St. Michael Parish Council Minutes

Monday, March 28, 2016

**Members Present:** Karen Basham, Leslye Biller, Jay Blair, Chris Bonbright, Helen Bryant, Stacy Davis, Charles Edelen, Bob Goodin, Kathy Goodin, Karen Karem, Kevin Popp, Susan Robison, Jim Smith , Mary Rose Stephenson, Fr. Dick Sullivan

**Members Absent:** Gary Grieshaber, Denise Hampton, Angela Kimbel, Brenda Rickert, Stacy Tackett, Lisa Wilhelmus

**Minutes Secretary:** Teresa Watson

**Opening Prayer:** Bob Goodin

**Agenda:** Bob Goodin introduced the evening as a special meeting to focus on creating a one year strategic plan to encourage and facilitate Participation and Accountability among the members of St. Michael Parish. He requested that for each goal selected there be a measurement tool assigned.

In the weeks since the February meeting, parish council members have sent their ideas, suggestions, and recommendations to Jim Smith who has organized and compiled them for this meeting. Jim’s report, PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY STRATEGIC PLANNING, served as the meeting’s agenda.

**Discussion:** Jim’s report contained 60 bullet points in three categories: Bridging Gaps, Stewardship, and School Tuition Rates. What follows is a brief summary of some of the particular items within each category that were discussed.

**Bridging Gaps:**

* The Parish Council is concerned with bridging gaps between various groups at St. Michael - School, Parish, Parish Council, and Staff – and finding ways to diminish a perception of compartmentalization and restore a sense of community.
  + A suggestion was made to meet with other groups once a quarter to compare notes (this is what we are talking about; what are you talking about?). This could contribute toward building a parish community.
  + The need to better communicate as a parish family and spend time getting to know others was discussed.
* The Parish Council is the one place where all the groups meet, so this is a great place to start building bonds. It can all trickle down from here.

**School Tuition Rates:**

* Concern was expressed regarding school families who receive a tuition break but do not contribute to the support of the parish through tithing and/or volunteering.
  + Could/should there be a different tuition rate for those families who are not engaged and active in the parish?
  + It was pointed out that we have no data on those who participate and those who don’t. Is there a way to track this? Should this be tracked? It was agreed that this is a sensitive area and needs to be addressed in a positive way.
  + In fairness, if a tracking method is established, should it extend to non-school families?
  + Chris Bonbright stated that the Archdiocese has set some guidelines and limitations in this area.
  + Several members shared stories of participation requirements they experienced when joining St. Michael’s and other parishes.

**Stewardship:**

* Concern was expressed over those who sign up to volunteer and then never receive a follow-up call. Could this be one reason some parishioners are not volunteering?
  + It was pointed out that accountability must also apply to committee chairs who receive these signups, though it was recognized that making these contacts can be very difficult and time-consuming.
* The board was cautioned to beware of categorizing a lack of participation as a “head” problem and encouraged to consider it as a “heart” problem instead.
  + Can we determine why some don’t want to get involved?
  + Fr. Dick estimated past parish experiences averaged less than 50% participation in both volunteerism and financial support.
  + Currently, Fr. Dick sends an annual letter to school families asking for their involvement, stating that St. Michael is not just a school; the school is a ministry of the parish.
  + A one-on-one meeting with new parishioners and/or current non-participating members was suggested to state the expectations for parishioners clearly.
    - Fr. Dick stated that this is covered at the New Member Registration Luncheon each month.
    - Chris suggested that a Parish Council member could make that part of the presentation at the lunches sharing their own story and their affection for St. Michael Parish. This could foster a friendly connection with new members while expressing expectations.
    - A similar presentation could be made to school groups.
    - Fr. Dick suggested replacing the word “expectations” with more of a “how would you like to participate?” approach. Asking questions like, “How would you like to be involved…?” “What are your interests?” “What are your talents?” can be more encouraging to new members.
    - Parish Council members were asked to bring suggestions to the April meeting for new wording to use in these presentations.
    - Father also suggested distributing a list of Parish Council members at each New Member Registration Luncheon and ask new members to call a Parish Council member to schedule a one-on-one meeting.
  + Father pointed out that we are still in need of a Stewardship Chair, a very important position to fill.
    - He confirmed that currently there are no funds in the budget to make this a paid position, but he is considering ways some of the tasks of the Stewardship Chair might be covered by one or more of the existing staff.
  + Suggestions were made for ways to educate parishioners on the need and importance of volunteerism:
    - Acknowledge volunteers before mass each week by highlighting those involved in a particular recent event and asking them to stand for applause.
    - This positive recognition will celebrate current volunteers and encourage others to get involved. It also lets the parish know that an event doesn’t just happen – it takes a lot of people to make it happen.
    - Beware of the language being used.
      * It was told that Fr. Nick Rice stated he never uses the term “volunteer” because it makes people think they have choice. He asks instead: How do you plan to participate?
      * Fr. Dick mentioned the Archdiocese has begun to promote the term “Free Will Offering” instead of Stewardship.

**Wrap-up:** Jim Smith made three motions for steps the Parish Council can begin right away. All three motions were seconded and passed. They are:

Motion #1: To station Parish Council members, with name tags, in the church vestibule and at all entrances before each weekend mass to meet and greet parishioners and be available to answer questions and accept suggestions.

Susan Robison agreed to prepare a binder for members to sign each time they participate before weekend masses. It will be kept in the information booth beginning this Saturday, April 2nd. Susan will collect these pages each month and bring them to the Parish Council meetings.

Members were encouraged to be outgoing and approach others as well as being available to be approached. The interactions with parishioners can help the Parish Council become more in tune with what the parish wants, and can help parishioners put a face to the Parish Council.

Bob Goodin suggested placing a group picture of the Parish Council members at each of the four church entrances to help parishioners identify committee members.

Motion #2: To publish the names and contact information for all Parish Council members and all committee chairpersons on monthly basis.

This will give parishioners who signed a volunteer form but did not receive a follow-up call the info they need to contact the committee chair themselves.

This info can be distributed as a bulletin insert. It will also be listed in the 2016 version of the St. Michael Guide Book & Directory which is now being updated.

Brenda Rickert will be asked to compile the list of committee chairpersons, and Bob Goodin will submit the list of Parish Council members.

Motion #3: To publicize every 3rd Parish Council meeting as a public/open meeting, inviting the whole community to attend.

The invitation can be placed in a variety of communications, and it will include an invitation to address the board for those interested. The wording concerning addressing the board should be taken directly from the Parish Council Constitution since it explains the requirement for prior notification.

The first 15 minutes of these public meetings will be set aside for any visitors wanting to speak.

These quarterly meetings will be held in a larger space to accommodate visitors.

**Conclusion:** Bob encouraged all the members to keep in mind that we will not change the entire parish, but we may change 30 families in the coming year. We may change 45 families the year after that, and if we can keep that momentum going, it will mean a lot. But, for now, our job is to make a start.

**Next Meeting:** April 25. This meeting **WILL** be publicized as a public meeting.

Agenda Item: Parish Council seats to be filled. (Bob will send out a list of members with their term limits, so it can be determined how many replacements will be needed.)