

St Stephen Catholic Church
Finance Council Meeting Minutes
October 22, 2020 – 7am

Present:

Fr. Dermot, Fr. Tim, Gary Augensen (Chairman), Tom Doyle (Parish Manager), John Clarkson, Hendrik Cloete, Gary Searls, Jean Voigt

Opening Prayer: Fr. Tim led the opening prayer

- I. **Reading and reflection** – Luke 12:8-12
- II. **Approval of the minutes** – September 24th, 2020 meeting minutes were approved as issued
- III. **Parish Managers Update – Tom Doyle**
 - The parish experienced a loss of revenue due to COVID restrictions, but it has also spent less during this time
 - The funding for the church gutters and pressure cleaning came out of residual funds in checking
 - \$40K loan from savings still needs to be repaid, but don't anticipate any difficulty
 - \$300K from the Yarborough sale went directly into savings
 - Parish focus is on keeping the bills paid
 - Expect spending to increase as church ministries return to activity
 - Bernie will be retiring in January after 28 years
- IV. **Reports to Council**
 - a) **Parish Council & Budgeting – Tom Doyle**
 - Expect budgeting to require more work due to the uncertainty caused by the COVID pandemic
 - Mass attendance has been increasing in recent weeks. Almost 1,400 have attended Mass on the weekends, but 7:30 am and 5:30 pm Masses continue to have lightest attendance
 - b) **School Advisory Council – Hendrik Cloete**
 - The school has remained COVID-free since the start of the school year. As parents gained confidence in the safety of the school, virtual learners have started returning to the classroom. Thankfully, hurricane season has not been a concern this year, allowing the school to remain focused on maintaining COVID cleaning and safety measures
 - Parents are pleased with the efforts of the school regarding COVID precautions and are sharing their approval through social media

- Pick up/drop off procedures have been modified to help maintain distancing and maximize safety of students and faculty
- School Mass has shifted from 8:30 am (with regular daily Mass) to 9:45 am in order to facilitate social distancing

c) Stewardship & Development – Gerry McCool unable to attend

d) Financial Reporting, Money Procedures & Accounting – Gary Searls

- Plan to bring back volunteer money counters in November. The staff is currently doing the collection counts and are adhering to the 3-person oversight method to ensure accuracy and transparency
- Payments for faith formation are transitioning to an automated system and should streamline the process and make accounting easier

e) Parish Inventory & Real Estate – John Clarkson

- The parish has experienced recent utility outages (especially FIOS phone/internet), driving dialog with Verizon and the construction company developing the Yarborough site. Arrangements have been made to prevent future outages without affecting the easement
- A UV sanitizer system should be installed for the parish offices, sacristy and Family Life Center by Thanksgiving at a cost of approximately \$16K
- The Eucharistic Rose Window will be installed above the Church Altar on 26-27 Oct
- An anonymous donor gave the \$35K for the statue of Mary. To date we have pledges of \$66,943 with \$23,057 to go on the memorial of the statue. All revenue over cost goes to pay down debt.

f) Financial statements – Gary Augensen

- Overall, expenses have been favorable after two months into the financial year
- An analysis of operating revenue and expenses reveal the two amounts have been very close to each other over the past three years, but expenses have outpaced revenue in recent quarters (mainly due to COVID closures). Many of the large expenses are actually capital improvements, while the parish has been staying under budget for day-to-day expenses
- The bottom-line good news is that the parish is **not** using savings to pay bills

V. Old Business –

- a. Endowment Fund Update: Current balance is \$32,754.86. John has talked with the Director of Major Gifts for DOSP about drafting a letter for parishioners discussing endowments and tax planning at the end of the year. He pointed out the endowment is a different type of “ask” from normal giving: namely, asking for assets as opposed to funds

- b. Membership: Jean Voigt assumed the duties of Finance Council Secretary and Parish Council liaison. Gerry McCool, Gary Searls, and John Clarkson have all agreed to extend their terms on the Finance Council until June 2021

VI. New Business –

- a. Weekly Collection Data: Some parishioners have asked if we will be posting weekly collection data. While monthly financials are posted on the website, weekly collection amounts normally are printed in the bulletin. Tom pointed out that we can start posting that information in the weekly Cornerstone e-bulletin starting in November. This also led to a discussion about ways to encourage e-giving through We Share. Ideas included encouraging the system during Christmas Masses (we hope to have large numbers of parishioners attending) or including information in the parish Christmas card. Fr Tim expressed the concern of diminishing the evangelizing message at Christmas Mass by emphasizing financial concerns. Fr Dermot and Tom both expressed the need to respectfully and prayerfully communicate the reality of expenses incurred in providing the parish's many services
- b. Meeting Schedule: After brief discussion, monthly meetings for the Finance Council will be held on the 4th Thursday of each month, unless agreed otherwise.
- c. Parish Council: Tom discussed the importance of conveying appropriate information to the Parish Council without wasting anyone's time. The Parish Council meets 7 times a year, so accurate information and good communication with the Finance Council is very important.
- d. Communication: Tom also pointed out the importance of transparency and communication with the parish population at large. He suggested posting to the parish web site a quarterly video from the Finance Council explaining recent decisions and providing information on different aspects of giving and finance (such as different ways to give, e-giving, the memorialization program, debt reduction, etc.)

VII. Next meeting – Next meeting will be held on November 19th, 2020

VIII. Closing remarks – Fr. Dermot expressed his confidence in the health of the parish. Families have responded generously over the past six months, not only with regular offertories but also with individual donations for the Marian statue and cameras for live-streaming Masses. The parish staff remains in good spirits despite the increase workload caused by personnel reduction. More people are returning to Mass in person; however, we can still accommodate more parishioners as the church can hold 500 people with proper social distancing. He pointed out that there have been no COVID cases associated with the parish thanks to the sanitizing efforts between church activities. Finally, the Knights of Columbus are planning to hold their annual St. Nicholas Breakfast, which is a hopeful sign that we can return to normal. Fr Dermot led the closing prayer and the meeting adjourned at 8:10 am.