

Elmira Planning Team
Meeting Minutes
December 14, 2016

Present: Philomena Mrkus, Ed Looney, Fr. John DeSocio, Mike Smith, Mary Montanarella, Deacon Paul Sartori, Karen Rinefierd, Armand Fusco, Bill McCarthy, Melissa Kalec, Jeff Schmidt, David Quinn, Fr. Rick Farrell, Tom Kubus

Excused: Fr. Scott Kubinski, Lorie Brink, Amy Finnerty

<u>Action Items</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>By When</u>
• Ensure each church is counting Mass attendance weekly	Pastors	Ongoing
• Bulletin Articles	Karen	Ongoing
• Create a survey for ministerial staff to assess the ministries	Karen	Done
• Each parish's finance council and pastoral council to compile advantages and disadvantages of each model of possible priest appointment/parish configuration	Pastors, parish representatives	Done
• Invite Deacons to be involved on the Planning Team	Fr. Rick	Done
• Ask Kelly to add Prayer for Wisdom to the bulletin	Karen	Done
• Send out maps of where parishioners live	Karen	Done
• Enter all hard copy surveys into Survey Monkey	Each parish	Done
• Send minutes from November pastoral/finance council meetings to Karen	Each parish	Done
• Finish Homework that went out 10/31	All	Done
• Collect Mass data from Anne or Kelly	Tom	Done
• Benchmark other parishes	Tom	1/4/17
<u>New Items from December Meeting</u>		
• Send Mass Schedule possibilities to Karen	All	1/4/17
• Invite Chuck Nocera of Catholic Charities to planning team meetings and provide him with agendas	Armand	
• Re-open the staff ministry assessment survey so additional staff members can complete	Karen	ASAP
• Contact individual staff members to create job descriptions indicating what they actually do	Karen	
• Ensure admin staff had opportunity to take staff survey	Dave	ASAP
• Identify what spaces we need to serve the Elmira community, prioritize expected salability of all buildings other than churches, develop scenarios for building usage connected to each building being sold	Dave, Jeff, Armand	February/ March
• Request "Senior Priest" status	Fr. John	1/1/17
• Draft letter from planning team to Bishop	Karen	1/4/17
• Request Bishop to approve clustering and start of merger process	Planning team	1/17
• Measure pews for seating capacity	Mary, Armand	2/1/16

Meeting Open: 7:03 pm

Opening Prayer: Fr. John DeSocio

Welcome to Deacon Paul Sartori and introductions

Housekeeping:

- Next Meetings:
 - Wednesday, January 11, 2017.
 - Wednesday, February 15.
 - Tuesday, March 21.

- Group agreed to request from Chuck Nocera, Executive Director of Catholic Charities, to observe our meetings in order to further collaboration between the parishes and Catholic Charities. Armand will be the communications link to him.

- Review of updated project management/timeline worksheet
 - Determining parish configuration/one pastor vs. two**
 - The Bishop can cluster parishes without going through a formal consultation process. Merging will require parishioner education/input, consultation from each parish's finance and pastoral councils, and the Bishop's consultation of the Presbyteral Council so this will happen later.
 - Determine sacramental and ministerial responsibilities**
 - Will happen after the two priests are assigned—maybe May/June.
 - Determine weekend Mass schedules**
 - In January we will brainstorm possible Mass schedules
 - In February we will determine which scenarios to present to staff and parishioners for input
 - Assess ministry and administrative needs**
 - In January pastoral councils, finance councils, and staff will discuss survey results.
 - In February we will review input from councils and staff and discuss results.
 - Karen will re-open the staff survey so that additional persons can complete it.
 - Re-align staffing**
 - We currently have mostly boilerplate job descriptions. Karen will contact staff members individually to request that they identify what they actually do.
 - Based on parish configuration, Tammy Sylvester, the diocesan HR Director, will work with current pastors to determine what staff positions are needed. The plan will be presented to the planning team for input and then the pastors will finalize the plan.
 - Hiring will not happen until priest assignments are determined.
 - Long-term plan for building usage**
 - The planning team and staff members have already compiled a list of current usage of all building.
 - Agreed-upon next steps: identify what kind of building spaces are needed (e.g. school building, space for faith formation, meetings, large group gatherings), prioritize expected salability of non-church buildings, and determine where to move functions if a particular building sells. Perhaps a sub-committee should handle this. Armand, Jeff and Dave have volunteered. Send any additional nominations to Karen by next week.

Reaching planning team preference for a model of priest appointment and parish configuration to recommend to the Bishop

- Blessed Sacrament Councils' minutes should say it would be better to move to clustering first with a move to merging in about a year. Should say either model will have 2 priests.
- Interest in St. Mary's rectory should be followed up on.

- CTR joint council meeting seemed divided. Half wanted to go quickly from cluster to merger; the other half wanted to go slowly. Members were worried about losing their priest and their church.
- There needs to be diocesan help for a year after the transition.
- Can we keep our 2 priests? Anyone can write a letter to the Bishop requesting that. The planning team did not attempt to reach consensus on making this request. It was noted that a decision about parish configuration is not about any particular priest, it is about the future of the church in Elmira.
- St. Mary's councils preferred merging the parishes. In reality, we will have to spend some time being clustered first since a merger takes time.
- We need to think about what is the best decision making platform for looking out 5 years. One entity is in the best position to do this.
- Level of poverty is prevalent throughout the city and is creeping into West Elmira and into Elmira Heights. Catholic Charities has the pulse of what is going on in the community. Dealing with poverty is important to the Elmira Catholic mission. Poverty doesn't preclude people from coming to church.
- We can pray that evangelization will lead to growth and develop specific initiatives to reach out to others.
- Two parishes will lead to each parish making the best decision for itself and not necessarily the best for Elmira. There can't be competition.
- It seems that this has to happen quickly (from a St. Mary's standpoint)
- It seems that everyone agrees that we need to combine. The disagreement is how quickly that could happen.
- If we move quickly toward merger, we can hold one set of parishioner church hall meetings, presenting the new Mass schedule options, explaining why the planning team is recommending merger, and receiving input regarding both.
- Looking at a possible timeline for going through a merger process, it will probably take until next November before the canonical merger and then another 6 months before the civil merger.
- Consensus to ask the Bishop to cluster the parishes on June 27 when Fr. John expects to move to senior priest status and start the merger process ASAP.
- Majority of the population knows where this is headed.
- Fr. John will send a letter to the Bishop requesting a move to Senior Priest status by January 1.
- Karen will draft a letter from the planning team to the Bishop recommending that the parishes be clustered on June 27 with the Bishop appointing a Pastor and a Parochial Vicar.

Determining next steps to develop a new weekend Mass schedule

- We have to prepare for 1 priest for to do all the Masses in cases of emergency.
- Shortest time between Masses can be 90 minutes including travel.
- We should have no concurrent Masses.
- Plan 6 Masses plus the regional Mass.
- Each member will prepare and submit their suggested Mass schedule at least one week prior to our January meeting.
- Mary Montanarella and Armand Fusco have volunteered to measure pews (allowing 22" per person) so we have consistent capacity measures for all of our churches.

Closing Prayer: Prayer for Wisdom

Meeting Adjourned: 9:09 pm