

Parish Town Hall Meeting

Oct. 12, 2022

Topic: Parish Projects 2022

The first Parish Town Hall meeting sponsored by the Parish Pastoral Council covered the topic of Parish Projects. Fr. Ray Powell gave a comprehensive presentation of the recently completed, planned, and possible projects at St. Thomas. His presentation slides accompany this summary. In his opening comments, Fr. Ray outlined the process for considering and fulfilling projects. Projects begin with reflection and that accounts for the past, present, and future. Projects develop through a process of planning in consultation with Finance and resource capacity. Review and prayer follow, and then implementation can begin.

Since only a small number of parishioners attended the meeting in person and because there was limited time available for questions, all the written questions and suggestion submitted by the attendees are addressed here:

- **Will we see a detailed financial report at the end of the year?**

- Yes, the normal year-end talk and financial overview was done by the finance committee in November and information provided and Duane Baumert was available after all the Masses to answer additional questions. In addition, we are providing more information via a parish town hall gathering to talk about finances. If more information is desired, parishioners can contact Duane or any member of the finance committee with their questions.

- **Currently do we use the maintenance budget as our source for money?**

- The maintenance fund is not the same as a building fund, nor is it as restrictive. While this gives the parish more flexibility in responding to parish needs, we are careful about how that fund is used. The maintenance budget is meant to be used for maintenance of the facilities and grounds. While this is primarily a fund reserved for unplanned and emergency repairs, it is sometimes used for projects to provide preventative maintenance and the support of ongoing maintenance (equipment, storage, enhancements to electrical/plumbing/other systems). Potential new and large-scale building projects such as those discussed at the Fall 2022 parish town hall would generally be financed through fundraising (i.e., Capital Campaigns), specific building fund donations/collections, or the use of other funds such as the Home Campaign.

- **Who determines whether a project is maintenance or capital expenditure?**

- The office staff and finance committee work together to identify how expenditures are classified and budgeted. The finance committee advises the office staff on which expenses must be listed as capital expenditures and which are to be considered maintenance. This includes consideration of diocesan, state, county, and city guidelines as well as following best business practices.

- **A suggestion: in a previous parish each month one of the envelopes was designated for church repair or maintenance ongoing so that money will be available in a fund set aside, to help with future projects. It worked well there and all the money was prepared for ahead of the actual project, which seemed to be helping to relieve and stress.**

- We already have a monthly envelope for donating to our maintenance fund which allows us to be prepared for emergency and unplanned maintenance needs. The finance committee is considering the need and benefit of a separate building fund in addition to our maintenance fund, especially as we shift to a parish that has facilities that are 20+ years old and our strong desire not to go into debt for any planned building projects.

- **Can the existing staff handle the planned projects? If not, what added help is needed?**
 - No, staff will be involved and consulted, but their job duties do not normally include these types of special projects. Parish involvement will have to occur on many levels before a project would be started and this issue would be a normal part of our assessment of any future projects, including: financial, physical, workload/timing, staffing, volunteers, growth expectations. This is most especially true in the area of what assumptions the plans would make regarding the strength and stability of existing facilities, anticipated future need, and existing parish volunteer involvement (or lack thereof). One example of this would be a building committee.
- **Need cushioning for kneelers-narthex pews**
 - The pew benches, chairs, and kneelers are on our list for consideration as to how to best maintain over the long-term. The pews, chairs, and kneelers are particularly susceptible to damage and the cost to repair is quite high, so we are looking into options and alternatives as we consider space needs within the church.
- **Can we replace the church pews-all wood? St. Joseph in Madisonville put in wooden pews**
 - This is definitely a strong contender as a solution to the difficult and expensive cushion maintenance for pews, chairs, and kneelers.
- **Church expansion-need choir area and bell choir area, two areas opposite each other on sides of the altar**
 - If a church expansion occurs, it will definitely include consideration for how to provide for the choir, without having them in the sanctuary area as currently is the case. No provisions for a special bell choir are on our list of anticipated future projects at this time.
- **Reconfigure the old kitchen by removing cabinets and installing shelves with nodes**
 - The old kitchen (now choir room) is a multi-use area and any update or enhancement to that area would need to take into consideration all the groups that use that area. We will be re-evaluating space usage in that area as part of our list of improvements and can add this as one of many potential options.
- **Good time to invest in portable room dividers?**
 - If this resolves a problem, then it is a possibility. However, recent discussions about partitions highlighted the high cost of room dividers sufficient to our purpose, the lack of a place to store the room dividers when not in use, as well as only limited benefit due to a lack of rooms that can handle multiple groups at once.
- **Can the current confessional be used at all, or will they be permanently closed?**
 - At present we are not looking at returning to using the old confessional. When COVID restrictions were in place we had to stop using the old confessional and we came to recognize how poorly designed that space was for our confessional needs compared to what we had improvised. The old confessional is not soundproof for such a high access area and is too small to accommodate the standard option of either kneeling behind a screen and/or sitting in front of the priest for confessions. Furthermore, the church pews restrict the ability for someone in a walker or wheelchair to enter of the confessional, let alone the confessional does not have room. We will look towards building a more permanent and appropriate confessional in the back of the day chapel and continue to use the choir room for when more than one priest is available.
- **What's the plan for the sports field? Will it be used for only parish play or a field for youth teams in the area? What will be the annual cost for maintenance for the sports field?**
 - Our current expectation is that the sports field is solely for the use of the parish and its ministries, as well as allowing for diocesan needs. Regarding ongoing costs, the parish will not be responsible for maintenance costs of the sports field until 2024. After that, the costs are expected to average approximately \$4,000 per year.

- **Speed bumps-why?**

- The speedbumps are necessary to help slow down traffic that is moving dangerously fast near workers, volunteers, and parishioners walking and working on the campus. Speaking to individuals who regularly put our staff and parishioners at risk has not changed their driving behavior, so we are forced to respond with appropriate safety measures. Two of the existing speedbumps nearest the highway were removed temporarily because they caused problems for our traffic control officers when directing traffic on the highway. They will be replaced with a more appropriate solution that meets both needs.

- **Do we have a capital expenditures budget? If yes, what is the amount?**

- Yes, \$285,000.

- **Has the revenue stream come back to pre-Covid levels?**

- Yes, offertory revenue has increased 16.8%, when comparing fiscal years 2021/22 to 2018/19

The Parish Town Hall meetings provide a great opportunity for parishioners to learn more about various aspects of parish activities and to ask questions. We encourage you to join us for future Parish Town Hall meetings, which we hope to offer on a roughly quarterly basis.