

Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania (OCA)

Minutes of the Diocesan Council held on August 17, 2010

Diocesan Center, South Canaan

- I. Meeting opened at 10:36 by His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, with the singing of *O Heavenly King*.
- II. All members were present except for Doug Yates who was excused due to an injury suffered the day before, for which His Grace asked the Council's prayers.
- III. His Grace announced that the order of the agenda was reversed with him speaking last as a means to propel the meeting and allow time for discussion of the Strategic Plans of the Orthodox Church in America and of the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pa.

Also announced was a change in the secretary for the meeting. Fr. Martin Browne would take the minutes assisted by Fr. Timothy Hojnicky who was responsible for the minutes of the treasurer's report.

Approval of Minutes

- Clarification about a line item for gifts for new bishops
- Fr. Dan pointed out the need to correct the word "sued" to "used" in reference to the proposed Diocesan Strategic Plan.
- Motion to accept the Minutes as amended was made by Elsie Herman, seconded by Fr. Michael Hatrak.
- All in favor

Chancellor's Report

1. Distributed Bishop's itinerary (see attached).
2. Reported on outreach to Russian immigrant population at St. Stephen's Cathedral. Meeting last evening at the Cathedral to introduce adding Fr. Yaroslav Stebelsky as an assistant to Fr. Victor serving the Russian Divine Liturgy weekly at St. Stephen's. At present, he will commute from New Jersey, but if the arrangement works out, he will move into our diocese. Bishop will evaluate progress in six months, receiving regular updates from Fr. Victor.
 - a. Questions and discussion followed on purpose of community, status in relationship to St. Stephen's and the possibility of outreach to other groups in the city.
3. Sexual Misconduct Policy
 - a. 4 Parishes submitted compliance forms to date
 - b. Need for diocesan wide training on sexual abuse
 - i. Resolution: The Bishop will require all laypersons having more than incidental conduct with minors to view a training DVD on recognizing and combating sexual abuse, on an annual basis.

- ii. Questions regarding enforcement /consequences on non compliance. Bishop will decide.
- 4. Diocesan By Laws
 - a. No one submitted anything to Fr. John.
 - b. Following Fr. Dan's suggestion, looked at those of Greek Orthodox Archdiocese.
 - i. Uniform Parish Regulations, mandated.
 - c. Suggested the formation of a committee to work on them
 - d. Fr. Dan commented that he specifically cited them because of how they dealt with issues of diocesan administration, its makeup and function and accountability.
- 5. Health Insurance
 - a. Mark Linnehan spoke about outcome of committee activity
 - i. Decided to go with Gannon Associates who had presented a plan which is not less expensive than the one we had, but less expensive than the one Penncrest could offer.
 - ii. Group number stayed the same
 - iii. Reiterated the recommendation of the committee that the Insurance Fund be audited to analyze strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations for procedural improvement.
 - iv. Recommended that in the future a two-year contract be considered and a three- year review of carriers in the area since we are presently limited to Capital One because of the usage of 1099's as employment status.
 - 1. John Buckeye recommended one year instead.
 - b. Comments
 - i. Fr. David Mahaffey indicated his understanding that Sarah at Gannon was not providing Matushka Kathy with the support she promised. Discussion followed.
 - ii. Fr. John Soucek spoke about the difficulties he experienced with Blue Cross in the transition from the former to the present plan. Discussion followed.
- 6. Fr. John mentioned the Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry Conference in Philadelphia from Thursday to Saturday at the Doubletree Hotel and thanked Fr. Mahaffey, the Dean of Philadelphia for his assistance and support and Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk for his provision of liturgical items for services. His Grace Bishop Tikhon, together with Bishop Mark of the Antiochian Archdiocese will participate with clergy from around the country.

Treasurer's Report

- Fr. Martin asked for the audit committee to go first. The Audit committee met on 8/16 in Bethlehem. They viewed May 1- July 31, 2010. It included an audit of the past insurance records.
- Fr. Martin then presented his report

- It was pointed out that we removed car debt as a liability as the car was paid off. The value of the Diocesan Center will be looked into to get a proper assessed value for future planning purposes.
- The Estella property due to it being a donation could potentially harm the donator financially. Her lawyer recommended that she not give it yet, but to be willed to the diocese upon her death.
- The Wachovia CD (which comes due in December) still needs the Bishop and Fr. John to go and make the branch and made the records current.
- Overall, we are within budget, except for the bishop's travel expenses.
- Fr. Martin requested approval of 2 items: A new computer for Mat. Sandy to use as the current one cannot keep up with all the work she does on it. And the purchase of the most recent edition of QuickBooks for nonprofit for 2010. (399.99 retail, 249.99 on amazon.com) It was the feeling of the council that these did not need approval per say as they reasonably fell in the area of office expenses.
- The Budget for 2011 will be reviewed at the October Council meeting.
- An ongoing issue with the National Church not supplying the Diocese with Invoices and receipts was again discussed due to our asking for these things. The Metropolitan Council Members would bring this up again. If there is no compliance, then we will revisit the issue. We will request an invoice for September 1.
- A discussion was held on the inadequate compensation of the bishop. Mark Linnehan suggested increase the bishop's salary by 10% every year until the bishop is paid adequately (about 4 years), and according to the proper clergy compensation guidelines that were given to the parishes.
- Fr. Dan Kovalak asked to have the Russian Mission Funds come out of the "Charity fund" rather than the "Mission Fund". Much discussion ensued.
- Mark Linnehan moved to accept the Treasurer's report. Fr. Dan Kovalak seconded. Unanimous approval.

Metropolitan Council Report

7. Kondratick Settlement: as noted in the press release. Sealed. \$250,000 to the Kondraticks . Three suits combined, resolved. No more suits from the parties, i.e. Kondraticks and O.C.A toward each other.
8. No other outstanding lawsuits against the O.C.A at the present time.
 - a. Koumentakos, Bishop Nikolai, and Kondraticks all resolved.
9. O.C.A. Strategic Plan

- a. Bishop received a copy of Planning Committee Presentation: 3 hours long. Concerned about the timing if offered at the Diocesan Assembly
 - i. Can present outside the context of Diocesan Assembly
 - ii. Or in abbreviated form at the Assembly
 - iii. Bishop prefers a diocesan response be offered in addition to individual ones
- b. Questions about
 - i. Timeline
 - ii. Involvement of the Holy Synod
 - iii. Relationship to Statute Revision
 - iv. Difference between a strategic plan (OCA) and tactical plan (DOEPA)
- c. Council voted to have a modified presentation of ½ hour at Diocesan Assembly after a Town Hall Meeting prior to the Assembly in the diocese.

Bishop's Report

10. Diocesan Strategic Plan

- a. His Grace presented a rough draft of a an Action Statement from the Diocesan Hierarchy entitled Giving Thought to Our Steps (Prov. 14:15)
 - i. Reviewed his personal involvement with Monastery, Seminary and Diocese from 1990 to present.
 - ii. As diocesan hierarchy he feels most clearly defined and personally comfortable. He wants to be a fulltime diocesan bishop and spend the next five years or less working towards that goal. Also wishes to rededicate himself to monastic discipline and theological/spiritual study.
 - iii. Needs to be in Philadelphia in 5 years
 - iv. While he remains Rector of the Seminary, the position needs redefinition, a synodal responsibility, along with the position of Dean of the Seminary.
 - 1. Has remained Rector because of the recent "time of troubles" in order to provide stability.
 - v. Monastery is under direction of Abbot Sergius and under the Episcopal oversight of Metropolitan JONAH.
- b. Administration of the Diocese
 - i. Diocesan Center: relocation to Philadelphia raises the issue of the Diocesan Center. The Orphanage Task Force met yesterday and initiated the process for reconstitution of the Board and offered alternative options for the Diocese,

either subdividing the property and acquiring ownership or selling the Diocesan interest to the Seminary.

ii. There was prolonged discussion of this with general support for relocation and suggestions of avenues of investigation/preparation for such a move.

1. His Grace offered two possible locations, one ideal, the other possibly practical, the R.B.O. Building in Philadelphia, currently for sale for \$2million or for rent at \$2000 per floor or the vacant rectory at Holy Assumption of the Virgin Mary in South Philadelphia. The latter might be possible as a base of operations there while he continues to live in South Canaan.

iii. Parishes

1. Bishop indicated his support of the Diocesan Strategic Plan because of

a. Its administrative requirements

b. It reflects the reality of our parishes

c. Offers concrete and measurable approach without changing much.

d. Concrete way of addressing the issues that face us in a way that unifies us, as indicated in 1 Corinthians 12 – mutual support of parishes, strong for weak, weak for strong.

e. Comments/concerns of Council

i. Labeling of parishes, morale, excessive goals. All subject to discussion/revision.

ii. Discussion followed on a variety of related issues.

1. Change name to Growth Plan

2. Incorporate demographic/sociological insights and data.

iii. Resolved that His Grace would revise the draft including feedback from clergy at retreat last Friday and today's meeting, along with his completed personal Action Plan.

iv. Clergy

1. Focus on spiritual and physical health, clergy compensation and continuing education.

New Business

Fr. Kovalak suggested including Deanery Reports at Council Meetings and reported on Education Conferences held and scheduled for Philadelphia on 9/25 and Harrisburg 10/9, as well as the Wilkes-Barre Altar Boy Picnic on 8/19

Fr. Mahaffey invited all to attend Russian Days at St. Nicholas in Bethlehem on September 10-12.

His Grace announced the joint Metropolitan Council/Holy Synod Retreat on September 20-23 and the Holy Synod Meeting on November 15-18.

Next Diocesan Council Meeting on October 12 at 10:30AM.

Motion to adjourn: Fr. David Mahaffey, seconded by Fr. Timothy Hojnicky.

All in favor.

Meeting closed with singing of *It is Truly Meet* at 4:10PM

Respectfully submitted,

Priest Martin Browne