

**St. Margaret Mary Parish
Pastoral Council Minutes
January 6, 2004**

Members Present: Dick Backer Matt Johnson Jeanne Mulroy Gary Skarr
Harry Dubnick Jim Kacena Mark Oliphant Fr. Danny Soriano
Dick Henke Joe Kash Sr. Madelyn Gould
Chuck Marquis Fr. Bill O'Shea Mike Prus

Also Attending: Sr. Elizabeth Crotty Jim McSherry

Not Present: Sarah Eckstein

Opening Prayer: Dick Backer

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the December 2nd meeting were approved without changes.

Discussion Items

A. Regional School Update

Jim McSherry reported that Holy Spirit parish has given its commitment to the regional school, but only as a supporting, not a sponsoring parish. The school's principal will be hired in February, to begin employment in June. SES & STA are beginning their capital campaigns. A group called Friends of Naperville is hopefully another source of financial support for the school. Surveys were distributed at all three participating parishes, trying to seek support and solicit volunteers. 700 responses were returned, mostly from the other two parishes. At least 50% of the responses were 'somewhat' to 'very' interested in enrolling in the regional school. The subsidy issue continues to be 'hot'. The name of the school will be decided in the near future.

B. Capital Campaign

The Parishioner-to-Parishioner phase will take place in the near future. Some current and/or potential contributors have mentioned that some members of Council and capital campaign leadership committees are not on the 'list' that is periodically displayed in the weekly bulletin. It is acknowledged that not everyone who contributes to the campaign wants their name listed, rather they prefer to make their donations anonymously.

C. School Subsidy Input from Christian Education Staff

Sr. Elizabeth gave a presentation on behalf of the Religious Education, Journey, Quest, and Adult Education program directors. In part:

"From 1999-2003 total Religious Education/Faith Formation Programs increased 3.3% annually (from \$344,120 to \$392,286) while in the same period the school subsidy increased 7.1% annually from \$175,049 to \$230,789 (figures from June 2003). The RE income of \$96,519 in 2002-2003 reduces the actual cost to \$295,767, which is only \$28,718 more than we paid for school subsidies.

At present we have 1,730 students from pre-school through high school (1073 families) plus over 1000 adults who benefit from our parish programs. These programs are asked to hold spending flat for the coming year.

At the same time, the 168 children (125 families) will be granted a 5.6% increase in subsidy, (approximately \$1846 per family this year.) The inequity of this situation becomes even more obvious when you realize that while the school subsidy has gone up every year, this is the fifth year we have tried to keep our own working budgets flat. Any change needed beyond that amount has had to be specifically asked for and documented in terms of special needs.

It would only seem fair that if our programs are asked to hold the budget flat, those in the Catholic Schools should also keep the subsidy flat.”

Sr. Elizabeth wants Council to ensure that the cost of Catholic school education does not take unequal priority of the other valuable education programs at our parish. She was thanked for her comments and a full copy of her talk is found at the end of these minutes.

D. Pastoral Council Election Changes

Jeanne Mulroy, on behalf of the PC Election/Discernment Committee, posed the following questions to Council members:

- *What are the significant issues/concerns which the PC will be facing in the next 1-5 years?* Building the addition to the church property, involvement with the regional school, unity within the parish, more diversity on Council, a focus on Stewardship and newcomers, listening to parishioners more effectively, and showing that we appreciate what is done by volunteers.
- *What are the strengths of the current parish council?* It is felt that this is a bright, intelligent group of members. It may seem that it takes a long time to work with difficult issues, but they follow through to make significant decisions. The group deals well with financial spending needs, complicated parishioner issues, and topics that at times cause conflicting opinions within the group. They are able to think in different directions, with balance and diversity of opinions. They are not swayed by decisions that are not in tune with ‘one’s inner self’. There is a strong commitment to communicate with parishioners and to be fiscally responsible. They are involved with many groups within the parish which hopefully allow the ‘real truths’ to be shared so ‘half-truths’ are not passed around, if possible. There is a good cross-section of dedicated parishioners with a variety of skills and ages who have the ability to deal with ‘hot’ issues, and when needed, agree to disagree.
- *What more can Commissions bring to Council?* It is felt that at this time the necessary contributions are being made to Council from the Commissions.
- *Is there anything in particular that is desired to be in a new member?* The skills desired include: a person with an analytical mind-set to be able to deal with financial decisions, good PR skills and leadership qualities, expertise in volunteerism and fund-raising, liberal viewpoints, and good group skills (listening, speaking and decision-making). A newcomer would be valuable as well as one who knows the parish’s history and has the commitment to come to meetings each month. It is important that Council members are not seen as ‘rubber-stampers’ for what Fr. Bill wants. It would be beneficial to include a parishioner who has experienced many of the programs at the parish and knows what is offered and how things fit together, has a sense of humor as well as patience. Although several staff members are part of Council that have a strong theology background, it would be good to have a non-staff member with the same expertise.

Jeanne will present the discernment process at the various commissions during the next few months and provide Council with updates.

E. Budget Update

The budget letters will be distributed in January with returns expected in March. Christmas and New Years Day contributions were higher than expected.

F. Subsidy Committee Proposal

The Subsidy Committee presented their proposal. Gary stated that the proposal had been finalized by the committee after prayerfully reviewing historical data, listening to various viewpoints, and analyzing how future subsidies would impact our financial situation with the anticipation of additional students to support at the regional school.

They reviewed four key variables to determine ‘what if’ models:

- Projected collection percentage change
- Projected subsidy percentage
- Current and projected per pupil cost at SJA and SSPP
- Projected student headcount through 2018

It was noted that although the 2003-4 budget is \$235,350 for subsidies at SJA and SSPP, the current payment that will be made will total \$215,070 due to lower than expected enrollment. In addition, it is *anticipated* that the enrollment for 2005-6 will be even lower, with a total payment expected to be approximately \$207,000.

The following are the portions of the proposal that were agreed to by Council using consensus. The remaining portions will be discussed at the February meeting with a decision expected at that time.

- *Tuition subsidy policy for 2004-2005 will continue as it has in prior years with a ceiling. SJA and SSPP have set the subsidy amounts to be \$1,378 and \$1,495, respectfully, and SMMP will contribute this for each child enrolled at these schools **with a cap of \$235,000 (the budgeted amount for 2003-2004)**. If additional students are enrolled that would exceed this limit, a lower per-student contribution will be made.*
- *Matt Johnson and Gary Skarr will meet with members of SJA and SSPP administration staff in January to discuss SMMP's future financial support for students at all 3 schools, including the current subsidy model, the anticipated change in financial support, and potential financial implications on their parish budgets.*
- *SMMP will communicate, as needed, to our affected parishioners before March 2004 (if said meeting takes place in January) the future subsidy program and contributions made to our parish by these families.*
- *SMMP will communicate with current staff regarding the tuition subsidy process and impact on future budgets.*
- *Members of the Finance Committee and Staff will provide more detailed financial information to Council on the overall future impact of the projected debt for the regional school. This financial information would be factored into the overall parish budget which will impact the future financial support model for 2005-2006 and thereafter.*

It is anticipated that the new financial support model will be both partial subsidy and partial needs-based, or only needs-based, to be applied to all three schools. Any model that uses needs-based support will require a third party to determine what the criteria will be. Although our parish will continue to provide support for our Catholic school students, it is imperative that changes are made to the method of this financial support to ensure fiscal responsibility to our parish.

G. Parish Council Corner

Joe will author the January's 'PC Corner' on the topic of parishioner appreciation, Gary will handle the subsidiary issue in February and Jeanne, the new discernment process in March.

H. Parish Council Workshop

Jim, Jeanne and Fr. Bill will attend the workshop and provide input to Council.

Commission Reports

Administration Commission

The decision has been made to begin purchasing 'fair trade coffee' for our parish.

Christian Education

The Parish Mission will take place this month. The Women's CRHP has been filled. Sr. Madelyn has been helping another parish set up their CRHP program.

Christian Service

The defibrillator is still an open issue. The clothing collection for St. Vincent de Paul is scheduled for this month.

Worship

Eucharistic Ministers will be commissioned at all of the masses during the weekend of January 24& 25.

Youth Representative

No report.

Pastor's Comments

This was an extraordinary meeting. The subsidy committee did a great job and we thank them for their work.

Final Whip Around

The subsidy committee listened to what Council asked of them and looked into a definite focus on needs-based subsidies and outside-parish financial support. We also thank the election/discernment committee for their continued efforts. It was a productive meeting with good use of time, dialogue and tasks completed. The burden has been lifted now that some major decisions have been made. Now the details have to be worked through. Ziggy, the Sunday custodian did a wonderful job clearing the snow after coming in on a red-eye after the first of the year. Thanks for prayers and support for illnesses.

Closing Prayer

Meeting adjourned 10:30

New/Continuing Action Items:

Person Assigned	Date of Origin	Item Description	Due Date
Joe, Jeanne and Gary	1/6/04	Write bulletin insert for "PC Corner" for January, February and March	As needed
Fr. Bill, Jim & Jeanne	1/6/04	Provide input from Pastoral Council Workshop	2/3/04
Matt	10/7/03	Obtain a written commitment of SMM's portion of the school loan through the diocese	TBD
Mike	9/2/03	Follow up with diocese on status of defibrillator approval	Continuing
Harry	9/2/03	Form New Member Welcome Committee, reporting progress to Council	Continuing

Respectfully submitted by Katrina Meder

Hospitality Sunday

February 15 – Worship

March 14 – Service

April 18 – Administration (Diocesan Appeal)

May 2 or 16 – Education (Time and Talent)

Refreshment and Prayers

February 3 – Dick Henke

March 2 – Jeanne
April 6 – Jim
May 4 – Joe
June 1 – Matt and Katrina

Presentation by Sr. Elizabeth:

“Having read the minutes of the December Pastoral Council regarding the Catholic School Subsidy and the recommendation from the council that ‘all groups... work within their previous budget constraints, except those who need to move with expected increases based on the inflation rate’. The Christian Education/ Faith Formation Staff members felt we needed to address this issue to you. In our letter of December 9, 2003 we asked you to reconsider these two decisions, based on justice to all our parishioners and a realistic hope that the programs here in the parish will have sufficient funding to continue and to broaden to respond to the faith development needs of all our parishioners.

We have always supported the parish’s commitment to Catholic School education as a valuable aspect of our broader commitment to lifelong catechesis, as expressed in our school subsidy. This commitment is continued in our parish’s participation in the new regional school. However, it seems that the cost of this commitment is becoming a serious drain on the other parish programs.

From 1999-2003 total Religious Education/Faith Formation Programs increased 3.3% annually (from \$344,120 to \$392,286) while in the same period the school subsidy increased 7.1% annually from \$175,049 to \$230,789 (figures from June 2003). The RE income of \$96,519 in 2002-2003 reduces the actual cost to \$295,767, which is only \$28,718 more than we paid for school subsidies.

At present we have 1,730 students from pre-school through high school (1073 families) plus over 1000 adults who benefit from our parish programs. These programs are asked to hold spending flat for the coming year.

At the same time, the 168 children (125 families) will be granted a 5.6% increase in subsidy, (approximately \$1846 per family this year.) The inequity of this situation becomes even more obvious when you realize that while the school subsidy has gone up every year, this is the fifth year we have tried to keep our own working budgets flat. Any change needed beyond that amount has had to be specifically asked for and documented in terms of special needs.

It would only seem fair that if our programs are asked to hold the budget flat, those in the Catholic Schools should also keep the subsidy flat. This will however mean that those sending their children to the Catholic Schools will have to pay more tuition.

I know that the subsidy committee is working on some sort of plan that would set a cap on the amount spent for School Subsidies, possibly a percentage of income and that future subsidies would be determined on a needs basis for our new regional school. But I also realize that many of the children at SJA & SSPP will need to be grandfathered in until they graduate (8-9 years). These families should be made aware that the subsidy funding may change radically in the future. There will also be a need to subsidize, or at least pay the debt for the new school and our new addition.

Recently, the subsidy committee determined that since we have less children in the Catholic Schools we might not need to spend the \$248,500 which a 5.6% increase would cost. However whether we spend this money or not, we ask that you examine the basic issue: Is Catholic School Education so much more important than all other programs that their needs come before the rest of the parish programs?

Our concern is - will there be any money left to continue to give quality Religious Education/ Faith Formation to all of our children & adults?

Right now we have plans to have a Vacation Bible Program for a week this summer. I also know that we will need to replace the first grade texts as well as many of the other texts since we now have been recycling many of them for 3 -5 years. Will we have to cancel a new program because our budget needs to be trimmed? The parish council has never refused our program in the 13 years I have been the director, so I am sure that they will not this year. But if the continuing pattern of increasing subsidies for the Catholic Schools continues, the council will have no choice but to start to do so.

We are in the process of trying to build a new building so we can expand our programs, but if we haven’t the money necessary to have expanded programs what good would a new facility do?

We encourage you to re-evaluate our subsidy policy to the Catholic School Families before the new school is a reality & to encourage and support programs that meet the needs of our broader community as discovered through our focus groups and commissions.

Although I am speaking for the staff which works in Religious Education / Faith Formation, I do think that all our programs need to be treated with equity. No one group should ever be asked to sacrifice more than any other."