

**ST. THOMAS MORE PARISH
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Monday, September 15, 2003**

Council Members In Attendance: Fr. Bill Wagner, David Lees, Bob Brennan, Matt Malott, Michelle Stultz, Denise Dyer, Duane Bradley, Vic Ivers, and Ray Neltner.

Others in Attendance: Mike Gennett, Peg Fischer, Diane Brennan, Dee Archer, and Carl Lamping.

The St. Thomas More Parish Council meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM EDT by President David Lees. Fr. Bill opened the meeting with a prayer.

David Lees welcomed new members Michelle Stultz, Denise Dyer, and Bob Brennan.

Reports were received in advance of the meeting from Education, Worship, DRE, Youth Ministry, Scouts, PTO, and St. Vincent de Paul. (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, May 12th. David briefly reviewed the contents of the minutes and stated we would be receiving updates to some of the content. He asked if there were any questions to the minutes.

Duane Bradley made a motion that the minutes be accepted. Vic Ivers second the motion. The minutes were approved and David announced the minutes could be released.

Finance Report: Mike Gennett gave the Finance Report.

The security lock change was implemented July 30-August 1 as previously approved by council. 39 locks were changed to the ASSA key system. 138 new keys were cut. New keys were assigned and logged. All old keys were collected and logged. A new secure key system was set up in the Finance Office. To date, there have been no issues.

The 2003-4 Guidebook is at the printer and the proof is due this week. The goal is to get the Guidebook in the homes in October. If there are any critical changes, they must be communicated to Mike Gennett by email immediately.

We are going to use a new Sunday collection envelope company this year. A local company has been hired, Trinity Printing. We anticipate saving an additional \$1,300 on the cost. Our old company, American Church, filed for bankruptcy.

The Parking Lot repairs were completed in two phases over the summer. We had a storm sewer break in the north parking lot last week. There was a crack in the sewer and it was repaired. The paving repair was completed today.

The fingerprinting portion of the new Child Protection Decree has been booked for two days in late January and a make up day for early March. The Finance Committee approved a \$15 charge for those organizations that generate revenue to help offset the cost to the program. FBI checks are \$39. There will be more on this later.

The mandatory subscription program to the Catholic Telegraph has been implemented. 743 subscriptions (households who are coming to Mass) were submitted in June. In home delivery began in early August. This program will cost the parish about \$18,000 each year. \$3,300 has been return by parishioners who have been willing to help offset the cost.

The Memorial Garden construction will begin in late September. The plaque has been ordered. Bard's Nursery has agreed to donate phase 2 of the project. Work should be completed sometime in October, weather permitting.

The new Parish Council email address (parishcouncil@sttm.org) has been implemented. Big thanks to James Stegemeyer at Quic.net. This list serve will allow everyone to communicate with one another without the frustrations that were experience in the Yahoo Groups. These included undeliverable mail recognized as spam, unwanted advertising, and the ability to quickly update the mailing list.

This year, the council minutes will not be distributed except to those in attendance at the meeting. The minutes will be reviewed and approved at the next meeting. Once approved, they are released to everyone for publication. The draft minutes are to be considered Confidential until the minutes have been approved by Council.

The condensed version of the Finance Report for fiscal 2003-4 was distributed and reviewed. The report will be inserted in the bulletin the weekend of September 28th which has been designated as Stewardship Sunday. A member of the Finance Committee will speak at each Mass. A copy of the report will also be in the next More About Us.

Some of the results were briefly presented: The parish spent \$255,382.48 more than our income in 2002-3. This was primarily due to a \$150,000.00 payment on our debt and the purchase and installation of the classroom modular buildings for \$131,587.40. When excluding these one time charges, the parish had a net operating income of \$26,204.92. Both the debt payment and the purchase of the modular buildings help our parish's future by reducing our outstanding debt and creating additional classroom and meeting space.

However, our parish's biggest challenge is to raise revenue and control expenses while we continue to pay down our debt. **If there are no significant changes in what transpired in 2002-3, we will no longer be able to fund all of our existing programs and pay in a significant way on our debt at the same time.** As of June 30, 2003, our debt to the Archdiocese stood at \$1,125,000.00 plus the unpaid interest on our debt was \$213,946.52. The debt and interest is a result of the 1998-9 building program that cost \$2,600,000.00.

Income

-The Sunday collections dropped \$50,237.10 to plan and \$24,553.36 to the previous year. Our Sunday collections were the lowest in over two years. The number of Sunday envelopes offered at Mass fell 11.2% while the envelopes that were returned had an average increase of 14.2%. The number of households registered at our parish increased by 4%. We now have more registered households with fewer parishioners coming to Sunday Mass who in turn are contributing a larger share of our income. Today, we have an average of 28% of the Sunday collection envelopes returned compared to 40% just eighteen months ago. On the bright side, we now have a record number of households who contribute regularly by credit card or a debit to their bank account. (Call Mike Gennett if you would like to participate!)

-The July 2002 Festival achieved their profit goal while our Bingo income dropped significantly due to the costs associated with a new state law and fewer patrons.

-All school tuition fees were collected in full.

-Income from school fundraisers, especially from the PTO script program, fell substantially. The school had to borrow from their savings to fund programs funded in the past by volunteer fundraisers.

Expenditures

-We did not have to pay for the mandatory Catholic Telegraph program until 2003-4. However, this will be an ongoing additional expenditure and will cost the parish at least \$18,000.00 each year.

-Our health care and pension costs continue to rise not only due to cost increases but because more employees are enrolling as benefits are no longer available to them from other sources.

-Our maintenance costs increased last year due to the replacement of one of two church boilers at \$11,326.00. We also had increased costs of \$18,893.00 for mowing, snow and ice removal. It was a wet, cold year. The severe winter also damaged our parking lot and some of the \$20,000.00 cost in repairs was made in 2002-3 and the balance charged to the next fiscal year.

-Even though our utility expenditures were under plan, they increased \$12,014.00 or 19.1% due to the abnormal winter.

When the Finance Committee met and certified the results for fiscal 2002-3, they made the following three points:

- 1) The Sunday collection shortfall must be addressed and will be done so during the September 28th talks at Mass.
- 2) The school must address the school growth plans. The school can not continue to add staff without an increase in enrollment. The number of classrooms needs to be reviewed.
- 3) Bingo needs to be addressed. Bingo fell over the past few months and will not make plan.

Mike also passed out a high level recap showing a five year history of income and expenses for the parish and school. A copy was also distributed on how the debt and interest balances were obtained and where they stood.

804 Ohio Pike - Little Pink House - Fr. Bill announced that our offer on the house next to the Rectory has been accepted. This has been an on again and off again issue. The Finance Committee has toured the house and felt an offer should be made on the property. The price offered was \$82,500.00. The owners had initially wanted \$125,000.00. What had sparked Finance's attention was the fact the property adjoined the Rectory property. The diocese also highly encouraged acquisition of the property. The short term use of the property will be decided later.

Fr. Bill also explained by church law the Finance Committee has the final say on matters like this. Some of the Parish Council members pointed out that they had already informally approved this purchase.

A conversation began on how to communicate this information based upon our current financial situation. Not everyone may see this as long term planning. It was generally agreed that when everything was completed, it should be announced at Mass since those parishioners would more than likely approve of the purchase.

Use of the property was discussed but no decision was made.

Finance Committee - It was asked who was on the Finance Committee. This committee advises the Pastor on all Financial and Operational matters. The committee also approves funds for all major capital projects,

certifies the annual operating statement, approves the budget, sets school and religious education fees, etc. They have a background in finance, accounting, law, and operations. The members are Fr. Bill, Mike Gennett, Randy Foltz, Tim Jossart, David Kling, Dick Schuler, John Trautmann, and Chris White.

Booster's – Carl Lamping gave the report. The sound panels were installed over the summer. They will soon be painted. The girl's basketball program is now under way and approximately 56 girls have signed up. There are approximately twelve St. Thomas More boys on the IHM football team.

The Booster's next project on improving the gym sports facilities would be to install an electric operated motorized gym divider. Funds would be raised through a fundraiser. Longer term, they would like to get the outdoor concession stand and bathrooms finished so they could be used for softball games.

Carl voiced a concern about the use of the gym by the school for the afternoon latch key program. It is going to cause practices to start and end later each evening.

Carl also stated when he left the last council meeting; he asked if there were any other issues that required his attention. He was told there were none and yet he learned of a discussion regarding the use of parish facilities during Mass time. David Lees mentioned that the policy has been in effect for a number of years and had not been enforced. The letter was mailed was to every organization head, not just the Boosters. Carl asked for a Saturday exception. He stated that to shut down at 4 PM and reopen at 6 PM was very, very difficult for the Boosters to administrate.

Fr. Bill stated that he was thinking about extending the ban on facility use to Holyday of Obligations. He says he can see events underway during Mass times. He also has thought about Saturday being an exception, but he has been receiving complaints about the parking.

Diane Brennan stated that with Sunday CCD and the Mass time changes more families might be coming to Mass on Saturday. Catechists can no longer attend the 8 AM Mass on Sunday and probably will come on

Saturday which would require more parking spaces. Diane further stated going to Mass is a priority, yet a two hour break might be a problem. She did feel that the Sunday ban must be air tight. Carl stated he would attempt to keep gym related parking on Saturdays to the north parking lot.

Michelle Stultz wondered what other neighboring parishes were doing. She did feel the parking problem needed to be addressed.

Duane Bradley made a motion that "we reconsider the exemption on Saturday afternoon Mass time ban on the use of parish facilities." Denise Dyer seconded the motion. David Lees proposed leaving the policy "as is".

There were 4 "Yes" votes to lift the ban on Saturday afternoon: Duane Bradley, Michelle Stultz, Denise Dyer, and Ray Neltner. There were two "No" votes: David Lees, and Bob Brennan. There were two abstentions: Vic Ivers and Matt Malott. The Saturday afternoon Mass ban for use of parish facilities has been lifted.

Fr. Bill made a closing comment that we need to watch for any developing issues that might need to be addressed.

Worship Commission: The music at the Sunday Masses still is not working as it should. Council had previously sent a recommendation to the Worship Commission. A number of comments were made that council members felt needed to be addressed.

David Lees said he would take the issues and present them to Jerry Cain for the Worship Commission for review.

Youth Ministry - Diane Brennan stated there is an update to her report: The Senior High Youth Ministry has tripled, not doubled.

She also stated she is looking into Social Justice. Fr. Bill stated that John Convery is in the process of being certified. Social Justice is the teachings of the church regarding issues such as the Death Penalty, Quality of Life, Laborers right to Organize, etc. These issues are sometimes controversial.

Diane requested that a Teen Advisory be added to Parish Council. They could bring concerns that affect teens to the meeting. No one had an objection and Fr. Bill stated they don't always come after a while because they might find the meeting boring.

Demographics - Michelle Stultz said she did not know the demographics of the St. Thomas More parishioner. She would like to know age, marital status; number in house old, number under age 18, number over age 65, and length of time in the parish.

Mike Gennett stated our new software allows us to build what information we request. However, he could not specifically state what fields were available without looking and if they were available the fields would have to be completed at the time of registration. He will see what is available and get back to the group.

JulyFest - Michelle Stultz made the presentation. She said the gross sales was \$160,532 and the profit is settling somewhere around \$87,000. The final report should be ready in a few weeks. This was a record event.

Michelle report a few decisions for the 2004 event have already been made or will be addressed: beer prices will be going up, the entertainment fees were high, but well received and might be rescheduled to later in the evening; Happy H rides will be back. Over 3,500 bottles of Coke were not paid for and needs to be resolved. The event was a huge success and the first planning meetings will be held in January.

Ray Neltner gave a big thank-you on behalf of Council. David Lees seconded the thank-you.

Michelle said she would like to learn more about fundraising and philanthropic issues. Mike Gennett said there was a small task force on the Finance Committee looking at this (which zeroes in on the donations to the parish).

Bingo - Michelle Stultz gave the presentation for Darline Foltz. Darline has resigned as Bingo Chair effective October 15. A subcommittee was appointed to look at Bingo and make recommendations on the program. Mike Gennett stated that paid staff can not by law work on a charitable, gambling fundraiser in Ohio. It is felony. Only volunteers can manage the process.

Gregg Gentile, Bob Brennan, and Matt Malott were appointed as a subcommittee to see where Bingo goes in the future.

Ray Neltner stated some sort of recognition must be done for Darline. He would be issuing an email trail on the new email listserv asking for suggestions to honor Darline for all her years of service.

Seniors - No report was filed.

Vision for the Parish Update - Ray Neltner gave an update as to the meeting last September regarding visioning the future of the parish. The discussion was to bring the three new council members up to date. Because of the late hour, this topic would be the focus of the next council meeting.

Pastor's Report - Fr. Bill opened by welcoming the new members to council.

He stated that the Vision Retreat we had a year ago must move forward. Maybe there could be another retreat in a year or so.

There was a Deanery meeting during the summer. Greg Feldhaus made a presentation to Fr. Bill and David Lees. The following locations are going to cluster with us for the future: Bethel, Amelia, Owensville, Williamsburg, New Richmond, and Batavia. Our Deanery has been moving forward while the bigger deaneries are not.

By 2020, there will be just 70 priests for 231 parishes.

Fr. Bill stated he was just back from Ft. Campbell. He worked in a hospital and visited some soldiers wounded in Iraq.

Regarding Fr. Kelley, Fr. Bill said he knows nothing more than what he reads in the newspaper. He did not know anything about what has been alleged. He called the situation unfortunate. Denise Dyer stated there were some concerns in the parish.

Next Meeting – The next council meeting will be Monday, October 20, at 7:00 PM in the Library.

It is very important that every organization file their report no later than Monday, October 13. The intent of this meeting will be to focus on the Parish Vision rather than the organizations. Only those critical issues requiring Council's immediate attention will be discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM. Fr. Bill led the group in a prayer.

Emails – As requested, everyone's email address is listed below. This information was also issued on the new list serv.

Dee Archer - Scouts - archerdj@yahoo.com

Rhonda Roberts - School Admin Asst/Festival Co-Chair/PTO Treas - assistant@sttm.org

Rhonda Roberts - home - rgobluerob@fuse.net

Becky Ready - DRE - office - bready@sttm.org

Becky Ready - DRE - home - bready333@aol.com

Carl Lamping - Boosters - clamping@preview-group.com

Darline Foltz - Bingo - dafoltz@fuse.net

David Lees - Parish Council President - Davidjlees@aol.com

Diane Brennan - Youth Ministry - dbrennan@sttm.org

Denise Dyer - Council Member - denisedyer@yahoo.com

Duane Bradley - Council Member - duane.bradley@cin.vector.com

Bob Guenther - St. Vincent de Paul - guenther5405@aol.com

Jerry Cain - Deacon - jcain@sttm.org

Julie Hawkins - PTO President - julie@stgregory.com

Matt Malott - Council Member - mmalott@fuse.net

Bob Brennan - Council Member - mdgrp2000@yahoo.com

Mike Gennett - Business Manager - mgennett@sttm.org

Michelle Stultz - Festival Co-Chair & Council Member Mstultz@fuse.net

Michael Thomas - Pastoral Associate - mthomas@sttm.org

Ray Neltner - Council Member - neltner@att.net

Peg Fischer - Principal - pegfischer@sttm.org

Vic Ivers - Council Member - Work - vic.ivers@xtek.com

Vic Ivers - Home - vivers@one.net

Fr. Bill Wagner - Pastor - wwags@sttm.org