THE OTHER PARISHES?

The Campaign case statement for St. Teresa of Avila Parish included, among other proposed projects, an elevator to enable people with ambulatory challenges to easily move from the lower parking lot and Schoppol Hall into the church. Based on current cost estimates for the elevator (approximately \$300,000), there would be sufficient funds in the campaign savings at Saint Teresa to complete this important project. Saint Teresa has approximately \$430,600 in campaign savings.

St. Athanasius was able with its campaign proceeds to install air-conditioning in the church, to improve the protection for the church stain glass windows and to partially renovate Athanasian Hall. There is approximately \$190,772 remaining in the campaign savings at Saint Athanasius.

Incarnation has approximately \$43,150 in campaign savings remaining after expending funds to improve the cooling system and fix the heating system in the church.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THESE CAMPAIGN SAVINGS?

As he has previously written in the bulletin, Fr. Rushofsky has pledged that, to the extent possible, he will seek to honor the existing case statements. However, he faces constraints. Some of the cost estimates submitted with the case statements were too low. There are not adequate funds for everything. Further, the needs of the new parish must be considered. Any changes would have to be approved by the Finance Council and the Diocese after consultation with donors and the Pastoral Council.

IS THIS FAIR?

Some may wonder if this proposal is fair and equitable. Some might say “One parish pays, but everyone benefits.” As of July 1, 2020, all of the

assets – including Campaign savings – and liabilities of the four parishes will belong to the new parish of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Father could “pro-rate” the costs and use a portion of each parish’s campaign savings to cover the cost of the renovation project, but in the end, it really doesn’t matter after July 1st. St. Sebastian’s happens to have necessary funds and the two remaining projects from the original case statement are either not as critical, as in the case of the roadway, or consistent with the intent of this repurposing, namely, providing office space that better suits the needs of the parish.

WHAT ABOUT FUTURE NEEDS FOR THE FACILITIES AT THE ST. SEBASTIAN SITE?

The parish is keeping a close eye on the roof of the school building which may need to be replaced in the next year or two. However, there is a formula in place for sharing such a cost with the North Hills Regional Catholic Elementary Schools, Inc. which operates Holy Cross Academy. Further the hope is that the large contingency (\$130,000) which is being factored into the cost at this time will not be needed and then those funds would be available for future capital maintenance and improvement costs.

I AM A DONOR TO THE *CAMPAIGN FOR THE CHURCH ALIVE!* FROM SAINT SEBASTIAN. WHAT IF I OBJECT TO THE PROPOSAL?

If you are a donor to the Campaign and have a substantial reason why you believe Father Rushofsky should not proceed with obtaining approval from the Diocese for the proposal to repurpose Campaign savings for the renovations needed to create a pastoral and administrative center for the new parish, please put your concerns in writing. Either drop off your letter at the parish office or email Father Rushofsky at jrushofsky@saintsebastianparish.org. All input on this matter must be received by Sunday, June 28, 2020.