

St. John the Evangelist Parish Council Minutes 4/27/10

The St. John the Evangelist Parish Council met on April 27, 2010, in attendance were Fr. Tom Powers, Sr. Evelyn Ronan and members Norm Boucher, Maryellen Denning, Mimi Eldridge, Mary Gotgart, Mike Holownia, Mike Racette, John Salvati, and Jim Stokes. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.

Opening prayer and reflection was led by Sister Evelyn.

Following the reflection a motion to approve the minutes from the February meeting was offered and the minutes approved with a correction to the date in the first paragraph.

Planning Group Update

Council President Mike Racette reported on his ongoing liaison with the Parish Planning Group. The sense from both the PPG as well as the Council seems to be coalescing on the need to agree upon a set of realistic goals for both the short and long term. Sister Evelyn noted that she had discussed with parish staff the possibility of a May 22 inter council breakfast.

To achieve this end times for a meeting were floated. It was opportune that the PPG was meeting simultaneously across the hall and Mike conducted a set of cross hall negotiations. There was some concern expressed by the PPG regarding their readiness for an early June meeting.

Note: In an email subsequent to our meeting Mike reported that the PPG had agreed that they would have sufficiently completed their work to allow for a June 8, 2010 meeting at 7:30.

Discussion was also held concerning the date of our year end meeting. June 14 was floated as a possibility but this needed to be checked with Father Tom. The next scheduled Parish Council meeting is May 18

Parish Photo Book

Mimi reviewed our decision from the March 16 meeting which was to use the "turn key process with Olin Mills. In further discussions it was understood that the contractor would provide a confidentiality agreement which will be received and reviewed prior to the start of the process.

Selection of Officers

Mike addressed the issue of the selection of officers for the forthcoming year that will begin in September, following the summer recess. Members are to provide Mike with

their thoughts on candidates for Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. Discussions will be held with those surfacing in this process in order to ascertain their interest. Specific instructions for the process, which were adopted in February of 2007 and updated in March of 2009, were circulated.

Regarding new members, nominations will be secured from the parish during September. In early October, selection will be made by random process from those who have surfaced and expressed interest, with new members attending the October meeting.

Eyes and Ears/Round Robin Discussion

Youth Programming

The issues that have surfaced during the recent round robin discussions were taken up. The first of these to be discussed was the concern about youth leadership, and the challenges faced in finding a youth minister, including how to define the task that would be presented to such a person.

It was decided that in the next meeting, the discussion would be opened by invitation to younger folks from the parish to insure their input would be heard.

It was noted that one clear response would organize the effort around social events, ski trips, world youth day, etc. In light of this it was pointed out that each generation is a bit different in terms of their activities and interests.

Another option was suggested that there could be a person who would be woven into the education program, possibly a full time person with additional responsibilities. The present structure of religious education includes 3 staff, including a coordinator. The focus now is primarily on formal education and sacramental preparation, within this focus retreats have been an activity. What seems to be lacking under this structure is the broader social perspective.

Fr. Tom recommended that as we look for models we should take a good look at the model working at St. Joe's in Medford where Fr. John Malloy is at present. This model seems to utilize a part time person woven into the education program who has been able to integrate the social aspect. Fr. Malloy has commented that the leader has a "real grasp of it."

As the discussion continued, Sister Evelyn and Fr. Tom commented jointly that this year's confirmation class of about 60 was a particularly impressive group, their impressions having been gleaned from the interviews that are conducted with each of the students. Both have been particularly stuck by the quality of the group in terms of how they are confronting their beliefs in the face of peer challenges to those beliefs.

Fr. Tom then provided a brief summary of the recent history of youth programming at St. John's. From this, two observations/questions were raised. The first was an observation that it is one thing to design a model and another to find the person who fits that model. In response the comment was made that perhaps the reverse of this might be an opportune alternative method.

The question was to the location of the youth issue within the structure of the archdiocese. The response was that while it was unclear, a call to the Office of Faith Formation would be a good start.

The St. Paul's model that is centered on parish volunteers and music was discussed.

Fr. Tom made it clear that he wishes to have the conversation continue.

Visitation Program

A second discussion item that has emerged, pertains to the parish's visitation program. There are 35 parishioners who are "home bound" in various ways. There are 11 volunteers who bring the Eucharist to these folks and others have family members who are able to transport folks. The majority are at various surrounding health care facilities. Responsibility for Newton Wellesley Hospital is shared by surrounding parishes.

In part the challenge is awareness or creating a method to keep the parish and staff aware of just who is home bound, defining the scope of the issue. In this area, some parishes have developed a volunteer program managed by a volunteer coordinator.

From both this and the youth programming question it is becoming clearer that we may have a need for a number of different parish positions, which in turn present the issue of funding. Fr. Powers pointed out that it is a responsibility of the parish council to determine priorities from among competing interests such as these.

The discussion expanded and the point was made that ever changing demographics are crucial to our ability to clearly define these issues and therefore our responses to them. In addition, another potential staff resource seemed to be identified as a Parish Resource Person. It was pointed out that the entire issue poses a broader question regarding how we conceive of parish, "...is it called to serve the whole person?"

The success of the Arise model, particularly in terms of involving multiple age groups was raised. Pushing the question further, the idea of sharing resources between parishes was put on the table, which would in turn require some amount of letting go of pre conceived territorial issues. A perspective seemed to be forming or at least suggested that it was important for the council to look closely at all the various ministries with a view toward pulling the whole catholic community together.

This led to the comment that we should build a strategy toward the goal of opening toward the array of talent within the parish and utilizing it much like the town utilizes the town talent pool with its Advisory Committee.

Appreciation Weekend

This discussion provided a neat segue into the next agenda item, the upcoming appreciation weekend, May 22-23. The thought was posed "...did this discussion, particularly the last point, suggest a new way of organizing the event, rather than simply saying thank you to parishioners the time certainly seems right to call them forth in a new way into what we have been discussing." Perhaps a "staffed" table could introduce the discussion and center it.

While saying thank you is always good, is this the time to refocus the event making it fresh, breaking the routine. As various possibilities of specific steps or actions within the five Eucharistic celebrations were suggested, the visual way in which the range of parish ministries could be/would be highlighted at that time, as well as, demonstrating the diversity of ages and groups in the parish presented some real opportunities. Sister Evelyn requested that members should email any thoughts or ideas directly to her.

One idea was raised immediately; the notion of a survey of all parishioners requesting their ranking of parish priorities. This could generate a good deal of momentum.

Administrative Matters

Father Tom raised three facilities/maintenance issues that are on the near horizon.

- Need to replace the church boiler
- Deferred maintenance items will need to be addressed in the new fiscal year
- An imaginative solution to the dangerous "cut through" to the Ledyard Street exit from the garage area

Adjournment

With thanks to all the meeting adjourned at 9:07 PM