

**Our Lady on the River Parish Council Minutes  
Monday, September 14, 2009**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Fr. Jim Lopez	David Schwehofer (Pres.)	Stephanie Spencer
Fr. Matt Ellis	Mary Patrick (V-Pres.)	Barbara Persyn
Sr. Mary Ann Ankoviak, CSJ	Catherine Nutter (Sec.)	

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:**

Bev Simon	Charles Ongena
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**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Judy Beauvais	Bobbi Ivan	Mary Endres
Carol Fett		

**OPENING** Fr. Jim opened the meeting in prayer at 6:45.

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS' MINUTES**

- 1. April 20, 2009 Minutes:** Mary Patrick motioned to approve, seconded by Stephanie Spencer, all assented.
- 2. May 18, 2009 Minutes:** Catherine made a correction to Lory McGlennen's title: She is the representative of the Office of Parish Life and Services. Mary motioned to approve, David Schwehofer seconded, all assented.
- 3. June 17, 2009 Minutes:** David motioned to approve, Mary seconded, all assented.

**AUDIENCE ADDRESS** No audience members raised any issues.

**VICARIATE PARISH COUNCIL**

- 1. Bobbi Ivan reported on the May 13, 2009 meeting that she, Paul Ivan, and Catherine Nutter attended:**

- a. Results of AOD Tracking Committee Discussed:** At the March 2009 Vicariate Pastoral Council meeting, an overall summary of commendations and recommendations from the February 24, 2009, meeting of Vicariate representatives with the Archdiocesan Tracking Committee was presented. At May's meeting, the detail information was reviewed and discussed for clarity and accuracy.

This report went through each tracking topic, with commendations on current activities as well as recommendations for further development. In particular, there was specific information concerning our parish, especially in regards to the cluster/merger experience.

Our Parish Council Meetings in May and June addressed the specific topics given in the Tracking Committee's report: for example, the financial issues that our parish has been dealing with as it continues to fully merge and the progress of our three communities forming a single identity.

- b. Help for Those in Need:** A representative from St. Clair County Catholic Social Services distributed brochures and other materials describing the programs and services that are offered. Like many other agencies, CSS has seen an increase in clients seeking help,

many who are unable to pay. CSS is not funded by the AOD and relies on state aid and medical insurance payments to help cover costs.

**c. Obstacles Facing Youth Minister:** Eric Coules reported that continued problems in maintaining campus ministry at SC4 may result in him recommending that focus be shifted to Youth Ministry with a minor outreach to SC4, beginning this fall. SC4 policies make it difficult for many student organizations to function on campus.

**d. Services for People Seeking Employment:** The presentation by Mike Whelan (not Mike Wendlin, as had been previously reported) on the Career Transition Support Ministry program (CTSM) was held on May 12th during a Vicariate staff meeting, instead of during this VPC meeting. Deacon John Connors and others have expressed interest in forming a Career Transition Ministry in our Vicariate based on CTSM. Parishes are encouraged to have representatives attend CTSM training, which will be held within the Vicariate or at least, regionally. CTSM will be coordinated by the AOD but will be available to all area churches. More information on CTSM is available at [ctsmministries.org](http://ctsmministries.org).

**e. Parish Participation in Interfaith Activities:** The AOD wants to know what interfaith and ecumenical activities our parish participates in, hosts, etc. Information on the activity as well as any contact information should be sent to Fr. Nick who then will forward it on to Michael Hovey (AOD).

**f. Reporting of Youth Activities:** Are there any parish outdoor basketball or volleyball courts available in the summer for Youth Ministry activities? Please contact Eric Coules with locations and scheduling information.

## **2. Catherine Nutter reported on the June 10, 2009 meeting that she attended:**

**a. DRE's Offer a Vicariate-wide Fun Night Out:** The DRE's are hosting Ted & Co, a group of actors who offer a very fun and entertaining look at our faith. The show will be offered this fall at two locations: St. Mary Queen of Creation in New Baltimore on Wednesday, October 7<sup>th</sup> and at Port Huron Northern High School on Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup>. These two locations were chosen because they are at the two ends of the vicariate. Admission will be a canned-good and a free-will offering. It is believed that in these hard times we need to offer our people an uplifting night. The DRE's see this as an outreach to the people who are slipping away. All are invited. The sites will supply the drinks. The web site ([www.tedandcompany.com](http://www.tedandcompany.com)) offers more details about the presentation.

### **b. From the Vicar's Report:**

**1) Increase in Participation Fee:** Effective January of 2010, the CYO (Catholic Youth Organization) will be charging each parish a \$10 per child per sporting event participation fee, in addition to former fees and charges. This caused a concern among pastors of parishes with schools, who could face additional fees of thousands of dollars.

**2) Restructuring of Central Services:** Fr. Nick talked about the process that the Central Services Assessment Task Force took to determine its restructuring. They had until August 15th to survey vicars, pastors, newly-ordained, senior priests, deacons and parish staff members about the mission and activity of Central Services, such as: What departments and offices do you regularly interact with? How can

these services be improved to carry out more effectively the mission of Central Services and the mission of the Archbishop "to share Christ in and through the Church"?

**3) School Support Agreement and DRE dues:** Fr. Nick reported that all parishes paid their school support agreement and DRE's dues. One parish still owed their Vicariate Dues as of June 10.

**c. Mission Statement:** VPC representatives worked on a new mission statement. The Roman Catholic Community of the Blue Water Vicariate's new mission statement reads like this:

*We are called by God, led by Jesus Christ, and gifted by the Holy Spirit to encourage and support one another by the responsible sharing of our gifts, talents, and resources; to strengthen the unity of the Church; and to manifest the love of God to all people.*

**3. Bobbi Ivan reported on the September 9, 2009 meeting that she attended:**

**a. Restructuring Central Services:** Archbishop Vigneron has emphasized how vital it is to continue the mission of the Church in our archdiocese, but to do so requires re-evaluating finances in light of the current economy. One of these changes includes restructuring AOD staff to eliminate 70+ positions. All current staff will need to re-apply for their current position, beginning September 21st. If that position has been eliminated, they may apply for another position within the new organization. All staff will be notified whether they will be retained as employees on November 18th.

Fr. Nick expressed concern that the AOD staff changes will result in more tasks assigned to already over-worked pastoral staff, but was assured that this new restructuring was needed, will be more effective, and will enable the continuation of current services and support.

**b. Unified "Together in Faith":** Archbishop Vigneron would like the archdiocese to follow one 'Together in Faith' plan that can be used for all parishes, instead of the current plans that have been 'customized' by individual parishes. This new plan will be rolled out following this fall's Priest Convocation.

**c. Help for Those Seeking Employment:** The AOD continues to work on developing Career Transition Support Ministry program (CTSM) for the archdiocese. Fr. Nick is chairing meetings to organize the program within our vicariate.

**d. Loss of Shelter for Homeless:** Mother Hill's Homeless Shelter has closed in Port Huron. This presents our local area with a need for alternative locations to house the homeless.

**e. Faith Formation Training:** Our vicariate will not be participating in hosting Faith Formation training this year.

**f. Schools in Collaboration:** The "collaboration" between St. Mary School (St. Clair) and Holy Cross Elementary is to be commended and should continue.

Question: what collaboration is going on? Developing plans for growth that doesn't impact the other school? No details were available from Fr. Nick.

*Answer: Fr. Jim clarified that he and Fr. Greg Deters were trying to work together and not "steal" each other's students. Also, they have been discussing how to share resources. Frs. Lopez and Deters will be meeting tomorrow to continue to share ideas of how they can better their schools by possibly working together.*

**g. Cluster Partners—for Every Parish:** All parishes are being asked to determine their cluster partner(s) within the vicariate.

Question: Who would be the most logical parish partner for Our Lady on the River?

*Answer: Fr. Jim could not offer an answer at this time except to say that it was his understanding that our parish was exempt from such an arrangement.*

Once approved, the complete minutes are available on the Vicariate website, <http://www.bluewatervicariate.org/>

## **PASTOR'S REPORT**

**1. Dealing with the Deficit:** The staff and the Transitional Team (Mary Patrick, Tony Antkowiak, Bill Roland, and Bob Goldenbogen) have had to make budget cuts.

The most painfully difficult decision that the committee made was the decision to lay off Daniel Susan. Consequently, Beatrice Wassenberg now has the responsibility of being the music minister for the entire parish.

Any additional musicians needed to provide music for the Masses will receive stipends, but none will be hired for at least one year. (For example, the organist at St. Mark will receive stipends but will not be a hired employee.) In addition, no musician can play as a "Good Will Gesture"—all playing must be compensated.

*David asked if Fr. Jim planned on hiring someone after a year. Fr. Jim said we would see if there was a need. If anyone else were to be hired, there would still be only one music minister in charge of the entire parish.*

**2. Change in Mass Schedule:** The Mass schedule will be adjusted so that the music minister can cover all the Masses at the Marine City and Algonac sites, allowing enough time in between the Masses for the music minister and singers to prepare spiritually and physically for each Mass. Input from the congregation will be asked for and taken into consideration as the new schedule is formed.

**3. Stewardship Committee:** The Stewardship Committee will be meeting soon. Members who have left will be replaced with new members from the Harsens Island site so that all three sites have adequate representation.

**4. Additional Items Concerning Deficit:** There will be some (minor) lay-offs and some early retirements (maintenance worker—Jeff, and the housekeeper—Kate). The deficit is slowly being lowered.

**COMMISSION REPORTS** No reports were given at this time.

*Bobbi Ivan read off an old agenda that reports had previously been assigned to the following months: Christian Service (Nov., Feb., May); Education (Oct., Jan., April); Stewardship and Worship (allowable any month).*

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**1. Financial Report Summary:** Judy Beauvais reported on the Parish's budget. She passed out three documents: *Financial Summary for 2007-08, Projected Budget for 2008-09, and Financial Summary for 2008-09.*

The offertory collection in 2007-08 was almost \$907,000; in 2008-09 it was \$844,000. This is a significant drop.

To summarize the reports, the expenditures of the parish are greater than its income. Bobbi Ivan asked if the reports would be shared with the public; Judy answered that they needed to be seen by the Parish Council and Stewardship Committee first, but then they could be published. Mary Patrick suggested a pie-chart to illustrate simply for people that our expenses outweigh our income.

Our weekly bulletin reports the weekly expenses and the weekly income. Judy commented that she would like to add a Year-to-Date Short column so parishioners can see how the deficit adds up every week.

## **NEW BUSINESS/MEMBER REPORTS**

**1. Second Annual Vocations Convocation:** Catherine Nutter announced that she and Carol Fett would be going to the seminary this weekend for the Vocations Convocation. Sr. Mary Ann added that Mr. and Mrs. LaVere would also be attending.

**2. Concern of Flu:** Mary Patrick spoke on behalf of a parishioner who wondered if the precious blood would be discontinued due to a fear of the passing the flu virus.

*Fr. Jim said the precious blood would continue to be distributed. We believe in Christ's healing nature. No person has to take the precious blood.*

**3. Holy Cross Steps:** David spoke on behalf of a parishioner wondering about the condition of front steps at Holy Cross Church.

*Fr. Jim said they would be repaired in two weeks.*

**4. Fees for Services:** Bobbi Ivan spoke on behalf of a representative of St. Augustine parish inquiring about the payment of fees that our parish charges for use of the Church and other facilities for weddings, etc. The representative said their parish was having problems with people "trashing" their church when they use it. Should she ask Pam?

*Fr. Jim said that she can call Pam, but we charge a \$100 deposit to use our Church. He said we haven't problems with people abusing our sites.*

**5. St. Mark Cleaning:** Barbara Persyn asked if Mike Rector had talked to Fr. Jim about hiring someone to clean St. Mark.

*Fr. Jim said he had spoken with Mike and it's on the list of things to do.*

**6. St. Mark Choir Area:** Barbara asked Fr. Jim if Karen had spoken to him about reconfiguring the choir area.

*Fr. Jim said they would have to take a look at the situation and see what they can do. Fr. Jim said it's important for Karen to be able to see the priest for visual cues concerning the music.*

**SELECTION OF OFFICERS** After some discussion, the following was decided:

David Schwehofer is President.  
Mary Patrick is Vice-President.  
Catherine Nutter remains Secretary.

**CONCLUDING PRAYER** At 8:10, Mary Endres read from *Galatians*:

*You are God's chosen race!  
His Saints! He loves you!  
And you should be clothed  
in sincere compassion, in kindness,  
in humility, gentleness, in patience.*

Respectfully submitted,  
Catherine Nutter  
Parish Council Secretary

**NEXT MEETING: October 12, 2009  
6:30 p.m. at St. Catherine Church  
in the chapel area.**

**Expected Commission Reports:  
Education, Stewardship, Worship**