

**THOMAS MORE PARISH
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, April 16, 2007**

Council Members in Attendance: Fr. Bill Wagner, Vic Ivers, Kathy Hornschmeier, Larry Bush, and Jim Conrady.

Council Members Absent: Janet Tate, John Duncan, and Ralph Bedel.

Others in Attendance: Mike Gennett

The St. Thomas More Parish Council meeting was called to order by Vic Ivers at 7:08 PM EDT. Fr. Bill Wagner opened with a prayer.

Business Manager Report: Mike Gennett gave the report:

The Finance Committee will be meeting next week. Some of the information that has been communicated to the committee includes:

2006-7 Update - We should break even by the end of this year unless we have an unforeseen maintenance issue. This projection includes paying for the new windows and blinds for Heider Hall. The windows are on track to be installed beginning June 11. The blinds will be installed probably in the July time frame after the windows.

We have yet to receive word regarding our claim on the computer virus that damaged our technology system in January. We are in communication with the insurance office but they seem to be on the fence regarding any reimbursement. We were promised a decision would be made soon. It cost us nearly \$14,000 to fix this problem.

We will pay an additional \$50,000 on the parish debt and interest this year than we did last year.

The diocese assessment is \$15,000 more this year than last and it will be an *additional* \$15,000 next year. The combined total will be \$30,000 more than in 2005-6. In order to accomplish this, it requires careful planning and close monitoring of our budget. Unpaid debts to the diocese are not the way to go these days.

Our snow removal costs were up this winter due to the very tough February. The spring grounds cleanup took place in March instead of April last year.

Even with the additional debt and interest payments, increase in the assessment, plus the computer virus expense, we are still doing slightly better than last year through March 31.

Bingo is doing about the same. They have some good weeks and some not so good. Bingo is not contributing a lot of income. The lack of staff and volunteer support is becoming more critical. The Ohio Attorney General's Office has notified us they will be auditing our Bingo, Festival, and Texas Hold'em records on May 23rd.

2007-8 Budget – a second draft of next year's budget has been forwarded to Finance. It is a balanced budget based upon the April 13th school registration number of 275 children. We have a "sliding scale" option built in that as the school enrollment increases the funds become available to hire the teachers required based upon our actual enrollment levels.

We are seeing more and more school families apply for financial aide. In 2005-6, 8 families filed for aide. 5 families were granted some aide based upon a thorough third party review of their financial status. In 2006-7, 13 families applied for aide and 6 were granted some aide. For 2007-8, 18 families have either filed for financial aide or say they are going to do so. The increase is coming from high income families that state they can no longer afford the tuition. We have a very limited amount we can offer to assist families and only those truly in need receive any assistance. All financial aide comes out of our budget! The preliminary results the company the diocese uses for this analysis is not recommending any assistance for these high income families. Our parish is not the only location experiencing high income families requesting aide. This seems to

be a growing trend. Unless there is a clear identified pastoral issue, these particular requests will be turned down.

There are no capital projects in next year's budget at this time. However, if the funds become available, we will continue to explore additional improvements to the property. There is no capital funds allocated for any changes, moves, or enhancements to the modular classroom buildings.

Health Care costs will rise another 5% next year. The diocese assessment will rise to 8.7% of income from 7.2% this year and 5.7% two years ago.

We do have a 53rd Sunday next year that helps. The High School Equalization tax will be phased out over the next three years. The fee remains the same for next year, reduces to 50% in 2008-9, and is eliminated the following year. A few years ago, we stopped paying the tax for those families who do not attend Sunday Mass at our parish or do not belong here.

Right now, the key to next year is to continue to get the school registrations in.

St. Veronica has graciously sent to us all their letters from their highly successful in-parish school family contribution program. As soon as we have identified a volunteer from Finance, we will begin to work on this project. John Duncan from Parish Council and Joe Evans from the School Committee have volunteered to work on this project.

Pastor's Report – Fr. Bill gave his report.

Fr. Bills stated he wanted to talk about two topics: the demographic study of our area conducted by the Archdiocese and the Parish Mission statement project.

The demographic study of our area is back. The report shows:

- Continuing growth in Clermont County. In our study area, there will be an increase by 15,000 households and 31,000 people in a 25 year period.

- St. Bernadette is showing the largest increase as the population moves east.
- Over the years, the study shows St. Veronica's school enrollment as constant, ours as slowly growing, and St. Bernadette as decreasing.
- The number of students will grow by 51% in the area by 2030. This contrasts with a West Clermont School study a few years ago that showed no increase. West Clermont feels most of the new homes will be occupied by empty nesters.

Fr. Bill stated that a very interesting statistic is that 54% of our school enrollment is from the east of the parish: Amelia, New Richmond, and Batavia. If this area is going to grow the fastest, we should be the school that will experience the faster growth than what the report shows. The families in these areas are choosing our school.

The Finance Director of the Archdiocese recently toured all our buildings. This was good for him to see how tight things are.

Now that the report is back, the next steps are for Fr. Bill and Mike Gennett to meet with the Archdiocese. Some of the Finance Committee members more than likely will also attend. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss the next steps for the parish with the diocese based upon this report's findings. Our financial situation as well as that of the diocese will have to be taken into account. The diocese is willing to talk to us because we have continually managed our finances in a responsible manner over the years.

Once we have an agreement with the diocese, we will discuss taking the next steps. We have to get permission before we can do anything. We can only take one step at a time.

A discussion was held regarding a 5 year plan for the parish. Kathy Hornschemeier stated a 3 or 5 year plan needs to be put into place. Mike Gennett stated Finance did a 5 year plan a few years ago and it was not realistic. So many things changed within a very short period of time. Kathy stated a 3 year plan might be more realistic once we know the outcome of the meeting with the diocese. There was also a discussion about holding a half-day retreat in September to work on this.

We also have to keep in mind the financial situation the diocese is currently in. There is a moratorium on building for the next two years. There is not a lot of leeway anyone can do right now.

Mike Gennett stated our current “unofficial” strategy has been to have an ongoing balanced budget, pay on our debt, and improve our existing facilities as the funds allow. This helps us to slowly become more viable for the long term. We continue to accomplish these steps, but we do need to look beyond into the future. Parish Council needs to set this direction.

(Since 2001, we have spent \$569,357.25 on capital improvements. All this was paid from special donations and cash in the bank at the time of the work. Major projects included a new church roof, church tuck pointing, parking lot repairs, new phone system, technology upgrades, the modular classrooms, new maintenance garage, parish office, and rectory roofs; electrical updates, to name a few. Also since 2000, we have paid \$1,101,680.19 on the parish debt and interest. All of this was done at the same time our budget remained in balance. All of bills and obligations have been paid and continue to be met.)

Regarding revising **the Parish Mission statement**, Fr. Bill passed out a number of parish mission statements from around the diocese. Kathy Hornschemeier presented her proposed statement. Fr. Bill assigned all the Council members some homework to do between now and the next meeting. It will be on the next agenda.

Fr. Bill also stated that the **Priest Personnel Board** has met and **new assignments** will be announced in the coming days.

Mark Prendergast has been named the **new Principal at McNicholas High School**.

Larry Bush asked about the cost of the **second tier of new lights for the church** and if it was in next year’s budget. Mike Gennett said the bid is for \$6,700 and at this time it is not in the budget. The first tier cost more because an additional electrical junction box had to be added and brought

up from the boiler room. Fr. Bill stated he wanted to hold off on that project until the window project for Heider Hall was complete. Everyone reported the first lighting addition has been positively received by everyone.

Jim Conrady asked about **the railings** for the church. Mike Gennett stated a vendor from the home show came out and has yet to submit a bid. Two follow up calls have been made with no response. Jim Conrady gave the name of another vendor.

Kath Hornschemeier made a motion to adjourn. Jim Conrady seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 PM. Fr. Bill offered a brief prayer.

NEXT MEETING - MONDAY MAY 21ST, 7 PM