

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

St. Bridget's Parish Council Meeting was held on Tuesday, September 11, 2018 at 8:00 p.m. The meeting was called to order by Ryan Miller, Chairperson. Fr. Jerry said an opening prayer.

The following is a list of who was present at the meeting:

Linda Romberg, Bob Casey, Debbie Cernohous, Victoria Cobian, Ron Giles, Tony Jilek, Tom Westerhaus, Jesse Gilles, Katy Pupungatoa, Sue Steckbauer, Fr. Jerry Harris, Ryan Miller, Roxanne Lovell-Olson.

**Approval of Minutes and Agenda:** The minutes from the May 8, 2018 Parish Council meeting were reviewed and no changes were needed. Ron Giles made a motion to approve the May 8, 2018 meeting minutes as written. Debbie Cernohous made a second to the motion. It was the unanimous decision of the Parish Council to approve the minutes.

**Pastor/Administrator Report and Discussion Items**

- Welcome New Members – Sue welcomed the new members to Parish Council and everyone introduced themselves.
- Review of By-Laws, Meeting Schedule, Goals for the Year – Sue quickly went thru the By-Laws as information for the new members. A Vice Chairperson was not decided on yet for this meeting year and Sue asked if there were volunteers. Vicki Cobian volunteered and was accepted to the position of Vice Chairperson. Sue went over the Parish Council meeting dates planned for the year and noted that the February 12, 2019 date would need to be changed due to a conflict. Sue stated that one of the main goals for the Parish Council is to have more presence in the parish and activities so parishioners know who we are.
- Clergy Abuse, Diocesan Plan – Fr. Jerry stated he has been wondering what needs to be done on his end to help people through the nationwide clergy abuse problems. He asked for the council members opinions. After discussion, they felt that Fr. Jerry and Bishop Powers have responded appropriately with communication. Fr. Jerry will think about having a meeting/listening session for anyone interested.

**Solar Panel Presentation**

Tony Jilek gave a presentation about St. Bridget's Church utilizing solar panels. The committee working on this is named the Care for Creation Committee. First Congregational Church put solar panels on in 2015 and that gave us the idea to research about it. Tom Westerhaus, Jerry Weller and Tony started looking into solar in January. Because non-profit organizations can't take advantage of tax breaks, Wisconsin power producers have been doing grants. The committee submitted a large grant request but did not get it. In April they applied for a \$10,000 grant from Solar for Good and it was approved. The end of June a grant was awarded from Wisconsin for \$48,382. Also grants from Focus on Energy with River Falls for \$4,000 and Utilities grant for \$2,500. That gave us a total of \$64,882 in grants and then the church received a donation of \$25,000, giving us a total of almost \$90,000. The committee has been working with the company Energy Concepts out of Hudson to see what we would need and the cost. Paul Steiner would be installing the equipment and panels. We would put 148 panels on the church which would produce about 40% of the electricity we use. Our total cost would be about \$164,000 and we have almost \$90,000. First Congregational Church had the panels all paid for before they were installed. We could also have them all paid for by selling a panel to parishioners for \$550. With the sales, grants and donations, we would have enough with a little extra. There are two main items to consider for this project. 1) the cost, installation and savings; 2) we are following Pope Frances' Care for Humanity statement (take care of our environment for now and future generations). There would be a kiosk station put in the church entry under the current message sign to show efficiency and what is being produced for parishioners to see. This isn't the only thing our parish is doing for efficiency as we have made improvements with lighting, etc.

Some additional facts include: the building insurance cost would only be a minimal change; we are asking for dollars again from parishioners but it can be looked at as a maintenance cost; with our flat roof the panels do not fasten down they would just sit on the roof at an angle – there is a way of getting them to stay in place. The new section of church roof has a 15 year warranty and Paul Steiner right now doesn't see any need for repairs and it will probably last longer. It was asked if the solar panels will impact the roof warranty and if the panels have a warranty on them. These are things the committee will check on. The panels don't wear out but the efficiency starts decreasing after 25 or 30 years. If they would need to be replaced in 30 years, we can't predict the future and have no idea what advances will be made by then.

The panels will be just for the church electricity and not for the school. The panels would bring us about \$4,000 yearly savings for energy.

The one grant from Solar for Good has an April 24<sup>th</sup> deadline. We would like to have the solar panels installed by then but it is possible to ask for an extension for the grant. We would like to start selling panels to parishioners between November 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. If it all goes good they could be done by April or May.

Ryan commented that this would be taking care of now – this generation. We need to look at the younger generation like our kids and what this will cost them for upkeep or change and how things should be improved by then. Jesse commented that at that time, they will deliberate the issue like we are now, and don't have to continue with solar power and maybe go with the trend at that time. Ryan commented that it is hard to keep up with technology cost; example look at cell phones and how fast they change and rise in cost. Also is it right to be looking at asking for money again from parishioners. Sue asked if it would be possible to sell a half panel to parishioners instead of the whole thing (so the cost would be less). Tony replied that it was discussed as a possibility. Linda asked what will be the plan if we don't sell enough panels. Tony replied that they only want to start this project if the parish has all of the money needed to pay for it. If the grant monies are accepted, they can be given back if not used. Ryan commented that something to think about is – if solar panels are so good then why don't more businesses and houses have them; maybe enough is not known about them yet.

Tony said they discussed the idea of doing a survey with the parish to get their opinion and if there is enough interest in purchasing a panel. The committee will now meet again and consider if/ how to ask the parish and then will know where to go from the survey. They will follow-up on questions/concerns brought up at this meeting and have more information for the Parish Council at the October or November meeting. At that time, the Parish Council can vote on the matter.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Finance Committee:** Bob Casey stated there was no report for the committee as they did not meet.

**Social Justice Committee:** Katy Pupungatoa reported for the committee. They discussed the racial slurs problem and what role the committee should have in this area. There is \$4,101 available in the tithe fund. There were no formal requests so the committee reviewed their pre-approved tithing list. They recommended approving the following tithe.

Catholic Relief Services to help with Hurricane Florence relief - \$2,000

The remaining funds will be carried over to next month.

**MOTION** – A motion was made by Vicki Cobian to approve the \$2,000 tithe for Catholic Relief Services. Jesse Gilles made a second to the motion. It was the unanimous decision of the Parish Council to approve this motion.

**Strategic Planning Committee:** Jesse Gilles reported they did not have a meeting. They will be looking at their to-do list and decide what items are next to work on.

**Facilities Planning Committee:** Ron Giles reported the committee discussed several projects – 4 capital improvements and 3 repair projects. School parking lot – they have several bids but found out the parking lot area is too small for the equipment that would be necessary to redo the whole lot. The last time improvement was made by patching at a cost of \$3,550. Ron Bjork will contact that person to see who could now do patching or a chip sealant which should last for 5 years. School exterior recaulking on north side – they need a few more bids and hope to have it done by next spring. Boiler in school gym – they are checking on the second boiler (there are two in the gym) which is used as a backup. They are not sure if the second boiler even works so it will be tested and if it does, that is great. If it doesn't work, boiler will not be replaced since we have a main one and there will be more emphasis on the main one to keep it working. Air conditioning at rectory – system has been replaced. Garage door modifications at rectory – frame repairs have been completed. In church – they will put on a door to hide the electrical panel in basement. Church skylight – may need more caulking, Ron will look at it. Brad Pitzen has set up an excel spreadsheet to have a calendar for preventative maintenance and show a plan for everything. The committee also discussed the solar panel project being considered.

**School Committee (Education Committee):** Tom Westerhaus gave a report for the committee. They met on August 14<sup>th</sup> and our school superintendent, Peggy Schoenfuss, was there. Our school principal, Jeanne McCoy, gave her report and talked about hiring numerous new employees and how the parent's volunteering for events are getting burnt out – especially for the Gala. The Signup Genius software is being used for people to sign up their volunteer times and that is going good. All the school maintenance updates went well. There is a Gaga Pit being constructed for the playground. This is a 20 foot circle of polyurethane with a 3 foot tall wall for a game similar to dodgeball. There was discussion about having a salad bar in the lunchroom, which has also been discussed previously. Jeanne has been busy hiring teachers – a couple were hired and then decided to leave the position. The Phy Ed teacher is in place but they still need music and art teachers. They are getting a good team put together but it takes time. This is also a common problem with the public schools. Next Wednesday will be back to school night, the wreath sale will be coming up, and February 23<sup>rd</sup> has been set for the School Gala. Tom handed out a copy of Profile of a Graduate. This is a one page summary of statements that we hope for our St. Bridget's graduates if the family stays with us thru 8<sup>th</sup> grade. It has been used before a few times and now the Marketing Subcommittee will be using it again to promote St. Bridget School. They are also revising the page of Four Great Things About St. Bridget, which was made in 2016. The Diocese had a marketing training day that Hillary, school secretary, attended and came back with a lot of ideas. The school enrollment is down this year at 149 students compared to 155 last year. The pre-K class has 32 and grades K thru 8<sup>th</sup> have anywhere between 11 and 19 students in each class. The top number allowed is 22 students per class. There has been a procedure change with the Diocese doing a different, more thorough background check. The school accreditation process will be starting next year with the self-study.

**Liturgy:** Deb Cernohous gave a report for this committee. They discussed it is going good with the consistency between Fr. Jerry and Fr. Rich so everyone is the same. They need more volunteers and there will be a staff member calling to try to get more people. A new idea is that Barrett will do a training session for people interested to see what the ministry is about and if they want to help.

**Religious Education/Faith Formation Committee:** Vicki Cobian gave a report for the committee. Diane is starting the year with lots of changes for pre-k through 5<sup>th</sup> grades. Each grade will be taught in separate rooms. There will be two volunteer teachers in every room. They still need preschool aids for kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade classes during Sunday mornings. They have not heard any complaints about the increase in class fees. Everyone seems to be happy with the new curriculum – it is user friendly and there are some things that can be done online. Amy will head the middle and high school grades. They would like to present a Living Stations of the Cross program and would also like to have a Christmas program on December 16<sup>th</sup>. Tessa has been discouraged about the attendance of Confirmation students. She will now do a follow-up with the student sponsors and not only the parents.

**Spirituality/Stewardship Committee:** Sue gave the report for Lola Higgins. Jodi has a lot of ideas for growth – Centering Prayer, Labyrinth, Yoga Devotion, Advent Night of Reflection and more. They want to get more people involved and offer a variety of activities. Most activities that require funds will be paid for by the Joany Fund.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Block Party – Fr. Jerry and Sue reminded everyone of the upcoming St. Bridget's Block Party on September 29<sup>th</sup>. Everyone should come for a fun time and socializing. A special event will be the burning of our mortgage. Please pass the word and welcome all.

Discussion Book – Fr. Jerry handed out a small book titled We Lack For Nothing – Five Essentials to Grow the Church. He stated this is an excellent, straight forward easy read with good ideas. Council members should read one short chapter for each month and we will discuss at the monthly meeting.

## **Upcoming Parish Events:**

- September 5 – First day of school
- September 26 – Diocesan Youth Rally (at St. Bridget)
- September 29 – Parish Block Party
- October 9 – First Senior Gathering

The next Parish Council Meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, October 9, 2018. Fr. Jerry ended the meeting with prayer.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Roxanne Lovell-Olson, Recording Secretary