

St. James Parish Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 11, 2019

Call to Order/Introduction of Those in Attendance:

Elaine Alicna, Barbara Boone, Joey Brown, Geoff Clark, Nicki Clark, Lou Edmondson, Sister Marie Hannah Paula Knowles, Jeff Lanz, Father Martin Linebach, Andy Medders, Jennifer Moran, Melissa Nepi, Beth Nickell, Coty Oropilla, Mimi Pike, Sonya Pruitt, Laura Tabb Reed, Cheri Ellis-Reeves, Stacia Reynolds, Father Casey Sanders, Greg Schraecke, Dean Sears, Dr. Karen Shadle, Jakob Sherrard, Susan VanZant Sherrard, Elizabeth Tabb

For the purposes of conciseness, the Parish Council will be referred to as "SJPC" and St. James Parishioners for Positive Change will be referred to as "SJPPC."

Agenda

- A SJPC member began the meeting by communicating ground rules for the meeting, which included a request of no audio or video recording, a time limit on speaking, no critical comments, and a designation of two people from each group (SJPC and SJPPC) to be responsible for approving minutes. One member from each was named to take minutes. She stated that the SJPC had met three times since receiving the list of concerns from SJPPC and the members were taking concerns very seriously.
- A SJPPC member stated that she felt that the SJPC was putting expectations on the SJPPC that they were not okay with. A SJPPC member agreed. A SJPC member stated that she hoped the meeting could be pleasant, a spirit of collaboration, and that the PC did want to hear voices heard. A SJPPC member stated that the purpose of the SJPPC was not for vindication but to express an indication that something is wrong in the church.
- A SJPPC member expressed a concern about the time limits. The St. James Pastor said he wants to inform and clarify because maybe he hasn't communicated as much as he should have. He restated the goals of the meeting, as stated on the agenda.
- The St. James Pastor then made the following points:
 - One of the most mentioned philosophies is that a church should have the best of the old and the best of the new.
 - There has been no full time Director of Music Ministry. We have a newly appointed Director of Liturgical Ministries.
 - The St. James Pastor expressed to the former Director of Music Ministry that every parish should be able to use Latin in mass when appropriate.. He misunderstood and used it more than when appropriate. The Pastor takes responsibility for that misunderstanding.

- The Knights of Saint John Vianney were created because men were not visible in the church, not participating enough. He said this, along with adding a men's retreat, has been fruitful. The Knights were started as a way to involve middle school boys more and a subtle way to see if they would consider the priesthood. Boys voted for the vestments that they wear. Girls said they wanted to serve with other girls. The Knights have bonded and more want to serve.
- Staffing issues: Former Music Minister left to take care of his mother. Former Youth Minister left because of the salary. An employee at the school went back into banking. Ecuminism: no one is interested. It was realized that the administration committee was having two meetings per month and doing the same thing.
- There has been an effort to create accurate records of regular parishioners and find out why the numbers have gone from 1,700 to 1,360.
- He wants to look at the terms of SJPC members. New folks will come in as others roll off.
- A SJPC member on numbers of parishioners: There were inactive people in the database, especially after 8th graders left. It was updated in Summer 2017. It was recommended to purge every other year. The next one is Summer 2019. January 1, 2017: 107 families who were no longer members of our parish. She said that the SJPC assumed or was told that 45 of the 107 moved to a local church, and the rest moved out of the area. She said that 110 families have moved in.
- SJPPC member: Do we know this because of tithing? Response: 110 families have registered. Some have relocated, some moved in, some came from St. Christopher.
- SJPPC member: The 110 registrants are probably natural due to recent growth of our community.
- SJPC member: What other topics would you like covered?
- SJPPC member: We are representing a large group of our parishioners whose concerns are the same: the use of Latin, for example.
- St. James Associate Pastor: Some are not upset with the Latin. Most are upset about the hemorrhaging of parishioners.
- SJPPC member: The SJPPC submitted the list which is a compilation of parishioners' concerns. After many sent emails and letters with no response, the group formed in an effort to be heard.
- SJPC member: How many have talked to Father Martin individually?
- SJPC member: I'm not sure that's important.
- SJPPC member: My husband and I have spoken with Father Martin and other parish leaders about our concerns.

- SJPPC member: Some are not comfortable speaking to the pastor individually. These are the people we are trying to speak for. Clearly, something is not right because the pews are empty.
- SJPC member: Were any of them involved in the discernment process?
- 2-3 attendees said yes.
- SJPC member: We can meet again on the discernment process [Note of time in the meeting: 7:50 PM]
- SJPPC member: Communication is very closed. There is no two-way communication.
- SJPC member: Help me understand.
- SJPPC member: We could talk all day about incense, music, etc., but our people make our church. We are not listening to our people.
- SJPC member: Were you able to do the survey?
- SJPPC member: No. To reach out takes a lot of continuous concern and effort, not one discernment process that heard from approximately 7% of parishioners in only three main areas. Many areas of concerns were not even discussed in that process. We need to look at multiple vehicles of communication.
- SJPC member: Committees meet once a month. There is an opportunity for people to be part of the committees and get heard. For example, _____ is the go-to person for Parish Life.
- SJPPC member: Some parishioners can't. We are not reaching all parishioners.
- SJPC member: Are you suggesting a survey?
- SJPPC member: Committees meet and address issues in isolation. Information from the SJPC -- parishioners don't get that.
- SJPC member: All the info should be there.
- SJPPC member : We don't get all the info.
- SJPC member: I pledge that all of the SJPC minutes will be on the website. Cheri couldn't get them together in time for tonight.
- SJPPC member : Yes, good. That is a lot for you to have to catch up on and a lot for us to have to read.
- St. James Associate Pastor: Why do you need finance information? Don't you trust the finance committee?
- SJPPC member: The SJPC minutes used to be put in the bulletin. Some parishioners don't have computers.
- SJPC member: You're right. I take responsibility. It was my decision to save trees. Is it important for it to be written out?
- Response (?): Yes. for transparency's sake.
- St. James Associate Pastor: Could we put 400 in the back of the church instead of printing them for the bulletin?

- SJPC member: There is a 12-page bulletin (extra page) the second week of the month.
- SJPPC member : Could it be an insert?
- SJPC member: Yes. Always.
- SJPPC member: The members of the Parish Council: where do they come from?
- St. James Pastor: A selection committee.
- SJPPC member: How does the parish know about nominating people for the Parish Council?
- St. James Pastor: We need to do that.
- SJPC member: I see your point. I take ownership and will let the parish know.
- SJPC member: People in the Parish Council are chairs of various committees.
- SJPPC member: We used to have area representatives who were elected.
- SJPPC member: The purpose of Area Representatives was to gather information and concerns from parishioners in their area and report back to the Parish Council.
- SJPC member: We're used to doing things a certain way. As we grow, we change. We are ever changing and evolving. We have had speakers, retreats, new things. We have more people attending retreats. We have had to close them. We have to reach out to people. You have to ask. It's frustrating. I'm struggling to make things happen -- no volunteers. I can't do more than I can do. Everybody on the Parish Council does [work hard].
- SJPPC member: Changes should be in the minutes.
- SJPC member: I agree. Minutes will be on the website, and have hard copies.
- SJPPC member: Change is difficult. We declare that we are good stewards. We're missing a whole group of people. They are leaving. I have spent three months traveling. I see people who built this church. Why aren't they here? I have seen, heard, or have been told by former parishioners that approximately 105 former members of St. James Church are sitting in the pews of surrounding churches.
- SJPPC member: Why aren't they getting involved? Why aren't they here?
- SJPPC member: Have you discussed the pews being empty? What are we doing about that?
- SJPC member: We have to get to mass early, and I find people are there, standing. How is that being measured?
- SJPPC member: I see all kinds of people who are not here any longer.
- SJPC member: Are you hearing why?
- SJPPC member: Yes. People poured their hearts out to me when I sat at Panera collecting signatures.
- SJPPC member: And there are more who didn't sign. Many are business owners, doctors, attorneys, etc. that may see it as a conflict of interest, and they won't share their names with you.

- SJPC member: Have you heard why?
- SJPPC member: Yes. The treatment of girls, the Knights. It breaks my heart. At St. Clare, people are happy, and it was full.
- SJPC member: The people who left -- did they express their concerns?
- SJPPC member: They said they started coming to the Parish Council in 2015 and felt unheard and that there was no sense talking. If we don't do something, are we good stewards?
- SJPPC member: They felt that the letters fell on deaf ears.
- St. James Pastor: I always respond. [SJPPC member], did I respond to you? Did I listen?
- SJPPC member: You listened about as well as you when we called for a meeting with you.
- St. James Pastor: I think a lack of transparency equals a lack of trust. What else?
- SJPPC member mentioned the unwelcome nature of the church.
- St. James Pastor: Help me understand.
- SJPPC member: They have encountered you at church and you didn't speak. (Then asked about why the hymnals were not in the back of the church.
- St. James Pastor: No specific reason.
- SJPPC member expressed that some people thought the lack of hymnals was because Father Martin didn't like for people to sit back there.
- A SJPC member said it would be an easy fix to order more hymnals.
- A SJPC member suggested that asking why there were no hymnals would have been a better way to handle it.
- SJPPC member: That's why we're here.
- SJPC member: Why don't they just grab a hymnal?
- SJPPC member: That's what they do.
- SJPC member: This is a great opportunity to get better.
- SJPC member: It's unfair to assume the worse. We don't know what we don't know.
- SJPC member: I'm not taking any of this as personal attacks. It's an opportunity to grow.
- SJPPC member: I'd like to talk about the lack of transparency regarding funds. *A summary of Liz's findings is attached.
- SJPC member: Different formats were decided upon.
- SJPPC member: There is a discrepancy in the numbers.
- SJPC member: We don't change numbers.
- SJPPC member: Exactly. Once the annual and monthly and weekly amounts are set, they should not change. But there are discrepancies in the numbers reported.
- St. James Associate Pastor: What's the solution?

- SJPPC member: We need reports. We need them to be timely. We need them to be accurate. We need end of year reports.
- St. James Associate Pastor : It's confusing, I agree.
- SJPPC member: If there is a revision, we need to know. Just let us know.
- A SJPC member mentioned the accountability report.
- SJPPC member: Losing parishioners means a difference in the budget. We need to see an annual goal, monthly and weekly goals, and the amount collected.
- SJPPC member: We used to get a breakdown. We deserve to see that.
- SJPC member: We need to mail the accountability report home, not just put it in the bulletin and online.
- SJPPC member: Turnover is a concern. There are three people in the finance department connected to finance in the office. We should be able to get accurate reports.
- SJPPC member: And there has been turnover of parish council folks.
- St. James Associate Pastor: We should discuss our liturgical concerns since we have Dr. Shadle here.
- SJPPC member: I understand encouraging young men, but what about the girls? Sunday at mass, they (the Knights) didn't have a function. It's more of a distraction. Aren't there other ways to involve them?
- St. James Associate Pastor: The Pope said that serving is the seed of vocations. It teaches the boys solemnity, etc. The March of Life is an example of their presence being important.
- SJPPC member: Why do they have different vestments? Who wears black and who wears red?
- St. James Associate Pastor: Only the Knights wear black and the others wear red.
- Office of Worship Representative: I'd like to give a message from the Office of Worship. You need to have discussions about whether this is right for your church. Mass is the main encounter. If they like the mass, they come back. Your instinct to focus on the liturgy is right. It's subjective, so you have to be charitable.
- SJPPC member: How do we serve everyone? Can we have two of each kind of mass (more contemporary and more traditional) each weekend? Is that an option?
- St. James Pastor: Yes.
- SJPC member: What do you mean?
- SJPPC member: Involve the children. No funeral music.
- St. James Pastor: The challenge is what do I say to people who say, "I don't go to that mass."
- Office of Worship Representative: You have to give up some of what you like. Can we get to a place where we all worship together? I'd caution you against a fragmented parish.

- SJPPC member: I'd like to share a history of why St. James was built the way it was with no statues, clean lines, aisles that point directly at the altar, no altar linens that reach the floor - a very minimalist design in which the Eucharist is the focus. (Passed out five pages from the 1976 St. James history book.) Why make changes? Everyone was content, but people are going, leaving. What was wrong? But now that all of these changes have been made, people are leaving. If both ways of doing things are in keeping with what is appropriate, what was wrong with the way things were before? The changes are driving people away.
- St. James Pastor: We all want the best for people of St. James. I'm as human as you are. I'm aware how different [the previous pastor] and I are. All I can do is pledge . . . I'm not trying to hide anything. I'm trying to steer the ship. I'm sensitive to changes in your lives. I'm trying hard. If I've failed, I apologize. I need your help.
- SJPPC member: All of the members of SJPPC are very involved at Saint James, and we all want the best for the church.
- A SJPC member asked when minutes could be finished. It was decided that we would have them by Monday.
- SJPPC member: suggested knowing the times of the Parish Life committee meetings.
- The St. James Associate Pastor suggested to have the Parish Council in the back of the church after some masses in order to field questions from parishioners.
- SJPPC member: I have a couple other quick questions.. Do we currently have a strategic plan in place?
- SJPC member: No, needs to be updated.
- SJPPC member: What do we have in place as our guiding principles?
- St. James Pastor: Those outlined by the archdiocese.
- SJPPC member: Do we have parish priorities in place, except for the results of the discernment process (3 main areas only)?
- St. James Pastor: No.
- A SJPC member suggested signing up for committees, as did Jennifer Moran at some point in the meeting, pointing out that the Parish Council has another task to complete that they are behind on because of addressing the SJPPC concerns.

Meeting informally adjourned around 9:45 PM, as individuals began to leave.

Addendum

Summary of Budget Issues

- Review of the budget started with May 2016
- First reports were weekly and showed deficits from the end of May to third week in June.
- July 2016 it was announced in bulletin we would go to monthly reports because the numbers were misunderstood.
- No end of year report for 2015-2016
- No July 2016 budget report.
- New format in August annual goal, collections and monthly goal reported. You had to figure deficits yourself.
- No budget information was provided for September.
- Reports in November showed surplus.
- December 2016, only the annual goal and the monthly goal reported. Monthly goal changed with no explanation why. No collections reported for December so you don't know if surplus or deficit.
- No budget information was reported for January 2017.
- February 2017 monthly goal does not match annual goal. Collections were reported and it showed approximately \$48,000 deficit.
- March 2017 – Monthly goal does not match annual goal. Deficit \$77,700.
- April 2017 – Monthly goal does not match annual goal . Deficit of \$31,500.
- May 2017 – No budget information provided.
- June 2017 – End of fiscal year, monthly and annual goals do not match. Deficit of \$52,800.
- No end of year reported provided in bulletin.
- Beginning of July 2017-18 fiscal year, July 2017 – Same annual goal reported as year before. Monthly goal corrected. Deficit \$31,500.
- August 2017 – Only annual goal and monthly goal were reported. No collections reported. Statement in August bulletin reminds us that the Finance Council provides a monthly report which denotes for parishioners the total amount of stewardship pledged for the fiscal year as well as the amount collected each month.
- September 10th 2017 bulletin states August totals would be posted in September 17th bulletin. However, no August budget information was ever posted in September or any month thereafter.
- September 2017 – Annual goal, monthly goal, and amount collected shown. Deficit of \$14,000.
- October 2017 – No budget information provided.
- November 2017 – No budget information provided.

- December 2017 – No budget information provided.
- January 2018 – No budget information provided.
- February 2018 – New format for reporting. YTD totals being used. Annual goal amount changed with no explanation. No monthly goal is listed. Deficit for this eight month period was shown as \$9,531. Previous months reported were larger than this amount.
- March 2018 – Back to weekly reporting. No mention of this change. Discrepancy in amount shown in second week of March compared to report at the end of the month. Second week reported as \$35,978. At end of the month the second week was reported as \$52,257.
- April 2018 – New YTDs posted for nine month period. Deficits ran from \$19,000 to nearly \$80,000 during April.
- May 2018 – Same YTD format. Deficits range from \$5,500 to \$40,000.
- June 2018 – Same YTD format. In June the annual goal is listed as 3,164,942. In February it was listed as 2,109,962. In July 2017 it was listed as 2,707,953. Three different annual goals listed for 2017-2018 fiscal year.
- July 2018 discrepancy in annual goal to weekly goal in YTD totals.
- August – November 2018 YTD totals have a discrepancy between the annual goal and weekly goals. September deficits were not reported. Also amount needed each week not reported.
- December 2018 – Discrepancy in YTD totals. Weekly goal changed.
- January 2019 – Discrepancy in the weekly goal from the one stated earlier in the fiscal year.
- We need reports. We need reports in a timely manner. We need standard form of reporting. If changes are made in the budget, the changes need to be explained. Provide end of year reports.