

St. Thomas More Joint Parish Council Meeting December 3, 2010 - 6:30 p.m.

Present: Fr. Mike Ratajczak, Pastor; David Berry, Facilitator

Pastoral Council - Doug D'Agrosa, Chair; Marti Harper,
Jen & Andy Frost, Lisa & Pat Attardo, Charlene & Dick Belprez

Development Council - Ron Briseno, Chair; Diana Diaz, Flora Fallone,
Bill Ipsen, Brian Leahey, Anne Marshall, Chris Smith

Finance Council - Paul Ibbetson, Chair; Nancy Busse, Don Eppich,
Irene Balli-Dumas, Natalie Provinse, Charles Salter, Nina Woodard

On Friday, December 3, 2010, a joint meeting of the Development, Finance, and Pastoral Councils was held on the lower level of the Parish Center to discuss the details and implications of moving forward with the building of the Permanent Church and Parish Offices.

David Berry facilitated this meeting and he led us in the welcome, introduction of those present, and the opening prayer.

After introductions of all members present, Doug D'Agrosa, Pastoral Council Chair, stated the purpose of the meeting. Although St. Thomas More is "community," not merely a building, we need to move forward in building our Permanent Church and Parish Offices. It is imperative that the leadership of the Parish understands the details of this undertaking and is prepared to answer questions from Parishioners and to inform them of what will be happening in the next several years.

Bill Ipsen, the Capital Campaign Chairperson, then elaborated on the good track record of STM. With 600 households while at the strip mall location, STM took on the next phase and successfully campaigned to build the current multi-purpose structure in which we now reside. In addition to timely payments on our loan, the Diocese knows that STM supports the Secondary Education Initiative to build a North County High School, the Annual Catholic Appeal, and the various national collections. Fr. Mike has been recognized as a good, effective Pastor as has the whole lay leadership structure. STM was even one of two Parishes visited by the Board of Directors during the International Catholic Stewardship Conference sharing its positive observations with other Parishes. We are a "stewardship" Parish—a Parish of "intentionality". Members gather here not because of boundaries, but because they like what they see, and they want to make things happen.

Based on our past history, the support of the Diocese, and the current economic climate, it is a prime time to build.

Chris Smith, Director of Stewardship and Development, gave some background on the Capital Campaign. She began by reviewing the first campaign, “Standing on Holy Ground” (Phases I and II) which brought the Parish from the strip mall to its current location. Between 1995 and 2004, \$3 million was raised to build our multi-purpose building. Then, “Our Journey Into The Future . . . Together” Phase I, raised \$5.1 million in pledges and special gifts, which has given us money on deposit at the Diocese, as well as paying down our present Diocesan debt, and also the purchase of the adjacent five acres of land. The current campaign, Phase II of “Our Journey Into The Future . . . Together”, which began in January of 2010, shows pledges of nearly \$1,500,000, leaving only \$500,000 yet to attain towards the needed \$2 million goal. Chris noted a concern that while excitement and likewise funds for the building of the Permanent Church increases, unfortunately in recent years we have struggled with having sufficient operational funds.

Ron Briseno, Development Council Chair, spoke of how the Council looks for strategic ways to keep operations budget in the black.

The “Did You Know?” Campaign, begun in 2006, was designed to educate Parishioners on the costs of maintaining the Parish and its ministries. Since 2006, \$237K has been donated towards the operational expenses of the Parish through this campaign.

The “Welcome Ministry” and the new member receptions help cultivate new members and educate them regarding Parish expenses and encourages their participation in Parish life.

The Golf Classic and Dinner is an essential fundraiser for the Parish. To date, it has raised \$452K. Each year the committee looks for ways to improve the event and thereby attract more participation.

The Scrip Program encourages Parishioners to purchase scrip for merchants they would normally use anyway. This program has already reached \$70K of its \$100K pledge to the building fund.

The ongoing restaurant fundraisers have been very successful and a simple way for STM to receive a percentage of purchases.

The Vehicle Donations Program brings in money from donated vehicles from Parishioners and non-Parishioners alike, while an outside agency handles all the paperwork.

Our neighbor, the Aegis Assisted Living Facility, held a fundraiser this year to benefit STM. The net proceeds were \$3K.

Also for the first time this year, STM hosted a flea market on the Parish parking lot. This event netted \$8,700.

Don Eppich, previous Finance Council Chairperson and current Budget Chairperson on the Finance Council, continued with discussion on the challenge of the Parish to meet the operating budget. Don echoed the facts presented by Chris and Ron regarding the building and operational income, and stressed that all those components remain essential to our success as we continue to move forward. The loan which we will receive from the Diocese will create a 25-year Parish mortgage. How committed is everyone to taking on this responsibility?

The current Finance Chair, Paul Ibbetson, spoke next of the details of our loan with the Diocese. The approximate loan amount is \$5.6 million at a current, but variable, interest rate of 3.5%, which can be changed at the discretion of the Diocese. STM is looking at an approximate loan payment of \$30,000/month, though payment on the loan will start only after the completion of the buildings. This would mean that the new loan payments would begin sometime in 2012. In the meantime, we will continue to pay off the existing loan (\$122K remaining) that has been interest free. Operational costs will increase with the addition of two new buildings.

Brian Leahey, New Construction Chairperson, was asked to alleviate concerns about the new construction going over budget as did our current multi-purpose building. The need for good communication and coordination of drawings with the actual contracted work was emphasized. Currently, the Parish is finalizing plans with the architect for the Permanent Church and Parish Offices. Then one of three contractors, all with proven track records with the Diocese, will be chosen based on their ability and agreement to adhere to the design and budget. The Parish takes ownership of the plans, sticking to the budget and without any change orders. If a complication should arise, we can re-bid the job with another contractor. To assist in the cost effectiveness, an easily maintained building has been designed. The structure will be energy efficient with articulating windows and glass walls, taking advantage of the bluff location. Energy-efficient lighting will also ease utility costs.

Another concern was whether the undertaking of building the new Church would change the focus or momentum of the Parish away from

its active and successful ministries. All agreed that the continuing, positive energy of the Parish will most likely attract more Parishioners. And again, good communication with existing and prospective Parishioners is important in maintaining that energy and sense of community. And what better statement can we make than a beautiful bell tower for all to see!

Fr. Mike concluded with his comments as to the great confidence the Diocese has in STM. He has no doubts that we, as a Parish community, can do this. Though a serious undertaking, we must move forward. And, in order to keep raising funds, we must move some ground.

In the very near future, the contract will be finalized with the architect, and we will have the footprint for the two buildings. Then comes the design and development phase. In 9-10 months the plans will be submitted to the city for approval. By late 2011, we will break ground and look forward to completion of our Worship Space in the spring of 2013.

Fr. Mike shared “The Asparagus Story” with the group. Asparagus requires painstaking care and patience, several years in fact, before finally reaping the first, precious harvest—much like the journey of STM to continue its mission to further administer to the Parish community’s needs and growth.

The meeting ended with a strong consensus that we can and should move forward, and that the lay leadership of the Parish will act as the evangelizers to the rest of the Parish in communicating with everyone the details of this exciting move forward in our Parish history.

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