

**ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH  
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
Monday, October 15, 2007**

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

**Council Members Absent:** None

**Others in Attendance:** Mike Gennett

The St. Thomas More Parish Council meeting was called to order by Vic Ivers at 7:00 PM EDT. Fr. Bill Wagner opened with a prayer.

**Business Manager Report:** Mike Gennett gave the report:

A lot has happened since the last council meeting in May. The update included:

The new **Heider Hall windows and shades** were installed over the summer. All the feedback has been positive. The school reported the classrooms were not as hot as they would have been with the old windows during August and September. The project has been paid in full.

The **new playground** was installed last weekend. Many parents volunteered and were acknowledged in the October 14 bulletin. PTO did a great job! This project has been paid in full.

There is nothing new or significant to report regarding **this year's budget**. We are pretty much on track. The **Sunday collections** are not meeting plan, but are ahead of last year.

**Bingo** has fallen on hard times. They have turned in less money than their start up bank 4 out of the last 8 sessions. They have been borrowing

money from the parish to pay their bills. They are very much aware of the situation. A new task force has been formed to give the program one last chance. If Bingo was to fold at this point, the net loss (after the start up funds and the bingo bank account balance are applied to the current debt) would be \$604.35 to the parish. Mike pointed out the Cincinnati Enquirer had an article in this morning's paper that Bingo was not doing well across the state of Ohio. The new state-wide smoking ban has played a crucial role.

The **JulyFest 2007 profits** were up 8.48% this year. The net profit was \$69,354.80. Winners were Food, Midway, and Grand Raffle with solid increases. Beer, Bid'n Buy, and the general expenses were flat to 2006. Casino, Texas Holdem', and Children's had large decreases. The gambling took a hit due to a lack of dealers available for the entire weekend and the state-wide smoking ban.

The Boosters have asked to use the other half of the **parish gambling license for the Winterfest** event on January 19<sup>th</sup>. The proceeds of the event are used to retire the gym floor debt. The remaining balance due on the original \$50,000 gym floor loan is \$4,804. Once this debt has been paid off, it will help the Boosters to fund other projects. Vic Ivers asked for a motion on the request. Ralph Bedel made a motion to vote on the proposal to allow the Boosters to use the parish gambling license. Kathy Hornschemeier seconded the motion. The vote was 7 to 0 to approve the proposal.

The **2008 Sunday boxed envelope sets** have been ordered will be distributed the weekend of November 17 and 18. Wine, cheese, and beer will be available after Mass on Saturday and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade will serve their fundraiser breakfast on Sunday after all the Masses.

The **Archdiocese** will soon be announcing they have a **web site for electronic contributions** for all 230 parishes. Our parish is concerned about this web site because the transaction fees are very high. The fees are 4% for parish transactions and 3% for school transactions. This is much higher then for our own program. For example, for school tuition, the fee is \$35 per family for the year. The diocese fee is 3% or \$75 per child. For a family of three, the cost would be \$225 versus \$35. We can not afford this and it is not right to pass this on to the school families. Plus, this duplicate

effort will cause confusion with our parishioners. We have a large electronic program of our own. 16.2% of our Sunday contributions are now electronic with over 36% on the first Sunday of the month. All school tuition payments are 100% electronic. The diocese plans to hold these contributions up to a month (we get our funds in two days with our program) prior to sending the funds to us minus the fees and any interest earned. The program does allow for electronic donations to the diocese for the Catholic Ministries Appeal which we do support. Any electronic contribution between a parishioner and the diocese would be between those two parties. If we can not opt out of this program for parish and school transactions, we will discourage our parishioners from using this program for the reasons noted. The company handling this program for the diocese wants to come out and convince us why we need this program. We currently use 5<sup>th</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Direct for all our electronic banking needs. This program covers everything including contributions. We don't need two programs. We can not eliminate the 5<sup>th</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> program without peddling backward.

The **Archdiocese Fund Drive has been renamed the Catholic Ministries Appeal**. The number of specific ministries it will support has been reduced to 6. There are a number of changes coming in 2008. Little is know at this point although we haven't told more of the process will be handled at the parishes.

The Archdiocese has implemented an **insurance program** strictly for the schools. The cost will be passed on to the parishes. It will raise our property insurance rates by 10 to 15% next year.

The **final rules for Jarrod's Law** have been published. This is the new state wide operational standards for all schools in the state. It will be audited by the Board of Health in each county. The rules include, for example, the angle of the water flow out of water fountains and the level of mulch on the playgrounds. We are in the process of reviewing the new law and any financial impact on the parish. There will be more on this later as the weeks and months pass.

The **in-parish school family policy letters** were mailed in August. This program was approved by Council as well as Finance and the School Board. The feedback has been minor. About six families have called to

complain. Many have voiced "it was long over due." The first update report will be issued to the school families in January for calendar year 2007.

**John Breitenbach has resigned** as the parish porter effective October 29<sup>th</sup>. He is moving to India. 9 people have applied for the position and an offer was made last week. We are still waiting to hear from that individual.

The **2007-8 Guidebook** will be published and mailed in the next 3-4 weeks.

A **new school security system** is currently being installed. It will allow for easy viewing who is knocking at critical school doors with voice and buzzer access from the school office. This system will be paid for in full upon completion.

The Ohio Legislature has passed a new law requiring **schools to collect sales tax** on all fundraisers that are 6 days or more in duration. We are still reviewing this new law to see how it affects us. Organizations such as PTO and Boosters are exempt. We are also required to collect sales tax on certain Bingo transactions.

We are in the process of **updating all our credit card machines** with software downloads to help further prevent fraud. In some cases, we are finding that some of the credit cards we have on file now require the 3 or 4 digit security code on the back of the card be keyed in. This may necessitate us contacting parishioners for this information. Failure to implement these downloads would result in increased fees, fines, and our future inability to accept credit cards at the parish.

The **Sanctuary banister** has finally been installed along with the choir loft railing to meet diocese safety standards. This has been a harder project to complete since we had a difficult time finding a vendor who could successfully complete this project in a timely manner.

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

The **McNicholas High School Board** is really making some excellent strides. The board this year is very professional with benchmarks being set for each member to complete.

For **RCIA** this year, we may have as many as 16 candidates: 12 adults and 4 children. This is a great response.

Our **school currently has 317 kids enrolled** which are down from 319 last year. We also have been told two more are coming once they get to town. This is an excellent response considering what is happening to our schools in general.

**The Sewing Ministry** has a new sewing machine. They are making baptismal garments for our infants being baptized.

Fr. Bill stated he is now taking Mondays off. The diocese policy is all priests are to take 24 consecutive hours off. He has never done that. One of our Deacons will do a Communion Service on Mondays. However, if there is a need on Mondays for a funeral or an evening meeting, he will be available.

We have just learned Deacon Fred Haas is in the hospital and wish him well.

Fr. Bill stated his **second term as Pastor of St. Thomas More** began this past July 1. The diocese could have a shortfall in the number of priests available for assignment next year. This might mean the first implementation of the Pastoral Regions. He reminded council that we are in a pastoral region with Holy Trinity in Batavia. When our region is implemented, it is unknown which priest would be assigned as Pastor. It could be neither. A new Pastor could even be appointed. This is all an unknown.

**Master Plan** - Fr. Bill said the main topic tonight was to discuss the future structural plans of the parish. We are in desperate need of more space.

In May, we received permission from the diocese to proceed on developing a Master Plan for the parish. The diocese gave us permission to hire an architect to design the remaining work envisioned in the Vision

2000 project that started in the mid to late 1990s. This work would include completing a master plan for the parish which would be broken up into phases. We also received permission to design a capital fund drive. The other stipulations set forth by the diocese include:

- 1) We must continue to operate as we do today. That is, pay all our obligations and remain in the black.
- 2) We must continue to pay on our existing debt as agreed with the diocese. We are currently on target.
- 3) We must also raise 100% of the money before any dirt is turned. Whatever work is agreed to must be paid for in full at the time of the construction.

The obstacles we have to meet are large.

Other things we need to decide is the future use of the modular classrooms and the parish office building. One thought on the modular classrooms might be to take the middle walls down in both buildings and use them as large meetings rooms.

The cost of the project is unknown at this time. We are not at this point.

If we don't raise enough money, we may ask if we can invest the money and earn interest until such time we have the funds to proceed.

A decision will have to be made regarding hiring a professional fund raising firm. That costs money, but may give us better results.

We are looking at completing the two story connector between the west of the church and the gym. It contains classrooms, offices, and meeting rooms. We also have an elevator planned in the building for handicap access for the parish and the school. By connecting the church building with the gym would be a security plus for the school (the kids no longer have to go outside). This addition would appeal to the entire parish. Something for everyone. That's why we are looking at building this piece next.

Fr. Bill passed out the first draft preliminary floor plans for review. (*This first draft is not to be shared since it is only a draft version.*) These plans are

designed for discussion purposes only. A small task force from council, finance, and school board plus maybe a parishioner at large will work on the plans along with the pastoral staff. Once the plans have been modified and approved, we will move to the next steps. The next step will include a discussion with finance regarding the capital fund drive piece.

A motion was asked for adjournment. Larry Bush made the motion and Janet Tate seconded it. The meeting ended at 8:18 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 19<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM. Both Janet Tate and Ralph Bedel stated they will not be available.

Fr. Bill led everyone in a prayer.