

**ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

Thursday, June 27, 2002

REVISED

Council Members Present: David Lees, Linda Young, Peggy Fangman, Tom Kiefer, Ray Neltner, and Barbara Schmidt.

Others Present: Fr. Bill Wagner, Mike Gennett, Peg Fischer, Michelle Stultz, Dee Archer, Charlie Randolph, and Darline Foltz.

The special Parish Council meeting was called to order by David Lees at 7:00 PM EDT. Fr. Bill opened the meeting with a prayer.

Prior to discussing the main purpose of the meeting, Fr. Bill Wagner opened with a few agenda items that could not wait until September.

BOOSTERS AND THE GYM - Fr. Bill reported an issue had arisen that the gym was not being cleaned on a regular basis by the Boosters as previously agreed. After a series of letters, phone conversations, and a meeting with the Booster President and Vice-President, the Boosters agreed to re-take charge of cleaning the gym. Their offer was 100% cleaning responsibility of the facility. The parish would still be responsible for all major building maintenance.

TUITION BENEFIT - Requests had been made in the past to offer tuition assistance for part time teachers. Fr. Bill's viewpoint had been this must be approved by Parish Council.

Currently, only full time employees receive any tuition assistance provided their children are enrolled in our school. Part time employees had been turned down in the past for tuition assistance. The Archdiocese does not provide any benefits for employees who work 50% or less of a work week. Effective July 1, 2002, the Archdiocese will change the part

time scale to prorate benefits based upon the amount of time actually worked beginning at 50% (one half of week). In the past, health benefits, for example, were 100% paid for any employee working more than half a week.

There was a discussion about providing extra benefits for part time teachers versus other employees. Many felt that the teachers work for below scale wages and need extra benefits. (Mike Gennett pointed out that most of our teachers were now at Archdiocesan scale.) It was also mentioned that other parish employee positions are more readily replaceable and should not receive special benefits. However, it was noted discriminatory benefits based upon the same criteria were not legal or fair. Benefits must be equally offered to all the staff regardless if they were teachers or otherwise.

David Lees proposed that the Parish comply with the Archdiocese policy on benefits and council should vote on tuition assistance on a prorated basis based upon the hours worked beginning at 50% (one half of the week).

David Lees made the motion for a vote. Peggy Fangman seconded the motion. The vote was 6 to 0 to comply with the Archdiocese policy on benefits and to offer all part time employees' prorated tuition benefits effective this school year.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES – Fr. Bill stated Catholic Social Services would like to help any refugees. He asked that if anyone knew of someone needing assistance to please let him know. He would also be publicizing this request in a future bulletin.

CISE - CINCINNATI INNER CITY SCHOOLS EDUCATION – This Archdiocese organization assists inner city schools in Cincinnati. Some of their funding comes from special parish collections. St. Thomas More had not participated in the past with a special collection for CISE. CISE has announced they will begin to work with some selected Clermont County Catholic schools on a trial basis. One school they will be assisting will be St. Michael's in Ripley. Fr. Bill requested that a CISE envelope be placed in the 2003 parish envelope boxes since the organization is now going to help

Clermont Catholic schools in need. Council voted 6 to 0 in favor of adding an envelope.

PARISH COUNCIL FACILITATOR DAY - As discussed in the past, Ray Neltner had volunteered to work with Parish Council at an off site location on how to better work and plan as a council. Three dates for this meeting were discussed: August 17, 24, and September 14. Saturday, September 14, was selected as the date. The seminar will be held at the Athenaeum. The seminar will start with a continental breakfast at 8:30 AM. The meeting will start at 9:00 AM, there will be a break for lunch, and end by 3:00 PM. All Parish Council members are required to attend along with those staff members who regularly work with Parish Council.

CLASSROOM ISSUE - The main focus of the meeting was the school classroom space issue.

Father Bill gave a recap:

- 1) We are adding a second class each year.
- 2) We are adding a second third grade this year. We currently have two first and second grades. Kindergarten for 2002-3 is closed.
- 3) The long term impact on a second seventh and eighth grade is unknown.
- 4) West Clermont schools are not looking for an influx and are planning on flat growth. West Clermont is not linking their growth plans based upon birth records, but home sales.
- 5) St. Veronica and Immaculate Heart of Mary have waiting lists in their schools. The Archdiocese feels it is only a matter of time until our classes fill up because our neighboring schools are full. We will more than likely grow by default.
- 6) Growth in Union Township will continue to take place.

In order to build classrooms, we would need a major fund drive. Before we proceed, the diocese would want to see detailed plans that would cost anywhere from \$4,000 up. We also have a debt level of \$1,275,000. We would need to raise \$1,000,000 to build ten additional classrooms. The diocese would not loan us any of money and we would need 100% of the

amount to build pledged. The Archdiocese prefers we do not build at this time.

Charlie Randolph felt that if we built everything could be planned and completed within a two year time frame. A lot of the preliminary work on the classroom expansion had been completed during Phase I. We are further along than other neighboring parishes.

It has also been learned through the Parish Business Manager Association that St. Margaret of York has two module classroom units for sale. One unit is being used for music and art classrooms and the other for offices. (See attachment that was passed out.) St. Margaret of York is planning to build a new church beginning August 15, 2002, and the units need to be moved. The cost for both units plus moving and installation costs could exceed \$150,000.00.

Fr. Bill then showed the preliminary plans for the phase II classrooms that were to be added to the south of the gym building.

Mike Gennett pointed out that St. Veronica's capital campaign was dead in the water. They had 32% of the parishioners pledging \$1,067,000 out a goal of \$1,500,000. Reasons cited for not pledging was the current crisis in the church and the existing debt level of \$159,000 (which was paid off this month). Others cited that Guardian Angels and IHM were experiencing capital campaign problems.

There was also a discussion about the slow economy and the bear stock market that could negatively impact a fund raising campaign.

Each individual was asked to express their view points regarding buying one or both of the module units and/or having a major fund drive:

Linda Young – She preferred we buy one module unit that would give the parish a three year temporary fix. A fund drive would be required in the long term.

Tom Kiefer – Was okay with buying one module unit, but felt that handicap issues in the church still were not being addressed. Upgrades were needed.

Barbara Schmidt – Felt that the space crisis was now immediate because the choir would not have a room to practice in this fall. She felt moving practice to the church was not appropriate since people in church were praying and did not want to listen to choir practice. She felt we needed to take steps now that we believe in the future. She wanted to buy the module units now and begin a five year capital campaign.

Michelle Stultz – Felt discouraged by modular units. The message concerns her. The Phase I signs on the property state that once the debt was paid off, Phase II construction would begin. A five year capital campaign was just too long. Most of her kids would be out of school and would not be able to take advantage of new classrooms.

Charlie Randolph – Deferred the issue to Fr. Bill. He was not concerned one way or the other. He reminded everyone that the attitude during Phase I was to build a “Field of Dreams” mentality around the parish. He did feel that St. Margaret of York’s modular sale should not be the driving force to purchase their units now. Other opportunities would arise.

Dee Archer – Agreed with Charlie Randolph. She felt one unit should be bought now. A fund drive should be started and go three years.

Peg Fischer – Buy one unit now and get it here so it can be used for this school year. (Mike Gennett pointed out that would not be possible to get the unit ready by mid-August. The auxiliary unit was started over two months ago and will not be installed sometime after the Festival. Others agreed the unit could not be ready for use in August.)

Darline Foltz – Felt that one unit should be bought now, preferably the lower end unit. She also requested that a roof campaign be held to get parishioners to contribute to paying for the roof. (Fr. Bill pointed out he gave the go ahead without council approval to have the roof repaired because water was pouring in the church and the roof was 42 years old.)

Peggy Fangman – “I do not have much to say.” She was not certain what the right decision was. She felt a general assessment was needed.

Mike Gennett – Passed. Felt as an employee his comments were not warranted.

Ray Neltner – Discussed a three piece formula he uses when making decisions of this nature to implement change: there has to be (1) DISSATISFACTION, (2) CREATE COMPELLING VISION, AND (3) PLAN THE STEPS TO IMPLEMENT CHANGE.

Fr. Bill Wagner – His concern was the existing debt level. Plus St. Thomas More was not a cohesive parish and people need to be attached to the parish. The parish must be viewed as a total community rather than a school with a chapel. He also felt that an assessment of the parish needs to be conducted.

David Lees – David felt there was no need for modular classrooms at this time. The need was not immediate, but one year from now. He was not convinced that buying these units was the answer. We also have not looked into the market place. He felt that council needed to look at all the issues affecting the parish.

Fr. Bill pointed out that Canon Law requires the pastor to consult Parish Council on large expenditures. A motion was requested on how to proceed.

A motion was then made by Barbara Schmidt: Purchase the lower end of the two units and have it installed as soon as possible. The purpose of the purchase was not just for school use, but to open up meeting space for the parish. The best possible price should be secured.

Peggy Fangman seconded the motion.

The vote was 5 to 1 in favor of purchasing the one unit from St. Margaret of York. David Lees voted no. Mike Gennett will be responsible for negotiating with St. Margaret of York. An offer would be made.

Father Bill summed up a high level of steps the parish needs to make:

- 1) Purchase, install, and use the temporary modular unit.
- 2) Conduct a professional assessment of the parish.
- 3) A “Vision” of our future needs to be made.
- 4) Conduct a major capital campaign to implement the vision.
- 5) Defray our existing debt

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 PM EDT.

**NEXT MEETINGS - MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2002 - 7:00 PM
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2002 - 8:30 AM**