

**ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, February 18, 2013**

Council Members in Attendance: Fr. Bill Wagner, Larry Bush, Jim Conrady, and Sam DeBonis.

Council Members Absent: Vic Ivers, Kathy Hornschemeier, John Duncan, and Janet Tate.

Others in Attendance: Mike Gennett.

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

Business Manager Report: Mike Gennett gave the report.

The Finance Committee met recently. The first draft budget for next year was discussed. A major change was made to the way we set our **school registration and tuition fees**. The registration fee was lowered from \$350 a family to \$250. Tuition for next year increased by approximately \$200 a child. The reason for the registration fee change was we had the highest registrations fees on the east side of town. That high fee was put into place a few years ago to stop numerous families from withdrawing from school just before school began. Our teachers were already under contract and we had our staff in place and were financially obligated. This is no longer an issue. This will have an impact on our financial results for this year. Registration fees are paid in the spring before the next fiscal and school year. Thus, this will have a negative impact by \$20,000 this year on our financial results. However, the tuition increase next year will have a positive impact by the same amount. When you combine the registration and tuition fees, we are about mid-point within the 14 schools on the east side of Cincinnati. School registrations for next year are now underway.

The **Virtus certifications** continue to be completed. As of today, 214 parishioners have been certified in the program. Only 5 parishioners or 2.3% are three or more bulletins behind. This was much higher 10 days ago and emails were sent to everyone to remind them to complete their bulletins. The vast majority followed up. Some report they are not getting email notices. (In

checking that out, some registered using difference email addresses.) Effective March 1, the diocese has stated anyone 3 or more bulletins behind are automatically suspended from being with children. Employees 3 or more bulletins will be suspended without pay. In order to be re-instated, the individual will have to re-take the Virtus class and start over. There will be a meeting of all Safe Environment Coordinators in the diocese next week. Chief Facilitator Larry Bush continues to offer classes at our parish and is doing an excellent job of getting our parishioner trained.

We are looking at an **access control card system** for the campus. We priced this a few years ago and it was just too costly. The high cost is because our parish was built as a campus, numerous doors have to be included in a system. It is too early to present any specifics although we have already talked to or plan to talk to 6 or more providers. We are also looking at a leasing, leasing with option to buy, as well as buying the system. The PTO has also expressed initial interest in helping to fund such a project. The school committee was also supportive. It would not be installed until summer. We continue to have security issues....doors left open, people accessing the buildings without approval, etc. Although the set up would be extensive, it would clearly establish far better controls. (We seldom find out who leaves doors open or accesses a facility without approval). The project does not include the church but all the school buildings and gym. More Martyr Hall is not cost effective to do because of the distance and the Parish Office is not included since there is already very limited access plus a new alarm system has already been installed. There will be more on this in the weeks ahead.

The **diocese COPE (Cooperative Purchasing) committee** continues to meet. We have issued a Request for a Proposal (RFP) for the Sunday collection envelopes to utilize one vendor. A survey was taken of the various locations in the diocese and 50% responded. The vast majority are interested in a combined purchasing program that reduces costs. The new building and property director for the diocese is joining the committee. This project is fraught with both legal and other issues and it will take time to get this on track. We would like an electric and natural gas program that if eventually implemented could be a major home run.

The **2013 Catholic Ministries Appeal** campaign opens this coming weekend. Our goal has been increased by 20%. There will be in an in pew campaign this year plus the message by the Archbishop.

Business Manager Position update – Mike Gennett stated he wishes to reduce to a part time status starting in January of 2014. We have talked about adding a part time individual for a long time. Mike said he would slide into that position

and we could hire a new full time Business Manager. Mike would be here to help train and transition the new person. There have been many, many changes in the past few years centrally directed by the diocese. Each change is an on line system that currently only Mike knows how to run. There would be a period of time when both the new and old business managers would be working together during the transition period.

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

Fr. Bill, Candace Hurley, Larry Bush, and some of the school marketing committee went to the **diocese digital conference**. Many aspects were discussed but the key target was the use of social media for evangelization. Fr. Bill stated he and the Principal are going to go to a digital boot camp this summer. Jim Conrady stated that there is a lot of discussion going on in the business world on how to use social media.

Lent is going well so far. The Rite of Election was this past Sunday night at the Cathedral.

The new **diocese parish auditor** wants to come out and visit. He wants to discuss how he can be involved in the parishes. This would also involve a discussion his involvement in the deanery.

Ken Blue is still out on medical leave. We don't know when he will return. **Sean Connolly** has been subbing for him. Sam DeBonis stated Sean has been well received by the parish.

The **athletic initiative** continues to move forward. There will probably be a diocese wide policy of no sports before 1 PM on Sundays. There is also discussion that Saturday sports must stop when the Saturday evening Mass is being said. The gyms would have to be locked up and then unlocked after Mass is over. Fr. Bill stated he told the committee this could be problematic if this is implemented.

Fr. Bill said he wants to re-open a discussion about the **Connector Project**. This was the capital project that was moving forward in 2008 and was shelved after the financial crisis happened. It was a two story project that connected the church building to the gym. It contained offices, 6 classrooms, meeting rooms, and an elevator to get into church. A feasibility study was done in the summer of 2008 and it was very positively received throughout the parish. The diocese had approved the project provided that 100% of the costs were raised first and

the parish continues to pay on their existing debt. Obviously with the stock market collapse at that time the project was shelved.

The council members present looked at the 2008 architect renderings. They asked why this is being brought up now. The Finance Committee wanted to move forward as quickly as possible on a “down and dirty” expansion. That was not possible without first involving the diocese and other key parish organizations such as Parish Council and the school committee.

A discussion took place while reviewing the 2008 plans. It was said that unless the school is growing, this plan would now be a tough sell in the parish. Fr. Bill stated he had reason to believe we would be picking up additional students in the years to come. Council members would prefer if other options were on the table....something far less aggressive. They agreed Fr. Bill could meet with the architect to look at other alternative solutions including building a smaller, one level building.

Sam DeBonis made a motion to adjourn. It was seconded by Fr. Bill. The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 18 at 7 PM.