

Parish Council Meeting Minutes

March 9, 2025

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Introduction

- Attendees
 - ☞ Father Toner
 - ☞ 11 Council members were present (all except Cathy Bennett)
 - ☞ Kathy Scott (Parish Office)
 - ☞ Rita Brumley (Building and Maintenance Committee Chair)
- A motion was made and passed to approve the minutes from the previous meeting
- Rotating council members
 - ☞ Proposal from Steve: All current council members to stay until June 2026 ☞ 1 group of 4 of the original task force members will rotate off in May/Jun 2026, 1 group of 4 will rotate off in June 2027
 - ☞ Further discussion and potential approval of this proposal will occur at April meeting.

Pastor (Parish Administrator) Report

- Father indicated that the search for a replacement for Scott Lewis (office manager) continues. The role includes:
 - ☞ Financial oversight
 - ☞ HR
 - ☞ Purchasing
 - ☞ Contracts
 - ☞ Preliminary work for budget (currently)
- Note: Finance council will be more responsible for budgeting in the future ☞ Father also indicated that the Parish is still looking for a part-time bookkeeper. ☞ Currently a \$150K budget deficit is anticipated for FY 2026 (FY 2026 starts July 1, 2025) ☞ School didn't achieve all the cuts expected for FY 2026
 - ☞ Father still anticipates the school to have a balanced budget within the next 2 years, if enrollment continues to grow at the current rate.
- Debt - Still waiting for forgiveness of the \$208K debt to the diocese - have not received reply from diocese about loan forgiveness.
- No official news about Father's replacement schedule yet from Diocese ☞ Major pastor retirements scheduled in other parishes in Diocese next year ☞ Father Toner has communicated that he is willing to stay another year (or two) if needed
- Steve asked Father to reiterate the Parish Council's Role for the new members:
 - ☞ The role of the Council is advisory – no official authority
 - ☞ Pastor can override anything the parish council suggests. However, that is not Fr. Toner's intention.
 - ☞ Council represents the voice of the parish
 - As administrator/pastor it is important to hear varying perspectives from parish before making decisions
 - Many people don't approach Father directly – Council provides a conduit • Council provides experienced people who know the history of the parish to speak to Father
- Father also discussed the Finance Council which does have official authority over the

finances of the Parish.

- ⌘ Can override pastor on spending decision

Moratorium on Beautification Spending

- Father requested that the Council consider approving a moratorium on Beautification spending at the February Council Meeting, with a proposal that 10% of the offertory be dedicated to Building and Maintenance projects focusing on critical deferred maintenance needs. Father believes that given current offertory levels that over a reasonable period of time these deferred maintenance needs (see Parish Impact Report) can be taken care of and the Parish can start to build a reserve (with the continued 10%) for future maintenance needs. The point was made by some Council members that people may be more motivated to give and dig a little deeper if there are specific projects that need accomplished, and they can see the fruit of their giving. Father noted that future capital campaigns (beautification and others) could be initiated after deferred maintenance projects are complete.

Council Action: There was consensus among the council that a moratorium on beautification spending is appropriate at this time until critical maintenance projects are complete.

Other Building and Funding Discussion

- Rita Brumley discussed:
 - ⌘ Most capital projects involve preliminary work to make intended work possible (e.g., tuck-point before replacing paint, taking down chandelier before adding cross, etc.)
 - ⌘ The old speaker system in the Church was undergoing an upgrade via the parish mentorship program
 - ⌘ It was noted that people give often for specific needs (i.e. landscaping) without anyone else knowing
- There was further discussion (continued from last meeting) that Father and the Parish Staff prefer that there not be separate dedicated fund categories and fewer special fundraisers and that the offertory covers all expenses except for large capital projects. Some thoughts the Council gave regarding this were to potentially:
 - ⌘ Have several large bucket funds, instead of many smaller
 - ⌘ Keep fund categories but make them more flexible / not locked (donation with fund tag is "I prefer" and can be used elsewhere)
 - ⌘ The Council expressed that it will be especially important to have very clear communication about how funds are being spent if separate funding accounts are eliminated.
 - ⌘ Rita Brumley commented that finance council as-it-is has authority to reallocate money between categories as needed
 - ⌘ No action was taken.

Follow-up: Father to check with the finance council to verify legality of moving money from "beautification" category.

Springs of Love

(presented by Christine Ellerbrock)

- Springs of Love (SoL) is Catholic foster & adoption ministry – support foster and adoption families at the parish level.

- Shortage on fostering: children desperately need foster parents to care for them
 - Would be wonderful if parish is an advocate of this effort
 - SoL founders help you go into a parish and help you start a chapter
 - Someone suggested that this effort could potentially fall under Respect Life committee
- Council Action: There was consensus among the Council to support Springs of Love through:
- ☞ coming to parish and giving a brief pulpit-pitch at Sunday masses ☞
 - having a table at a Sunday “donut gathering”
 - ☞ coordination with the St Mary Respect Life group
- Follow-up: Christine Ellerbrock to follow-up with St Mary Respect Life members and Springs of Love leaders

St. Vincent New Beginnings (revisited from February meeting)

- Council members have indicated that parishioners and representatives of the school have cautioned against St Mary officially endorsing the house near the school • In February, Council advised that they: 1) Provide information about the ministry at fish fry, 2) Contact Eric Piefer to discuss the school administration’s opinion.
- Council’s general understanding from the presentation last meeting is that they already have city approval for project, and it will move forward, but were looking for ideas on how to get support and avoid blowback

Council Discussion – Welcoming (continued)

- Father Toner was asked what he has seen work well for other parishes:
 - Gathering area right outside of church is helpful (not really a possibility at this point for St. Mary)
 - Screens that show all the current activities / announcements (e.g., in narthex)

Council Action: The Council reached consensus to recommend the following to make St. Mary a more welcoming Parish:

1. Hold regular “donut gatherings” after Sunday masses
 - Provide space for tables for various ministries
 - Announcement that donut gatherings are partly to welcome new members ◦

Possibly fellowship event as part of gatherings

 - Rob Gabel to coordinate for the first donut Sunday
 - Approval of Knights for funds & dates
 - Parish council volunteers to initially help welcome people to donut gatherings
2. Form Hospitality Committee
 - a. Need for a formal Parish Hospitality Committee/Team
 - b. Ultimately leading to a large (50+ people) “hospitality team” whose mission it is to welcome and connect people in the Parish at Sunday masses, at various parish events, through other welcoming efforts
 - c. The bereavement committee was mentioned as a similar example of a consistent nimble group with a mission.
 - d. Father suggested that the hospitality committee not led by the Parish Council (enlist other volunteers to lead and run the committee)
 - e. Follow-up
 - i. Father to request for volunteers for committee (at mass, at donuts)
 - ii. Council members to look for / ask for interest in leading Hospitality

committee

3. Hold a Multicultural Picnic (like Homecoming picnic after Covid pandemic ended)
 - a. Invite people or groups from different cultures to prepare food, share cultural information, have activities, etc. to connect and increase awareness of the various cultures at St. Mary
 - b. Target a Summer event
 - c. At least an annual event
4. Increase awareness, understanding, and promotion of involvement in ministries
 - a. Many Council members indicated that they were not aware of what ministries St. Mary has who their leaders are and can't easily find that information on our website.
 - b. Kathy Scott confirmed that the list of different ministries & ministry leaders exists (but needs updated).
 - c. A ministry leader meet-and-greet during a Parish Council meeting was suggested.