

**SPIRITUS CHRISTI PARISH COMMUNITY FORUM**  
**September 6, 2023**  
*Minutes*

**Meeting Start Time:** 7:05 pm

**Opening Prayer** - Trevor Carney

**Meeting Overview, Introduction of Staff, Framework** - Trevor Carney

**Staff Present:** Lauren Urzetta, Rev. Myra, Mike Ramich, Fr. Jim, Mike Boucher, Ruth Cowing, Amy Durkee, Jim Smith, Rev Celie.

**Professionals:** Peter Kane, Mike Tyson, Christine, Mike, Eileen Hurley

**Numbers attending:** 37 on zoom, 68 live = 105 total

**Framework of meeting**

**Pastor's Report**

- She has been on vacation
- Celebrated GOG liturgies and fundraising month
- Organizing sharing of a meal for asylum seekers on Sunday
- Parishioners will be bringing a dish

**Building Update by Mike Ramich**

- Brought structural engineer came through Mike Tyson
- Asbestos containment down are estimated to get in the building
  - We thought we could negotiate with current owner to reduce price or get them to fix
- Heating and air needed considering it was hot during tours
- Needed roof repair
- Needed lift
- Numbers for renovation costs were very high
- Renovations will be more than twice the cost of the building
- From building committee Mike Tyson - construction person said "From a construction standpoint we shouldn't take it off the board. It has put us in the good position with our current landlords"
- He feels that number may change daily there are big swings in how you go about doing things
- How do we move when it is time?

- How can we sustain paying rent and looking at gaining money for new building?

### **Mike Ramich Report**

- Mike presented numbers
- Adding 40% was what the committee thought was a reasonable estimate
- Seldom does it come in on budget

### **Parishioners response to building committee report**

- This final number is move in ready
- Everything but first 2 items engineer felt needed to be completed before moving in
- Mike R response
  - The committee felt that what was below was needed so everyone could see and have access to all areas.
  - Rel Ed was accessible
  - Where would choir go
  - In theory some figures are negotiable but felt it was too high
- Some things are legally required by ABA like lift and bathroom
- Mike – Committee says building is currently in use so it is a functioning building now.
- Can we compare what both buildings are charging and for renovation vs this cost for the building
- Mike Ramich
  - Rent \$177,000
  - Additional costs like setting up this room for a meeting
  - Hochstein proposed new lease - we signed for 6 month Increase 5% now will be paying \$180,000
  - Side by side cost it would be \$50,000 more in cost for new building
- New question - Why is the balcony line empty?
  - We didn't get an estimate for balcony in time for the meeting
  - Alter cannot be seen from parts of the balcony. We asked for a drawing of raising alter and fixing balcony but didn't get in time for meeting
- What does the committee think is a reasonable budget?
  - We didn't talk about what is reasonable as if it was another church there would be other needs

- If we decide not to go with Child Street because \$1.68 is too much does that mean moving ahead? Would we not take a property that was this much? It would help us with moving ahead and
  - This is something we need to look at as a parish?
  - What is too much?
  - What is essential for us to function?
  - What does a building look like that would work?
- Commercial banks are more complicated and more challenging
- Initial meeting wasn't what we were paying for building rent. It's 15-18% - but that is not that expensive for us to stay here.
  - When we got an 8.5% increase from DUPC made us think
- Going back to Corpus Christi early 80's prison ministry lead to a restaurant. That building makes Child Street look like a gem and yet there was a sense that we could do this. The difference was that the parishioners put our sweat equity into it. The guys living at the house were working at the construction site.
- Don't necessarily agree that it is where we should go but that it is a vision that we can use as we go forward
  - Rev. Myra - Sense something different at the meeting tonight then last time. Last time sensed that they didn't want to put in so much and now feeling different. Asking what are people thinking now? Part of not recommending it was about parishioners and not recommending a high number. We need to explore how much we would be willing to invest and do.
- Do we know if the swing that Mike Tyson said could go down could it go up?
- Mike Tyson -
  - Difficulty is that contractors are not quick to come to a site that you don't own. We talk to them and sometimes get a reasonable number, but the swings could be lower and could be higher. The 40% is an attempt to build ourselves an allotment of money if things go sideways
- In order to talk to other Realtors, commercial Realtors, need to know how much square feet do we need? How many offices do we need? How much do we have to spend?
  - Mike Ramich - We looked at that and first looked at how many people it can hold - one place was 100 people which would not work.
  - We used a benchmark that the largest number in a year Easter was 275, excluding Christmas

- o Offices - we have 12-13 offices and some conference rooms.
- o That is what we are using as benchmarks
- A few people have talked about where do we want to go? It would be great to have a vision - where do we want to be? What is our collective thought process about what do we want to do? Need to know what our vision is going forward.
  - o Rev. Myra - We just had a Visioning Day and as we looked at Child Street, we carried that vision with us. We do have a collective vision. If we become scared at every turn then we can't carry out our vision. How do we get over our fear that is different than the facility? I moved forward trying to figure out how to get past the fear to create our vision

It was pointed out and confirmed that the Visioning Day results were never shared with parishioners and need to be.

- o Rev. Myra - We need to publish the Visioning Day results
- Prison outreach budget around \$700,000 - we put feet to ground and wrote grants and we always knew it was going to happen. We didn't angst over it. Collaborative decision making is good but takes so much time. Which way would we serve the ministry best - renting this or buying a church? We can all get people involved. Dream can be scary but if we dig in we can do it
- Zoom question - I have been looking for houses on line but expensive and I have had to look outside what I was originally thinking. When I walked to Child Street, I was looking at it to see if it would work. I am also looking at other places and saw other places like film school? That was bigger and more intact in a neighborhood and has elevator etc. If we move on from Child Street what other properties are we looking at? Are we looking only at churches or other commercial properties that we can live out the vision? Church is where you make it. Don't want people to be locked into Child Street. Don't want to miss an opportunity going forward because we are looking backward
  - o Rev. Myra - yes we are willing to look at other types of building
- What about bank buildings and movie theaters?
- Response to numbers - this is a bare bones number.
- We have all tried things that have been a stretch and things have fallen into place. I like the idea of having a church. What if we decided that we are going to buy the building, I think things will fall into place. I think about the children and the neighborhood. I think we would find that things will fall into place.

- Jim Smith as talking about early days of Corpus Christi got excited. Thoughts that we need to get out of our comfort zone to step out. When we bought a building before we have never thought – “Do we have the money?” We asked “Do we want it? Will it help the poor? Is it the right thing to do? When we decide this is what we want to do hope it’s an inner city neighborhood as they have a lot to offer us and we can offer them. It has a lot to do with our comfort zone - is this the right place for us?
- How much money could we borrow? How much would the payment be for \$1 million?
- We have no equity now.
- Teen Empowerment about to break ground on new facility, Rick DeJesus on board. They started by thinking that they could build new. They needed to raise \$4.5 mil. City took down some houses from slum lords and sold for \$1 each. Do we need to look at existing structures or do we need to look at building new?
- Have we started to collect a small seed fund? Do we have a special fund that we can ask parishioners to pledge to?
  - This is new and just getting the numbers so haven’t started a fund yet.
- We had a fund what happened to it?
  - We had a fund but after 10-15 years no one wanted a new building and so distributed it to the ministry outreaches
- If God is everywhere like store etc. is there a building that was recently updated and could fit our needs? Do we have to have stain glass windows and a pipe organ?
  - Church will be wherever we call home
- Thinking new and thinking empty lots we need to root ourselves in the mission and vision and ground ourselves. Let’s look and let’s go
- How much time do we have to let Child Street people know we are backing out?
  - We did let them know
- Set a time frame to deep dive into our vision, explore the neighborhood and the people
- Have another Visioning Day?
  - It would be a struggle instead of a joy
- We need to have a needs analysis, we need to have a more refined understanding about what the finances are for Having a proposition going forward without firm financials is hard to commit energy to.

- o We weren't able to get every contractor through that we wanted, because it is summer and that is the busiest time for contractors.
- Appreciate building committee, trust that they are giving their knowledge and their heart to the project
- Child St. area is a really neat area – was called Dutchtown - lots of history. Germans planting roots and working their way out Dutchtown
- So admiring of the congregation - when Fr. Jim performed the first gay marriage and when Rev. Mary stood on the alter and said she belonged there. The majority put their faith in Rev. Mary's faith and Fr. Jim's faith. We are in an antiracist renaissance. We need to put our faith in Rev. Myra like we always have. We can't separate our vision of antiracism from the vision of our building.
- Often when I move in the direction of my fears, often resulting in good decisions.
- Visioning Day - if it doesn't frighten us a little bit maybe not be the right vision. if we are hoping for a property without risk it may not happen.
- We have never had a conceptual discussion about a building because Child Street came up.
- Process has been bumpy since Child Street. Should we have a talk and vote - Do we agree that we should give up renting and buy? Do we agree that we should be in the inner city? What are our needs? Decision on do we have a building fund if the parish agrees on a certain building?
- Is it possible to merge with a church that is like minded as we are.
  - o Rev. Myra - I guess anything is possible. We have to be aware and own that we have developed a different theology than most churches. I don't think it is worth it to take that chance.

Rev. Myra - thank you for the comments and wisdom and advise. Hope that you are empowering us to look and think about the proposal to change the rental model to an ownership model. Maybe take a vote about that. Need to do an additional PCF about that.

**New Business** - Not asked

**Closing Prayer** - John O'Gorman

**Meeting End Time:** 8:50pm

**Meeting Facilitators:** Trevor Carney, Colleen Farley

**Notetakers:** Bridget Casselman, Colleen Farley

**Parish Community Forum Facilitators:**

Trevor Carney

Colleen Farley

Matt Liston

John O’Gorman

Kim Winden

Dave Winden