

**ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH  
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
Monday, February 9, 2004**

**Council Members in Attendance:** Fr. Bill Wagner, Matt Malott, Michelle Stultz, Denise Dyer, Duane Bradley, Bob Brennan, and Ray Neltner.

**Council Members not in Attendance:** Vic Ivers

**Others in Attendance:** Mike Gennett, Jerry Cain, Diane Brennan, Carl Lamping, Dee Archer, Darline Foltz, Sandy Robinson, and Jason Kahle. Jason Kahle, student at the Athenaeum, was a special guest.

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

Jerry Cain introduced special guest Jason Kahle who is a student at the seminary.

Some council members reported they have not received any list serv emails in the past two months. Mike Gennett reported the email provider made a number of changes to his server the weekend of February 1 and will work to get the problems fixed. In the meantime, a temporary group mailing list will be set up to communicate with everyone. *(If you change your email address, please notify Mike Gennett with your new address).*

Reports were received in advance of the meeting from the Education Commission, Worship, DRE, Girl Scouts, Festival, PTO, and Julyfest.

(If a report was filed by a group in advance and no issues were discussed during the meeting, there is no mention of that organization's report in the minutes.)

**Minutes of the Previous Meeting:** The last meeting was held on Monday, December 15th. Ray asked if there were any questions regarding the minutes. Mike Gennett reported he had not received any feedback. No one offered any changes.

Duane Bradley made a motion to accept the minutes as originally written. Denise Dyer seconded the motion. The motion carried 6 to 0.

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

A 2004-5 Budget draft has been completed and will be reviewed with Fr. Bill later this week. The Finance Committee is scheduled to meet on Wednesday, February 18 to review and approve a budget.

**2004-5 Budget:** Some of the proposed budget highlights include addressing the Sunday collection shortfall issue, allows for ongoing debt reduction if the Sunday collection goal is achieved, no Bingo income, a health care cost increase of 17% that includes doubling of many employee co-pays, utility increases, modest non-payroll reductions across the board, and an increase in school tuition. More details will be shared at the next parish council meeting. All areas in the parish and school will share in the goal of meeting our budget objectives next year.

**Child Protection/Fingerprinting Update:** Our Fingerprinting weekend was held January 23 and 24. The Archdiocese has reported they were very pleased in how we handled the process.

A parish-wide Child Protection Class & Fingerprinting log has been established listing every employee and volunteer. The logs contain the names of those attending the classes as well as everyone who were fingerprinted. The log also includes those we know who have been fingerprinted at other locations. We must have the written certification for everyone that has attended the class as well as for the fingerprinting. Verbal verifications will not be accepted.

The staff will be looking at the possibility of canceling our March 5 backup date. If we don't have a lot of additional folks to process, we should direct them to a nearby parish. It doesn't make sense to go through this again and ask the diocese to come back. Some of the neighboring upcoming dates are:

**IHM - February 11, 6-9 PM**  
**Eliz Ann Seton, Milford - March 20, 10 am-4 pm**  
**St. Peter's New Richmond - April 3, 10 am-1 pm**

**Remember, everyone must have been through the new class and been fingerprinted before June 30th of this year if they are to continue to volunteer and book facilities.**

We fingerprinted 273 people on Friday and Saturday. 165 were processed on Friday and 108 on Saturday. 248 were our parishioners. 15 of our parishioners had FBI checks in addition to the Ohio check. 93 parishioners were certified in the Child Protection program over that weekend.

The total cost of just Friday and Saturday to St. Thomas More was \$4,080.00. \$1,842.00 was donated by our parishioners or 45.1% of the cost. That was a terrific response!

Thanks again for everyone's help. It went well and we should feel good we all made a big step in getting our parish in compliance with the new policy.

**Deacon's Report:** Jerry Cain gave the report. There is going to be a three day Mission, March 8, 9, and 10. Monday the 8<sup>th</sup> is Prayer evening, the 9<sup>th</sup> is Community, and the 10<sup>th</sup> is Discipleship. Fr. Paul Desch will be conducting the mission. Each evening builds to Discipleship on Wednesday.

Fr. Bill mentioned other events will not be taking place during these three evenings; Market Day could not be canceled, but is being moved to Heider Hall.

Parish Council was asked to set up a Ministry Fair for Wednesday evening. A representative from each organization should be there. The events with services should last no longer than 9:30 pm. Michelle Stultz recommended that some hospitality be served on Wednesday even though Tuesday was the official hospitality night. Jerry Cain agreed.

Ray Neltner said he wanted council to do this. Michelle Stultz, Matt Malott, and Duane Bradley offered to help. Duane said he had another commitment, but could possibly be here later in the evening. Duane would set up a planning meeting for council to organize the event.

Fr. Bill stated he has asked the Worship Commission to look at moving the Friday weekday Mass back to 8:30 am during June, July, and August. We have 40-60 people on a weekday at 8:30 Mass and only 6-8 adults on a non-school day.

Jerry reported that CHRP had 14 new members from the most recent weekend. The Men's CHRP would probably meet just once a year in the future. The Women's Group were now in formation for their May weekend.

Jerry also reported that a Social Action Commission will be here soon. There were 12 in the Salt & Light program which is running for 7 weeks. John Convery is conducting the program. Ray Neltner added that only one response was received on the Social Action Survey that was originally sent out last November. Ray asked that Mike Gennett see if he had it in his computer and send it again. (This was found and re-transmitted on Tuesday, February 10. *John's email was incorrect on his survey and Council's responses were being returned as undeliverable. The correct email address has since been communicated.*).

Duane Bradley asked if the recently completed music survey was going to be shared with Parish Council. Both Fr. Bill and Jerry said they wanted to share it with the Music Director first. Matt Malott stated there were concerns with the music that came up during the recent CHRP weekend.

**School Report:** Fr. Bill mentioned that the enrollment for Kindergarten had gone well. We might have to have a third Kindergarten. We have one remaining modular classroom and if need be, the Faith Formation Room. Becky Ready could move back to behind the Confessional.

Darline Foltz pleaded that tuition not be raised to \$2,200 or \$2,300 a child next year. Fr. Bill responded that Bingo has put us between a rock and a hard place. We have to pay on the debt plus we are dealing with the Sunday collection shortfall.

The school asked that a master fund raising calendar be put together by council.

**Youth Ministry:** Diane Brennan gave the report. Bible Camp for this summer is being planned. Confirmation planning is underway. A youth painting project at Geiger House saved them \$30,000.00. 18 kids painted. Walnut Hills Soup Kitchen may need some painting help soon.

**Festival:** Michelle Stultz gave the report. The February 21 Sponsorship Party is a week from Saturday and Council's help is needed to smooze with the sponsors. This is the event we raise the \$16,000 for the Beechmont Ford grand prize. Bid'n Buy is moving to the Beer Garden and the beer garden is being split into two locations. Security will be on the grounds around the clock that weekend. Teri McCarty is the new Bid 'n Buy Chair and has written all major league sport teams. She is receiving a lot of positive responses.

**Boosters:** Carl Lamping gave the report. Winter sports are wrapping up and spring sports sign ups are underway. Summer leagues will start in the spring. The electronic curtain in the gym will be installed after school is out.

**Boy Scouts:** Dee Archer gave the report. The Lenten fish fries will start on February 27<sup>th</sup>. There was a big turn out for the Scout Mass last Saturday.

**Singles Enrichment:** Diane Brennan stated there is a new ministry being formed which is the singles enrichment group.

**Coffee & Donuts:** Attendance was not as good this past Sunday as it was in January. Better communication is needed. Nice crowd at the 10 AM Mass, but not that many came down stairs considering the Mass attendance.

**Council Committee Charter:** Parish Council reported on their January 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. They decided on three areas to concentrate their effort: Debt Reduction, Fund Raising, and Volunteer Recruiting.

Debt Reduction was briefly discussed. Fr. Bill stated that the Finance Committee was looking at the issue. A consulting firm, JVM, was sending a speaker to the next Finance Committee meeting. The proposed budget was addressing an increase in revenue to help pay on the debt. Matt Malott suggested a 10% tithe to the debt on all fundraisers. Fr. Bill responded he did not want any strong arming to do this. Diane Brennan stated we all need to look at the big picture.

Council decided to center on the other two areas, Fundraisers and Volunteer Recruitment. They agreed they needed to get their arms around the entire topic of fundraising. Mike Gennett was asked how each fundraiser was budgeted. He stated only the Festival and Bingo were planned in the budget. All the other fundraisers were a wash or showed a very small profit after expenses. Most of the funds are held in escrow until invoices are received and then paid. If there is a shortfall, the parties involved are notified that it must be addressed. Anyone who does not pay back what was given as an advance has to pay it back before the next event. There have been very few problems in the past.

Council agreed to address both areas at the next meeting.

**Pastor's Report: - BINGO -** Fr. Bill opened by bringing up the recent suspension of Bingo by the Bingo committee.

Denise Dyer reported that Bingo was suspended because it was taking more than 50 hours a week of volunteer time, the four team committee was not working, one of the four team members quit and the other three therefore voted to immediately suspend all operations. There has been no further discussion planned. There was a lack of follow through, responsibility, and accountability. The bottom line was "the wheels fell off". Bingo was also only clearing \$200 many weeks.

Darline stated she was shocked. Mike stated the problems began last summer and everyone was saying it would get better after Labor Day. It really did not. In July, we lost \$1,788. It did get better in the fall, but December and January were not good. Since October 1, we have made only \$4,270. In the past, Bingo had made anywhere from \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year. It was a "given" the parish could always count on.

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*Since there was some confusion during the meeting as to the amount of financial assistance Bingo has given to the parish, some additional clarification is noted at this point. The amount of profit Bingo contributed in the past five years was:*

2002-2003 - \$41,062.75  
2001-2002 - \$54,487.26  
2000-2001 - \$51,104.99  
1999-2000 - \$52,202.34  
1998-1999 - \$43,400.00  
5 yr average - \$48,451.47

*Since July 1, 2003, through February 3, 2004, Bingo has earned only \$13,371.74. Bingo was planned for 2003-4 at the five year average. The shortfall has been coming out of our general operating account. The \$20,000 number that was been discussed at Council was the projected earnings for 2004-5 based upon the current trend prior to the suspension of Bingo. You can't plan a budget with revenue that is not realistic. The Bingo loss of revenue has been factored in our 2004-05 budget and will be shared by all areas of the parish as well as the school.*

Darline Foltz stated she was concerned about the suspension of Bingo with no plan to do so, the debt reduction issue, and potential high tuition. Darline stated that she and Cindy Robinson were offering their services to take and train a new leader and the teams. They would take the time to help bring Bingo back, but were not staying beyond an initial start up.

Fr. Bill stated he would like to move Bingo to Thursday nights. There wasn't enough time to end Tuesdays and move it to Thursdays.

Mike Gennett stated we can play Bingo on Tuesdays and Thursdays since this is what we submitted to the Attorney General's office on our license. Mike stated he had called the Attorney General's office and they stated if we changed to any other day or time (other than Tuesday or Thursday) we had to apply and pay a \$250 fee.

Diane Brennan stated she has felt "no pain" without Bingo.

Fr. Bill responded the pain will be the budgets. He further stated that leadership is an issue. Fr. Bill further suggested that Council take up the offer to the trainers. Council should find, hire, and train the teams.

Darline stated she was "not back" and wanted that made clear. She was willing to make the transition to a new leader as smooth as possible. Others expressed that some school families would feel Darline was back and everything was back to normal.

Fr. Bill suggested postponing setting tuition fees until the summer. Mike Gennett felt that was not possible. Registrations were already slow and the families he had spoken with were taking a wait and see approach. Plus, the TMS contracts need to be filed in May. We are limited to their payment cycle. Fr. Bill suggested even offering rebates if Bingo got off the ground.

Each Council member was then asked by Ray Neltner to state their thoughts on the topic of Bingo.



Bob Brennan said he was willing to help Darline. He wanted to give a last shot due to the seriousness of the issue. It was time to “put up or shut up.” He proposed moving Bingo to Thursdays and give it a six month run.

Duane Bradley stated he does not like principle of Bingo and it should not be resurrected.

Michelle Stultz stated she was on the fence. An increase of \$300 or \$400 per child will put more families over the edge. A well crafted letter will need to be written. The letter should be signed by one of the parents and returned to the school. If people were willing to work, it was okay. She also respected Duane’s opinion.

Denise Dyer said she respected Darline’s and Cindy’s offer and was willing to try one last time. Other than that, she had no more to say.

Matt Malott said he agreed with Duane.

Ray Neltner felt a “bridge effort” was needed.

Mike Gennett stated that the completed budget draft had not been discussed with Fr. Bill. It was not really fair to discuss any specifics that have yet to be reviewed with the Pastor. He did feel there were some opportunities to adjust the budget but he did not have the authority to make major budget shifts without the Pastor’s approval. Budget shifts to all areas of the parish could help to keep tuition at a reasonable level. The decision could also be made to suspend any debt payments allowing the interest on the debt to just grow, however this will curtail any future building plans. Our unpaid interest alone is growing at nearly \$85,000 a year. Fr. Bill mentioned that maybe savings could be used to offset the shortfall in the short term.

Mike stated that Bingo was not the sole issue affecting next year’s budget. A 17% health care increase and soaring utilities were also a factor. We have less coming in and more going out.

Duane Bradley then made a motion to let Bingo “die a slow death”. There should also be a move to find other sources of revenue. Matt Malott seconded the motion. The vote was 5 to 1 to permanently end Bingo.

Duane Bradley, Matt Malott, Denise Dyer, Michelle Stultz and Ray Neltner all voted to end Bingo. Bob Brennan voted to retain it as he had stipulated.

**The next meeting was scheduled for Monday, March 22, at 7:00 pm in the Library.** (The meeting will not be held March 8 due to the Parish Mission and can not be scheduled on March 15 due to the Parish Lenten Reconciliation Service.)

This meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM. Fr. Bill led the group in a prayer.