

St. Thomas More Pastoral Council Meeting Minutes
17 September 2009

Present: Peter Ries, Gloria Wilke, Steve Wilson, Mike Sarafolean, Joan Williams, Fr. Joe Weiss, Arline Datu, Gretchen Tieder

Absent: Ryan Bean, Steve Thomas

Opening Prayer

Proposal to Use East Campus Basement for a Theater

Presentation by Jerry Sedewick and Urban Landremann regarding using the basement of the East campus church as a theater space for community use. At one point the basement was used as a theater and is constructed in such a way as it could be reconstructed that way. Urban is involved in theater with contacts with theater builders. Tonight's presentation is to ascertain a yea or nay to assemble a group to further evaluate, including access and budget considerations (bathrooms, financial). Other questions and issues to be addressed: how to use space as a gathering space, not just a theater; could a theater fit in with mission to create community.

Urban distributed pamphlets about Lex-Ham Community Arts. There has been some informal partnering between parish and Lex-Ham, band even performed at picnic. There is no theater on Summit, so this could be a unique opportunity and could generate revenue. This seems to fulfill mission of parish – provide a place for community to come together, for speakers on social justice, for educational purposes. One thought is a theater could help parish grow within the larger community.

Question – will STM create its own theater? There are lots of opportunities to open to community, not just one group. Maybe Lex-Ham would see this is their home, but they would not fill it year-around so others could use the space too. The school and parish could use it too. Lex Ham offers acting classes, maybe it could partner with school.

The space is configured so it can accommodate small groups or large groups up to 600. Unclear how space could be reconfigured – use whole space (back section is now the nursery).

Question – would there be any concern about what type of plays are performed if this is church-sanctioned or if it is a separate organization using the space with some type of financial agreement. How would plays fit in with mission, social justice and education? An organization might submit a proposal. This is an issue to be addressed if the Pastoral Council decides to go forward with further exploration.

One concern would be limiting use of the basement, as opposed to a multi-use. If this works as a theater, should it work for other functions, meeting space, a gathering space. The space is daunting as it exists right now. Concern about how much work would need to be done to be functional.

We need this to be multi-functional, to be used year-around for many functions, and maybe a theater is just one. It could be used for Summit Salon, Donut Sunday, funeral luncheons.

It is very important that it mesh with mission of parish. Financial concerns need to be addressed to make it a workable space. It is in need of massive work. What would it cost to use it for theater and movie space? This is a major obstacle due to financial limitations. Urban has spoken to several people who could serve on a planning group.

They were given permission to go ahead with the next phase of the proposal – no commitment that the next phase will be approved, but they can go forward with a more detailed study.

Facilities Use Policy

Dave Waller of Catholic Mutual (CM) came to discuss how the parish is insured and the need for a Facilities Use Policy. Any comments should be forwarded to Susan Stephens by Friday, September 25th. Finance Council will also review.

Catholic Mutual is the administrator for the self-insurance of the Archdiocese. The Archbishop of Omaha is the CEO. Catholic Mutual is the administrator, not the insurance company. The entire archdiocese is insured, but there are different types of programs/packages. STM has been with CM for 22 years.

There are 217 parishes in St Paul, and there are 97 schools. CM physically inspects each property each year. CM is managing risk. CM sees itself as a resource, and it develops relationships with parishes and schools. CM handles claims for liability, and it reviews contracts and policies to ensure that there isn't something in them that would trip-up the parish. CM works like an insurance company but it is not because it is an administrator. It also has a risk management group.

Archdiocese has a policy for \$100,000 per claim, and then there are layers of reinsurance. It has been taking on more risk so its rates have been falling.

What is difference between insurance certificate and policy? In our case, the cert is the same, but CM cannot call it a policy. STM has full coverage for all its needs.

What does this mean for STM? Our new leadership will be more in line with Archdiocese in sharing and managing risk. (This was not a statement about former leadership.) CM is cutting its expenses like the parishes. If STM is going to partner with CM, then STM needs to be proactive in being in compliance with fewer losses, fewer claims and lower costs.

Dave Waller was contacted initially about a claim, and then Fr. Joe mentioned STM would be looking at facilities use. The reality is that people do steal from the church and many think people think the church has deep pockets. People who rent the space do not take care of it the way the parish does. The goal is to maintain the facility. Dave is looking at the leaks in the basement (through walls) to determine the source to ensure building is maintained.

Even if an outside organization using space doesn't share our mission, we still have liability. We are responsible for having a safe environment regardless of who is in our building. If we rent the space, the renter will have to provide an insurance certificate and might have to list the parish as an additional insured. CM reviews 2500 contracts a year. CM recommends liability insurance for damages from renters.

If a theater group was part of the parish, it would not need a certificate of insurance. But all outside organizations must have certificates, including Boy Scouts, Knights of Columbus.

Need to limit the number of people who have keys/access to the church.

We will always be covered so long as no one has broken the law and stayed within the limits of the certificate/policy. Companies doing work on our facilities need to provide a certificate of insurance before doing any work. It is in parish's best interest to reduce risk by following programs and policies.

Who is doing the best job? – Lumen Christi is doing a good job. In terms of policies and procedures, we are about a 3 or 4 on a scale of 1 to 10. On internal financial controls, we are about a 9. That has been our focus the last couple of years. There are a lot of issues at the East Campus – leakage, security (open doors).

Parishes have a lot of autonomy within Archdiocese. Examples – Joan of Arc, St. Olaf's, St. Agnes.

CM has provided feedback on the proposed facility use policy. If we don't have a policy, then we are taking on too much risk. Need to be consistent.

St Paul has one of the best programs in the country.

All questions and comments should be filtered through Susan or Fr. Joe, instead of calling Dave Waller directly.

The Facilities Use Policy is our own document, not the insurance company's. This might create challenges with parishioners if we limit who can use the space.

What are things that could be problematic? After evaluating the facilities use policy, we need to approve and support it. We have an opportunity to make comments and some edits can be made (with the guidance of Dave Waller at CM). Some things cannot be changed, such as the basic tenets. Finance Council also will review. Feedback is due, Friday, September 25th.

Pastoral Staff Changes

MaryAnn Zervas and Sr. Josetta have resigned. Fr. Joe is taking parts of each of these jobs and combining them into one position, Pastoral Associate for Community Minister. This will be a full-time job without benefits. Would like to evaluate faith formation programs and determine most effective way to provide faith formation to all ages. This position would encompass faith formation in our whole community, both the school and the parish. This person would work 25 hours in school and then the rest of the time in the parish. This person would oversee FF in school and in church, sacramental preparation and adult FF.

One of our goals is to provide just wages and benefits, when we have some financial stability. We need to improve on what we offer. What we build in stewardship has to go to these things. Then maybe we can have someone who provides youth ministry services. Fr. Joe is looking into ways to develop this, maybe even with another parish like Lumen Christi (only for youth ministry).

Fr. Joe uses Lumen Christi as an example because it is comparable to us. The Archdiocese is moving towards more shared services.

We pay benefits for only three people right now. This position is an exception to the general policy of providing benefits. Two people have declined benefits due to spousal coverage.

How do we communicate this to the parish? We need to be clear and thoughtful in how we approach this. No chance of benefits now – the position has to be built from existing budget.

Salaries need to be adjusted across the parish and not just the school. If the school raises fees for raises for teachers, it needs to be raised enough for all or monies have to come out of stewardship.

Other

Faith Formation is delayed. Sacramental preparation will take place this year.

October 8th Meeting – will start with mass. The goal is to introduce everyone. (see blue sheet for more details). Susan will discuss how parish is structured. Question - can someone arrange for photos to be published in the bulletin so everyone knows who to contact?

Joan will coordinate bringing food – dessert – for the meeting.

Discussion of why there are no donuts after 8am mass – there could be if people volunteered to coordinate.

Ministry Fair – 14th and 15th November. Steve W and Gretchen will organize. Would like one more person to help who could take over next year. It does not have to be someone on PC. It could be someone who volunteered last year.

Stewardship appeal – would like to find people who will speak about why they give. The parish needs to change its giving spectrum from sometimes to all the time. Looking for models for giving. The appeal will take place during November. Will also have soft asks, talking about our financial situation. We fundraise for operations now. We need to change this to fundraise for special projects. Peter will start the appeal in early November and then follow-up with other speakers in following weeks. It was suggested that we follow up with phone calls.

Idea – We should take time to introduce ourselves to someone at mass.

Closing prayer.

Submitted by Gretchen Tieder