

**THOMAS MORE PARISH
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, May 19, 2008**

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

Council Members Absent: John Duncan.

Others in Attendance: Mike Gennett

The St. Thomas More Parish Council meeting was called to order by Vic Ivers at 7:05 PM EDT. Fr. Bill Wagner opened with a prayer.

Minutes Change – a request was made to send a draft copy of all future Parish Council minutes to every council member even if they did not attend the meeting.

Business Manager Report: Mike Gennett gave the report:

The Finance Committee will meet on Tuesday. We have some major challenges affecting next year's budget. We have proposed a deficit reduction program that takes the necessary steps now to ensure we remain fiscally sound before next year begins. The steps do not include any reduction in force. The steps will include postponing some planned expenses and asking the staff to curtail unnecessary non-payroll expenditures for the next 90 days. These steps are far easier to take than doing nothing and having a serious problem later.

Some of the issues we are concerned about that are or will affect the 2008-9 budget that we need to address now include:

- Our school registrations have really slowed down. 292 children have enrolled so far. We have to be cautious with our financial

commitments for the school until we have enough students enrolled to justify the requested expenditures.

- The problem with the slow school registrations is some families send in an incomplete registration (and don't respond after numerous requests to complete their registration) while others don't respond until mid-summer. This makes it very difficult for us to project our tuition income in order to commit to a staff for the school.
- Increased payroll costs for the parish.
- A 20% increase in pension costs.
- 5% increase in health care costs with two additional families added to the plan.
- Mandated school accident insurance premiums
- Jarrod's Laws requirements including radon testing
- Architect and Feasibility study costs for the Connector project
- Additional requests for financial aide for school families
- Increasing energy costs even though our usage continues to fall
- The unknown impact of \$4 a gallon for gas on Sunday contributions and school tuition payments
- The unknown impact of the current economic situation on JulyFest
- Increased requests from the staff to add positions which we are not in the position to afford at this time
- The Catholic Ministry Appeal has not done well as a whole with additional pressure from the diocese to step up the campaign process on our end

We are taking a wait and see approach to committing to the additional requests we have received for next year until school registrations increase to a certain level. We also need to see the JulyFest results and any impact on the Sunday collection and the July 15th due date for payments in full for school tuition.

We are looking at two capital projects: adding freezer storage capacity to the cafeteria. We are clearly out of room and need to take this step. We are also taking a hard look at the parking lot if funding permits. Capital projects will proceed depending on how we are doing in late July.

Clearly, we have some challenges facing us in regards to the economy.

Jarrod's Law Update – We had our first state inspection on May 7. It went very well. The inspector told us we had one of the best schools they have seen to date. There were very few violations and we were commended for an outstanding job. The staff worked very hard to get ready for the inspection by getting ready for all the various facets that were audited.

We are continually faced with new challenges regarding this law. We are required to do a full radon test of our buildings next winter. To make a long story short, if radon is found at unacceptable levels, we will be required by the law to mitigate the radon out of the ground. This would require installing sump pumps and piping to suck the radon out. The costs of such a project would be between \$10,000 and \$30,000. All costs including the inspections have to be absorbed by the parishes. The diocese will not assist in helping to pay for any location to meet any part of the new law.

FEMA app filed – Clermont County was declared a disaster zone by President Bush on April 24th regarding the March 8th snow storm. We have applied to have our snow and ice removal costs reimbursed by the government. We were told by FEMA our application has to go for a review at the state level prior to being forwarded to Washington for payment. It may be a couple of months until we hear anything.

The Feasibility Study regarding the Connector Project is underway. Letters to 100 households have been mailed and phone calls are taking place inviting them to a one on one confidential interview with the consulting company from June 2-13 at 804 Ohio Pike. 60 interviews will take place. The in-pew survey will be held the weekend of June 7-8. The parish at large will get a letter inviting them to Mass that weekend to participate. We are looking at putting the survey on the parish web site for those who were unable to attend June 7-8.

Paid Time Off – The school has requested more paid time off for the school teachers.

Current Policy – Full time employees accrues 12 sick working days a year. School teachers accrue 10 working days a year (since they work only 10 months out of the year).

Employees can currently accrue up to a maximum of 60 paid working days. That converts to 90 day paid calendar days.

There is no cash value to an employee's accrued sick time and there is no payout when the employee leaves our parish.

In most cases, accrued sick time is transferable from location to location within the diocese.

The policy starts and is prorated for those employees working at least 50% of a work week up to full time. There is no paid time off for any reason allowed for employees working less than 50% of a work week.

Paid sick time off must be used strictly for the employee's own personal illness. There must be sick time accrued prior to being paid for a sick or personal day. Paid sick time ceases when the accrual is reduced to 0. Accrued paid sick time may be used for maternity leave for the employee. When an employee is sick for 3 or more consecutive days, a release form from the doctor is supposed to be turned in.

Full time employees may use up to 4 (3 for teachers) sick days a year for personal time off which is defined as serious illness or death in the immediate family, personal emergencies, and care for an aging or dependent family member. Personal days may NOT be used as vacation time. Personal time requests must be submitted in writing and approved in advance by the immediate supervisor.

Family Leave – Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) allows employees who meet the law's requirements (been employed at least one year and work 1,260 or more hours a year) are eligible for up to 90 days unpaid or paid leave for family and medical reasons. Our policy has always been unpaid

leave. Pastor's approval is required in advance of the absence. We have had previous requests for paid family leave and they have been declined. FMLA is not applicable to employers of less than 50 employees, but always covers school teachers regardless of organization size (either paid or unpaid). By law, parish employees are NOT covered but school employees are covered.

School request to change the policy - The school is asking for a revision to the policy to grant paid time off for school teachers to care for dependent children, children living at home, and family illnesses. The school cites that neighboring parishes offer paid time off for these and other personal issues. The school is asking that if any employee has sick time accrued, the policy be expanded to allow for them to take paid time off for these (and potentially other) reasons stated.

There are numerous issues with this proposal:

1) Any policy change would have to apply to all the employees, not just the school. Since parish employees are not covered by FMLA, any policy change must apply equally to all employees who meet the minimum work standards and have accrued sick time available.

2) In this proposal, there is no limit to the number of days that an employee can take for paid time off. As long as there are sick days accrued, an employee can be out on paid leave up to 90 calendar days.

3) The cost of this policy to the parish is prohibitive. **School teachers have to be replaced with subs. You are paying a teacher that is not at work and a substitute.**

- The cost to the parish for a sub teacher for a single day including benefits is \$84.65 a day. The cost to the parish for a sub teacher for long term duty in the same classroom after 5 days is \$114.15 a day. (Benefits must be paid for all employees on FICA, Workers Comp, and unemployment.)
- The school has already been approving more paid time off each year since 2001. Our payroll sub costs since 2001 are up 135.2%. Some

absences are very legitimate that include teacher training, workshops, and the like.

- Our sick pay obligation through May 15 for our employees who qualify for paid sick time is \$17,512.95. If we expand the policy as proposed, our risk for paying for employees not at work rises times the number of family members in a household (spouse X #children X parents X in-laws, etc.).
- Our sub costs for 2007-8 through May 15 is already \$5,278.35. Our sub teacher costs are already running 28% ahead of last year. Sub costs this year are estimated to be \$5,849.60. The budget is \$4,500 (costs do not include sub pay for teachers who were absent and did not have any sick time available for pay).

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Sub Teacher Payroll \$ Only</u>
2007-8	\$5,849.00 (est.)
2006-7	\$4,500.00
2005-6	\$3,274.94
2004-5	\$5,087.95
2003-4	\$2,525.75
2002-3	\$2,813.99
2001-2	\$2,487.50

We have a history in this parish of some employees abusing paid time off. Once you grant a policy change of this nature, there is nothing we can do to stop any request. You have to treat everyone fairly.

When businesses offer paid family leave, the position is seldom replaced. Other employees have to fill in to complete the work which causes resentment. In our case, not only would the employee be paid while absent, we would have to pay for a replacement in the school. It is a very costly proposal. Most of our jobs are critical to running the parish and the employee needs to be here.

If Parish Council approves this policy change, direction from Council and Finance will be needed to where to find the funds to cover this additional

benefit especially in light of the challenges we are currently facing. We are aware that both Democratic Presidential candidates are promising paid family leave which would be costly to everyone doing business. But for now, the law does not require we offer paid leave.

Alternative Proposal – Most neighboring parishes offer more sick time accrual. The majority offer a ceiling of 90 paid sick days. Accruals for full time employees are 15 days a year and 12 for teachers. The number of personal days allotted a year are 5 for full time employees and 4 for school teachers. The proposed change would be effective July 1, 2008. Fr. Bill supports this change in our policy.

We propose changing this policy in order to be comparable to other locations. However, at the same time, we will strictly enforce the following:

- 3 or more consecutive sick days will require a doctor's permission slip to return to work or the days become unpaid.
- Strictly enforce the number of paid personnel days. Request for personal days must be approved in advance by the immediate supervisor. Any other personal time required would fall under FMLA and be unpaid.
- Data would be tabulated for sick and personal time on a July 1-June 30 basis. Vacation time for parish employees would remain Jan 1-Dec 31. School teachers would continue not to receive any paid vacation since they are off in the summer and for the various breaks.

The sick days ceiling would be moved from 60 to 90 and there is no grandfathering for employees who could have had 90 days accrued due to tenure and not taking any previous paid sick time. The accrual process would begin in July as the ceiling is raised from 60 to 90 days.

Parish Council stated we could not afford paid family leave due to the cost of having subs in addition to paying absent employees. Jim Conrady suggested if the sick time policy was amended as suggested we need to

look at the number of the sick day ceiling compared to when Long Term Disability kicks in. (That is after 180 days which was determined to be too long of time span.)

A motion was made to vote on changing the policy as recommended by Fr. Bill from a ceiling of 60 to 90 days with stricter enforcement. Kathy Hornschmeier made the motion and Larry Bush seconded it. The vote was 5 to 0 to change the policy as recommended.

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

New Music Director – Fr. Bill asked Council how they felt about the new Music Director quality. Responses included: “great”, “very happy”, “don't want to lose her”, “old choir members are going to be coming back.”

The **Catholic Ministries Appeal** is not doing well this year here or in most locations.

There is a **new Pastor at IHM** starting in July.

Work is commencing at Beechmont & Glen Este-Withamsville Road.

The buildings have been torn down and a Metro station will also be built.

Both Confirmation and First Communion went well. Graduation is still to come.

The rumor mill has it we **may get a Coadjutor Bishop** by the end of the summer. This bishop would automatically become our new Archbishop if when current Archbishop retires.

The diocese is going to a **single payroll provider, Paycor** starting July 1. We are already using Paycor and this will be a non-event for our parish.

Deacon John Convery is working on a project to **get the parish engaged** in doing more things together as a parish family.

Our organ will have to be repaired in July. Parts of it have to be torn down and replaced. The piano needs a major cleaning.

The Archbishop and Eastside Sports have now both signed an agreement regarding the use of our parking lot at specific times. Eastside Sports has provided insurance to cover their patrons on our property.

New Business – Janet Tate stated she is concerned about the announcement podium area. Someone keeps moving the podium and the wires in the ground are sticking out. This is a tripping hazard.

A discussion took place that if the Connector gets built, the first row of pews could come out in the chapel area and this area be used for those in wheel chairs. That area would be close to the elevator and the new set of rest rooms.

Next Meeting – Date unknown. No meetings over the summer, however a joint meeting with Finance will be called sometime in late July to discuss the Feasibility study results.