

**Parish Council Meeting Minutes**  
**May 14, 2024**

**ACTION ITEMS**

Council will edit letter and add per suggestions as needed and send to the Seek the City by Thursday at noon.

**Attendance: (in person)** Fr. Ray Chase, Leona Gruzynski, Leah Mank, Colleen McCahill, Sally O'Hara, Sharon Hunt, Graham Yearley, Kevin O'Reilly, John Gontrum, Geri Sicola, Kate Volpe  
**(virtually)** Denny McMullin, Rita McMullin, Catherine Mundy, Anne Freeburger, Marianne Reichelt, Al Reichelt, Jill Huppert, Bob Betta, Kathy Betta, Pat Ball, Kevin Daly, Kathy Younkin, Mark Palmer, Tia Forrester-Whipps, Eileen Zerhusen, Tom Zerhusen, Terri Rizzo, Gerry Fialkowski, Mary Catherine Bunting, Joan Kub, Jeri Delambo, Mary Weiss, Elizabeth Pepple, Jennifer Michalak, & Lindsay Dierkes  
Absent: Mary Henningan

Meeting began with prayer from Geri S.  
April minutes were approved.

**Parishioner Feedback**

Nothing new except support offered through the suggestion box.

**Pastor and Pastoral Associate**

**Fr. Ray:** No new updates. ("Seek the City is consuming life.")

He received delegation to do confirmation with our two communicants.

St. Leo's also has someone prepared for confirmation and has asked that she be confirmed here (the communicant had a time conflict with their original plan). He is seeking delegation to do so.

**Colleen:** The Jesuit Volunteer Corps has assigned a number of applicants for Colleen to interview. This is the third round. She has interviewed another 3 people, and on the recommendation of JVC did ask how they feel about Baltimore. More to come.

Regarding Historic Trust: The board of 9 members voted to fill Michael Kelly's position after his death and now someone else has resigned. The board acquired two new members—Scott Becker (known to Fr. Ray, former CEO of Catholic Charities) and Johns Hopkins (head up Baltimore Heritage). The Trust's board had approved funding for the louvers and tower, and they affirmed that at their most recent meeting. The next move is silicone coating on the roof which has now officially been approved.

Geri S. asked for clarification on if/how the Trust can "protect" St. Vincent as a church. Colleen replied that the Trust exists separately from the parish and the Archdiocese for the deferred maintenance of this facility. If the parish were asked to worship elsewhere, the Trust would not tract with it.

Sharon H. asked if it could be transferred to another property. Fr. Ray said it is only this building, church, and property. Sally O'H. asked if St. Leo's is a historic property, and therefore could it go there. The answer was no. The trust has the option and responsibility to make a decision of the condition/usage of the church changes.

### **Committees**

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**Facilities:** Tomorrow 5/15 at 2:00, the committee will meet with Fick Contractors at a pre-construction meeting as to when the application for the roof will be applied.

Also, two signs have been damaged that Tony has been working to have repaired or replaced.

### **Seek the City**

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Updates from Fr. Ray:

Feedback was due through today at 5:00pm. However, we've been given permission to extend for a few days. Also, there was one change already made in the model of clusterings, giving credence to the listening sessions and feedback. In the last iteration, St. Ambrose was to close and the worship site would be All Saints; now, St. Ambrose is not clustered with anybody.

Geri S. reviewed the process so far:

- Initial presentation of the models
- Extraordinary meeting of PC with deep analysis and conversation against the known criteria
- At regular PC meeting, continued to work with that, parish-wide, helping to build a case.
- At the meeting, Council tasked EC to draft a letter.
- Then, Conversations in the Spirit were offered to the parish community. Data was reviewed and went into consideration.
- All letters, emails, etc. sent to us and the ArchBalt taken into consideration.

Now, PC examined the draft to begin final conversations—not to edit or word smyth, but large content changes, if any.

Sharon H. asked how we would send it; she suggested registered mail as well as email. Denny suggested we hand deliver it, too.

#### **What is liked about the letter:**

Rita McM. said the tone was wonderful and that it was very thorough.

Catherine M. was very impressed.

Sharon H. appreciated the tone and thinks this letter does the job. She suggested we get together to discuss the alternatives before "the shoe drops."

Graham Y. loved the lack of defensiveness and would be happy even if there were no changes.

#### **What isn't clear/understandable:**

Catherine asked if our tone makes it seem like we don't want to be part of Seek the City. We should add that we would like to contribute to the initiative and support other parishes, not that we seek to be an independent parish. Catherine continued that we could contribute or mentor other parishes. Geri S. said this won't help to keep us open, though we could offer that *if* we

continue to exist as a site. Colleen added that the purpose of this letter was configured to address specific questions, but that we could add something about wanting the success of the City Church. Pat Ball added that she did *not* get the impression that we wanted to be independent at all.

Rita suggested that page 2, section 1 about “served...preferences” was confusing and awkward. She also suggested adding that we evangelize through the city thru financial *and* volunteer contributions (specifically regarding schools).

**What do you feel needs to be changed or what was missed:**

Kevin O’R. asked that we add that the ArchBalt has a big problem—fewer Catholics, few priests. Also, that there’s a place for smaller churches rather than large lumbering bureaucracy. Fr. Ray reminded that we don’t give recommendations in this document; we focus on cogent reasons for why we remain. Kevin responded that as a smaller site, we are better suited. Fr. Ray suggested that this could be joined with Catherine’s point wanting to help address the issue of revitalization (see above).

Colleen added that we have not addressed our challenges here, but that those inhibitors need to be discussed and faced.

Per Kevin D.’s point, the ADA point should be separated from Vatican II renovation to highlight it further.

Kevin D. and Mark P. suggested that we add we are fully sustainable financially, not just “not a burden to the ArchBalt.”

Colleen added the sidenote that the Catholic Theological Society of America will be using our space in the summer—Al R. suggested we include that in visibility (“nationally recognized”).

Leona G. mentioned Jerome Bird’s book being terribly impressive and wondered if it could be useful now.

Geri F. recounted how Archbishop Borders told Dick Lawrence about how he saw our Word and Sacrament as the future of the church.

Tom Z. pointed out that we are a *metropolitan* parish and wanted to emphasize that. He added that hotel staff sharing our location to guests is a form of evangelization; we do get consistent visitors.

Mary Hennigan suggested via email to change the structure (change the order to 5, 2, 3, 1, and 4.) Geri S. shared that the Executive Committee drafted with the thought that everything comes from liturgy and that is why it was put first. Geri F. liked that what has brought us to St. Vincent is what keeps us here, and that it is first/who we are—Sacrament and service. Al R. and Pat B. agreed wholeheartedly; it manages a main concern Bishop Bruce had about our reputation.

Marianne added that historicity is something many parishes could claim, so it's better to lead with something else.

To Geri D.'s question about what's next, Fr. Ray and Colleen reiterated that to speculate now is not useful, but to be prepared for the next steps which –no matter the decision–will be required.

This letter will be done Thursday by noon and it will then be shared with the entire parish.

Meeting closed with "Our Father".

Meeting adjourned at 7:46pm!

