



## Prairie Catholic Parishes

**St. Gabriel Archangel**

506 N. Beaumont Rd.

**St. John Nepomuc**

710 S. Wacouta Ave.

Prairie du Chien, WI 53821


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## Current Council Minutes and Agendas

### JOINT PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

### MINUTES

FEBRUARY 14, 2008

**Present:** Joe Faust, Mark Forsythe, Jim McGrath, Mike Mezera, Steve Schwager, Mike Steiner, Pat Mercaitis, Debbie Morovits, Patrick Nolan, Holly Nicholson, Carl Orr, Father Boschert

**Excused:** Norma Lochner, Keith Neisius

Meeting was called to order with a prayer and roll call was taken, no minutes from the previous month. Additions to the revised agenda were Web Site, and Scrip

Four questions were added to the agenda the first one addressed Father and asked him to give us his vision and thoughts on the school and parishes right now and what he sees for the future.

Father feels we are progressing very positive with the special planning committee and we are looking into the strengths and weaknesses of the school and will have a list of concrete things that will need to be considered to move forward with the next phase of what's happening at the school. He doesn't want to put a deadline on the project until that committee has met with all the councils. We are still looking at dwindling population which is a key factor in what will be done. We need a certain number enrolled to maintain everything at the current level. The Bishop has addressed the issue and is not looking to change anything unless the parishioners are asking this to be done, he states that when a new Pastor comes it maybe addressed at that time but all will remain the same for now. Father stated that at some point the vast majority will go along with whatever that decision is and he will not push the school situation at this time. He may talk to the Provincial and the Bishop about what he feels is best for himself and reflect on that.

When asked about what process occurs when there is a job position available, he stated that himself, Paula and and Kathryn, the school principal, are currently screening and hiring, a suggestion was made that a personnel committee be appointed to help with the process to take some of the burden off the three of them and people that have experience in the various fields could be on this committee along with a job description and what was expected, Father was agreeable to this. A comment was made that at times we maybe sheltering people for fear of how they may react if told certain jobs were not being done correctly even though they are being done by volunteers but maybe if Father is afraid to approach them someone from the personnel committee could do this.

Can a summary of the financial report be given to the education committee and the Pastoral

council and the answer was yes he will have that done. It was felt by this council in order to have a grasp of what our expenses we need to see a summary of that report.

Father feels the purpose of the Pastoral Council is to be a voice to him from the parishioners, not to make financial decisions but to be the vision both spiritually and a guiding group that can focus on what the school and parish need. He would like to hear our weaknesses and strengths and what concerns need to be addressed from the parish point of view.

When asked about parishioners approaching with questions the hiring of Robert Dowd was a lengthy discussion. The use of the truck, the insurance coverage with his background, what made the 3 hiring persons decide this was best for the parish. Father knew of his background, finally heard from the Diocesan lawyer about the risk, but feels this man has saved the parishes a substantial amount of money already and feels he is entitled to a second chance to prove he can be trusted. If anyone approaches any of us about this matter they are to be sent to Father to address it. Mike Steiner voiced his opinion as did others and we will leave with Father being the responsible person in charge to watch over him. At that time Mike Steiner stepped down from the Pastoral Council. It is our hopes that Father will meet with Mike and express that even though they disagree on this matter Mike is an important parishioner that has done many generous things for the parishes and would want him to please continue to do so. Ed Steger's name was also brought up at this time and Father says he has already spoken with Ed.

A few things were brought up about the financial report. We will put the Pre-K and K tuition changes on our next agenda.

Patrick spoke about the Web sight and it is up and visible for the councils, Father agreed to have a password protected section for all council meetings that Patrick can get from the different minute takers. Comments from the Council who have been on the sight are very impressed and thank Patrick for all his extra work.

The Scrip program seems to be having a problem keeping Walmart cards and part of the issue is that some of the national cards are in abundance leaving to much money in stock tied up with those cards. It was suggested to put it in the bulletin if people would please try and buy these up then we can get more of the area cards that people use more often. Walmart, Kwik Trip and Dick's Piggly Wiggly seem to be the most popular. Also if the funds does not have enough money to purchase a larger amount of these local cards so as not to loose out on sales can they be purchased by non Scrip money to keep those cards more available till the money is replenished? Father said yes the Jesuits or the Parish could lend the money.

Steve wanted it mentioned that two very positive things that he feels the Parish Council has been a part of that was our focus was the Youth Ministry program and the Web sight, two new excellent examples of new beginnings to our Parishes.

In order to read the minutes of the other two council meeting we will change our meetings to the 3rd Thursday of the month except for March because of Holy Thursday.

Next meeting will be Thursday March 27, 7:00 at St. Johns Church Hall.

Meeting closed with a prayer.

Debbie Morovits

## **Parish Council Minutes from the March 27, 2008 Meeting**

The following members were present: Pat Nolan, Steve Schwager, Keith Neisius, Joe Faust, Jim McGrath, Pat Mercatis, Carl Orr, Mike Mezera, Mark Forsythe, Holly Nicholson, and Fr. Boschert. (Visitor) – Tom Farrell

The meeting began with prayer and roll call. The minutes from the February meeting were approved. Pat Nolan added to the agenda – creation of Web log and Joe Faust added to the agenda – School board discussion.

Everyone was okay with Debbie's decision to step down from the Parish Council.

A Discussion of the e-mail from "Dar" concerning holiday Mass times.

Pat Nolan explained that a web log would be a way for parishioners to communicate with council members. Posts can be made back and forth. This could make everyone feel more connected – positive comments, no personal, no negative comments – will be moderated by Pat. Message of congratulations would allow names. Pat would need help with Finance & Education committees – need authors to answer posts. Father will look over posts, come up with responses and email to Pat. Father will get booklets for Pat of the by-laws of the three councils for Pat to post on website.

A report of the Finance Council meeting was given. Both parishes are in the black. Mark Forsythe brought up "text book drive." This was done 7-10 years ago and was very successful.

A report was given on the new tuition rates. Also discussed Scrip cards – Wal-Mart, Kwik Trip – have more readily available.

A report of the Strategic planning committee was given – Steve S. Vision, mission, marketing & finance plans. SWOT analysis – strength, weaknesses, opportunities. Clem Wachuta came in to make suggestions – brochures, radio, newspaper. He will get it together and then have all three councils meet again to give or get input. Maybe get document to members ahead of time. They will discuss facilities at the next few meetings. Steve read Vision Statement and Mission Statement. They've been working out marketing plan.

The council elections were discussed. We need 4 for St. Gabriel's and 6 from St. John's to run.

Discussion of a 5 member school board. They would hear grievances; take some slack off Father and Paula, Board of Education so people feel they have somewhere to go. Father will talk to the diocese. School board would fit between principal and pastor.

Community Center/gym discussion was held. Steve talked about Strategic committee discussing it. Even though we may keep both buildings open for now. Maybe best to build at North Campus. Joe said we need positive - textbooks, gym, etc. Need a direction for all to move forward.

A discussion was held regarding other parishes subsidizing our school to send their kids to Prairie Catholic. Joe suggested "principal's corner" in the bulletin – positive things going on at our school.

## **Minutes from the November 17, 2008 meeting of the Pastoral Council, Finance Council, and Education Committee**

Present for the meeting: Deb Trautsch, Holly Nicholson, Rochelle Neisius, Rochelle Fulcher, Jim McGrath, Phil Mezera, Jim Welsch, Brad Linder, Jerry Wachuta, Laurie Pedretti, Kathy Schneider, Father Wolf, Father Jerome, Father Thome, Kathleen Schwartz, and Paula Check

Absent: Joe Faust, Mark Forsythe, Mike Mezera, Steve Schwager, Pat Mercaitis, Keith Neisius, Patrick Nolan, Carl Orr, Lucy Cornford, Mark DuCharme, Mike Garrity, Mark Mara, Tom Stram, Dixie Jackson, Tim Steger

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Father Wolf opened the meeting with a prayer.

### **Ways to Serve the Lord**

Father Jerome explained that he placed the *Ways to Serve the Lord* handout in the pews at church to encourage volunteerism. He is hoping that everyone on these three councils will step up and volunteer their services to the Lord as well.

### **Strategic Planning**

Mr. Jerry Wachuta talked about the Strategic Plan that members from the councils and a select few parishioners helped to write. Some members expressed that they had not seen the plan until tonight. Members from each committee were supposed to have taken the draft back to their respective committee's back in April. The marketing committee has done some nice things because of this handout. They have developed the website which all agreed is a great website. The committee also raised some funds for Share & Care and marketed our schools. It was decided that the plan is well done, but it is only effective if we move forward and utilize it.

Four important decisions were made at the meeting tonight.

1. We need to look to the future from this day forward. No word of closing a school should be spoken. Father Jerome and Father Thome are both of the minds that we are not going to close a school and in fact, hope to build up in the future. The good news should be spread.
2. To finish the marketing plan, we need to get contractors to walk through all our buildings and give a rough estimate of the capital expenditures that may arise in the next 10 years. We are looking at big items that will be costly like boilers, roofs, etc. Mr. Jim Welsch volunteered to be the lead on this task. Within 2 weeks he will line up a group of contractors that will each take a building or two. By the new year we hope to have rough estimates.
3. We should have the new brochure that the marketing committee is developing ready to go within 3 weeks. Mrs. Pedretti will call Mrs. Manganiello tomorrow and inform her of the urgency to proceed quickly.

4. The Strategic Plan will be discussed at the Pastoral Council, Finance Council, and Education Committee meetings that will be held the first part of December. Everyone should read it over before your respective meetings and come with suggestions to improve the draft or to give your approval. If all agree that the document looks good, we can proceed with efforts to market and promote.

Mr. Jim Welsch expressed concern that Prairie Catholic Schools do not teach the Catholic Voting Guide and that some teachers are actually teaching against the guide. Principal Schwartz will address this with each teacher and at her staff meeting. Mr. Welsch is trying to get a donor to purchase the *Faith & Life Series* for our schools. Arch Bishop Burke has recommended it also.

Mrs. Schwartz thanked everyone for attending.

Father Wolf gave a nice closing prayer and the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Next meeting dates:

Education Committee - Thursday, Dec. 4, at 7:00 p.m. at St. John's Church Hall  
Finance Council – Monday, Dec. 8, 7:00 p.m. at St. John's Church Hall  
Parish Council – Thursday, Dec. 11, 7:00 p.m. at St. John's Church Hall

Respectfully submitted in faith,

Paula Check  
Finance Council Secretary

## Parish Council Minutes from the December 11, 2008 Meeting

The following members were present: Father Jerome, Mark Forsythe, Mike Mezera, Joe Faust, Pat Mercaitis, Keith Neisius, Holly Nicholson, Patrick Nolan and Jim McGrath

The meeting began with prayer and roll call. Steve Schwager read minutes.

Holly Nicholson was nominated to be Parish Council Secretary. Steve Schwager was nominated to chair this meeting.

Everyone was okay with Carl Orr's decision to step down from the Parish Council.

The Strategic plan was discussed. Talked about the brochure needing a new picture (without the girl looking back). It was noticed that the mission statement was shortened in the brochure. This was put in as a "rough draft" by Stacy Manginello. Also pointed out was that the "blue box" information only needs to be on the brochure only once. The corrections will be made before the final brochure is distributed.

Patrick Nolan needs documents about our various groups and organizations from different areas of the church and school before the release of the website: i.e.: Daycare, Knights of Columbus, Home and School, ~~PCS Athletics~~, Family Life Committee, Holy Name, etc. Information about the group, its role, and activities are needed. Various council members discussed who to contact for these "write-ups" and will have these people get information to Patrick.

Stacy Manginello is working on a new Crest/Motto.

Discussed \$25 promotional scrip drawing per month to encourage alumni to register on our website. This would create a database for mass mailings for inquiring about donations and activities and upcoming events. Did not discuss who would pay out the \$25 scrip.

Building check: It was discussed at the November meeting that Jim Welsh was going to get a few people to do a walk-through of the seven buildings to see what needed to be done. Mark Forsythe will contact Jim to see if this was done and get the list of the "big-ticket" items that will need to be fixed in the next 10 years.

A discussion about increasing enrollment: Brochures could be put in back of area churches to spark people's interest, contact the school and then receive a folder with more detailed information. Father Jerome suggested starting with a meeting of all CCD parents and asking why their kids aren't going to Prairie Catholic. This would give us insight as to what the majority reason is; financial, academic or things we don't offer that the public school does.

Patrick suggested that Father Jerome and Father Thome approach area catholic churches to subsidize their student to come to our school and they would get parishioner rates since we are the only catholic school in our deanery.

Kay and Doug Tesar asked about renting St. Gabriel's school kitchen. We need to have more information before we make a decision if it would be allowed or not and what the terms and conditions would be. Holly Nicholson and Mark Forsythe will ask Ed Steger to come along some time before the next meeting to speak with Kay Tesar to get more information.

Father Jerome decided to change morning mass times after the first of the year: No 6:45 am mass anymore. Monday-5:15pm mass at St. John's (no morning mass). Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:30 am and 5:15 at St. John's and Wednesdays and Fridays 8:30am and 5:10pm mass at St. Gabriel's. Discussed having adoration the first Sunday of the month in Prairie du Chien after 10:00 mass until noon and after 8:00 am mass at St. Gabriel's. Last Sunday of the month in Wauzeka.

Corpus Christie Procession is set for June <sup>14</sup>~~25~~, 2009. The procession will go from St. John's after 10:00 mass to St. Gabriel's. There will be four stops. All area catholic churches will be invited. Will need several committees for organizing this event. The Bishop will be here. Will also need to check with the city about blocking streets and/or stopping traffic. Brochures will be printed. The Diocese will further advise.

Maintenance Committee: Complaints have come up from some teachers and staff about Rob delaying projects and not doing his job well. Father Jerome feels he needs strong support/supervision. Paula Check is to come up with his job description. Council members suggested names for Father Jerome to contact to be on a Maintenance Committee. Intent for this committee is to advise a "to-do" list and prioritize it. Father Jerome will have final decision. Names suggested: Doug & Steve Rickleff, Ed Steger, Tom Steiner, Mike Mezera, Ken Hess, Mike Trautsch and Terry Meyer. Father Jerome will ask/appoint four people.

Concluded with prayer.

Next Meeting January 15, 2009. 7:00pm

Future of Prairie Catholic School:

Granted it would be more beneficial to the students of the middle school to retain the present arrangement but certain factors have developed which must be considered;

PROS for consolidating the two facilities into one

--from 2002 until the present the percentage of the parish subsidies toward the overall school budget has declined from over 70% to 49%; each year for the past two years the two parishes have wound up the fiscal year in the black after St. John's had had to borrow \$40,000 from the diocese in 2003/04 and St. Gabriel's used up all its savings in the same fiscal year. In the past two years, the school has had one less teacher than in the previous year which has allowed the parishes to reduce its annual subsidy amount and thereby wind up in the black.

--the school population has fallen from a high of 365 in 1996 to 245 in 2003/4. This caused us to delay the building of a new gym for the middle school until we found out where the middle school would be located for the future. Even with some success in attracting new students in the past few years, each year has still found us with a lower number than in the previous year because we continue to graduate classes in the 30s and get in new first grades in the 20s. This present school year we have 226 students and it's time to ascertain whether we can accommodate them all in one facility at the north campus or not.

--it would be hoped that we would build a new gym facility at whatever location the middle school winds up. If south campus, we would look into forgetting the proposed gathering space and making do with just a gym. (The earlier effort to raise money for gym and gathering space wound up with an inadequate amount of money raised.) At the north campus we would build two or three additional classrooms on to the gym facility. Heating and lighting would be balanced out in regard to either facility.

--if everything moved to north campus, we would have need of 1 less school secretary, 1 less part-time custodian, and 1 or 2 less teachers on the middle school faculty

and would experience a subsequent reduction in payroll tax. The present south campus facility would see a reduced cost in heating and lighting as the building would not be used as much as presently. A rough estimate shows us reducing overall costs some \$120,000 at least.

--middle-school would still be able to be departmentalized but with fewer teachers since class sizes would seemingly allow each year to remain in 1 class section rather than being split into 2 for each grade level.

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--it was felt that it would be advantageous to keep the elementary and middle school populations separated as much as possible, it would be possible to have one section on the top floor of the school with the 5<sup>th</sup> grade being joined to the middle school level and the lower grades on the middle floor. Likewise the two sections could have separated times for eating lunch in the cafeteria, going to weekday Masses on separate days of the week as they presently do which means that all Masses at St. John's during the week would be at 6:45AM and all at St. Gabriel's would be at 8:30AM. Likewise recess times could be staggered for the two divisions.

--with everyone at north campus it would allow the principal to be located in one building only throughout each school day; it would no longer be necessary to transport the hot lunch each day to the south campus which would make matters easier for the custodial staff and would allow us to get by without the delivery van and its accompanying costs for insurance and upkeep.

--older students would be present for traffic guard duty

--parents would only have to deliver children to 1 rather than 2 drop off points

CONS against merging the two facilities into one:

--quality of middle school program necessarily affected negatively?

--how determine which teachers and staff to let go of?

--class sizes would become larger per section, thus affecting individual attention and having the sections more homogeneous

--how use the south campus facility to the best possible potential or better to try to sell it?

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