

February 14, 2017

Dear Parishioners,

At the rescheduled Parish Council meeting on January 19th, a good part of the two-hour meeting was spent responding to the latest report of the Parish Planning Group. Betsy Anderson made a presentation on behalf of Mike Buchmann, who is the new chairperson of the Planning Group.

Betsy pointed out the general results of the opinion poll that was done in the parish with the cooperation of Professor Clark's Marketing class at Saginaw Valley State University. The parish cost for the hours of work and volumes of reports done by the class was \$2,500.00. The most expensive costs were for printing and mailing. There were positive and negative results reported. Positively, the marketing class was impressed by the number of responses received. Negatively, the Planning Group was disappointed in the misunderstandings and misinformation revealed by many who responded. Despite our attempts to communicate, it is apparent there is much room for improvement.

The questions Betsy asked on behalf of the Planning Group were: "What direction should we move in? Do you want the focus to be on significant capital repairs tabled because of uncertainty or do you want us to go back to the drawing board and revisit building a new church and remodeling the current church into a gym/social hall?"

A most lively discussion followed with everyone present contributing questions and comments. The consensus opinion, which prevailed, is that we need to focus on one site (East Campus) and we need to do what is necessary to meet the needs of the parish at this one site. A gym is needed for the school and a more sufficient social hall for larger funeral luncheons. The survey shows that only a small percentage favor building a gym/social hall complex. About 50% of those who responded to the question favored spending the money on a new church and a remodel of the current church into a gym/social hall.

The overall tenor of the discussion prompted the Parish Council to put forth a motion to direct the Planning Group to revisit the cost estimates surfaced previously by the Building Committee to verify that the numbers are, in fact, in line with current building costs. The previous figure supplied by an architect, in consultation with a builder, was \$2,862,643.66 for both a new church and subsequent

remodeling. Included are the basic building components, plus paving, landscaping and pews. There is a contingency fund of \$150,000. The architect, Fred Dice, has given us permission to use his drawings for Assumption Church in Larkin Township at no cost if we so choose.

A new church would bring an end to both the St. Anthony and St. Joseph Churches. We would become, with appropriate Diocesan and Vatican approval, St. Gabriel Church, as well as being St. Gabriel Parish. We are in a strong position financially in our general fund. If the projected figures are accurate, we are very close to having the portion on hand that the Diocese says is appropriate. The Diocesan policy directs at least 1/3 on hand, 1/3 to be raised in a three-year pledge drive, and up to 1/3 to be borrowed.

There is a great deal of emotion surrounding the considerations, however, the Council believes the time is now for making the decision to move forward in hope with a commitment to future generations. The Parish Council voted unanimously to proceed in updating the costs involved in:

1. Make repairs to the East Campus to bring it up to building code, and to accommodate the extra activities that would take place once the West Campus is not available.
2. Build a new church while renovating the current worship space to accommodate the same extra activities that would take place once the West Campus is not available.

We encourage all parishioners, whatever your views, to be actively involved in the committees that are making decisions about our future. Working together will instill unity in our community and pride for our parish. Our parish has been blessed with the rare opportunity to dictate our future, to some extent, because of our strong financial position, loyal parishioners, and experienced leadership. Our goal throughout this decision-making process is not only to keep the doors of St. Gabriel open, but to ensure that a healthy, viable Catholic parish will always be in Auburn.

Sincerely,

The Parish Council

Dep Lupo	Deb Ora	Renee Krager
Bill Zimmerman	Mary Ellyn Gushow	Sally Czabala
Tim Hadd	Karen Willsie	Bill Rivet
Tim Markel	Mike Jamrog	

P.S. The Building Committee will be restarted and in need of additional members. Other committees will be necessary if we proceed, e.g. fundraising, decorations, religious environment, landscaping, communication, etc. Let us know if you want to be involved actively in some way. If you share our hope, let us know.