



SAINT VASILIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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St. Vasilios General Assembly Minutes of Meeting June 15, 2009

I. Call to Order:

Mr. Venios called the General Assembly to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Opening Prayer:

Fr. Chris and Fr. Panteli led the General Assembly with a prayer and a blessing (Aghasmos) for the new gym floor.

III. Selection of Moderator of General Assembly:

A motion to elect Tony Maistrellis the General Assembly Moderator was made by Eric Zisis and seconded by Sophia Nanis. A motion to elect Peter Franggos was made by Dr. Dean Kostas and seconded by Spero Xerras. Mr. Franggos declined to be elected. A motion to close nominations was made by Dr. Marinakis and seconded by Lola Kalivas. The motion to close was approved by unanimous consent. The motion to elect Tony Maistrellis as Moderator was approved by unanimous consent.

Mr. Maistrellis outlined the following rules and procedures for the meeting, as follows:

- That we all use decorum, be courteous and respectful
- We try to finish the meeting in 2 ½ hours
- All questions and comments must be made at the microphone after being recognized by the Moderator
- Questions not asked at the meeting should be submitted to the Parish Council in writing within five days of the meeting. Such questions will be replied to within 30 days.

Dr. Marinakis then briefly outlined some basic concepts of Robert's Rules that we should adhere to. Robert's Rules provides common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole membership on the same footing and speaking the same language.

IV. Approval of Minutes of Previous General Assembly of November 17, 2008

A motion to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2008 General Assembly was made by Tracy Franggos and seconded by Mary Limberakis. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

V. President's Report:

Mr. Speros Venios referred the assembly to the President's Mid-Year Report which was included in the handouts. Mr. Venios mentioned that St. Vasilios is experiencing somewhat of an economic crisis, and that stewardship pledges are not as high as expected. Mr. Venios explained that while we must remain fiscally conscious, it is important that we do not make short-sighted decisions that will affect the vision of our parish going forward. Mr. Venios explained that our focus remains as follows:

- Master Plan – this is necessary for St. Vasilios to prioritize both its ministerial and physical plant needs. Although not yet prepared, Lane Nordquist has been named chairperson of the Master Plan Committee and will be leading this effort.
- Building Needs Assessment – completing this assessment will ensure that our buildings are being upgraded and maintained accordingly to avoid emergency repairs.
- Stewardship – our community needs to become more familiar with stewardship. On Monday, June 22, we will host a meeting open to the entire community to specifically discuss stewardship.

Arthur Pavlo asked if we will be discussing stewardship again in tonight's meeting. Mr. Venios replied that we would.

A motion to receive the President's Report was made by Dr. Kostas and seconded by Rhea Lesage. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

VI. Priest's Report:

- a. Fr. Chris reminded the assembly that the Scholarship Ball will be Friday, June 19 at Jimmy's Allenhurst. Fr. Chris noted that the procedure to award scholarships has changed from prior years. A committee of three individuals review candidates' applications on a no-name basis and grant the scholarships based on merit.
- b. Fr. Chris reported that later in June there will be an outing for Altar Boys and Junior and Senior GOYA.
- c. Fr. Chris noted that in July, St. Vasilios will participate, along with the Metropolis of Pittsburgh, on a 1-week mission trip to the Blackfeet Indians in Montana.
- d. The Food Fair will be held June 27-28 in the Demotses Center, and all volunteers are welcomed.

Dr. Kostas asked how many sacraments have been done this year and whether we can have a moment of silence for the departed. Fr. Chris noted that there have been 22 funerals and that the other data was not presently available. A

motion to accept the Priest's Report was made by Charlene Deftos and seconded by Dr. Kostas. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

VII. Financial Report

Costa Partaledis, Treasurer, referred the assembly to the financial reports in the handouts. Mr. Partaledis summarized the 2008 Statement of Income and Expenses noting the following:

	YTD 2008	YTD 2007
Stewardship	\$383,180	\$363,063
Net Excess (Deficit)	\$(154,691)	\$(48,734)

Mr. Partaledis explained that the 2008 deficit included about \$53,000 in capital expenditures for the kitchen renovations. Mr. Partaledis explained that stewardship was under budget and not adequate to cover expenses and that salaries represented about 60% of expenses. Office expenses were higher than budget and this will be discussed further.

Mr. Partaledis discussed the May 2009 Statement of Income and Expenses, noting the following:

	Jan-May 2009	Jan-May 2008
Stewardship	\$217,892	\$238,983
Net Excess (Deficit)	\$7,551	\$34,269

Mr. Partaledis reported that stewardship in May 2009 was only about 50% of that in May 2008, and that stewardship is expected to fall short of original 2009 budget, while expenses are on track as compared to budget.

Peter Franggos, representing the Finance Committee of the Parish Council, then discussed the Income/Expense Analysis which was included in the handouts. Mr. Franggos explained that the purpose of the analysis was to provide a high level view of our financial trends from 2003 to the present, noting that while our expenses have exceeded our income in all periods presented, the recent deficits (2008/2009) were greater due in part to the decision to transition from one full time and one part-time priest to two full-time priests. Mr. Venios noted that other than clergy, no employees receive benefits. Mr. Franggos further noted we have experienced increases in office expense and National Ministries. He reported that the projected deficit for 2009 is forecast to be about \$120,000 prior to transfers from functions (e.g., the festival). Mr. Franggos also noted that the Parish Council will outline suggestions on how the shortfall could be reduced.

There were then numerous questions and comments from the assembly, including the following:

- Sophia Nanis inquired about employment contracts and whether there were mandates for the salary increases that occurred in 2009. Mr. Venios made reference to the Archdiocese Clergy Compensation Plan which dictates salary ranges and cost of living increases.
- Dr. Kostas observed that Fr. Andrew Demotses did not receive cost of living adjustments because circumstances did not warrant as such.
- Bill Stephanides suggested a wage freeze for all employees.
- George Rockas observed that we have a revenue problem, not an expense problem, and that we should not use the economy as an excuse.
- Helen Terzakis suggested that the Greek School and the Church School be separated in the financial statements. Kay Nicolakis echoed this suggestion. Mr. Venios indicated that the two would be separated in future financial statements.
- Sophia Nanis, referencing the projected deficit and actual-to-budget shortfalls, asked how the Parish Council can restore the parishioners' faith. Fr. Chris reminded the assembly that the 2009 budget was approved at the 2008 Fall General Assembly and that we all share responsibility. Ms. Nanis, former Treasurer, offered her assistance to the Parish Council if they thought she could be helpful.
- Jason Panos opined that our financial predicament is primarily due to the weak economy. Mr. Panos suggested greater transparency in terms of publishing financial results, and he inquired as to what the Parish Council's solution is to rectify the financial difficulties. Fr. Chris noted that our parish really has only 800 stewards supporting it, not 1,500. Mr. Franggos noted that the Parish Council recommended that we avoid drastic cost cutting measures that could severely impact the services the church provides to its parishioners. At this point, Mr. Franggos outlined a proposal that would eliminate \$10,000 of annual printing costs, as well as a proposal to charge tuition for Greek School.
- Dr. Frank Varinos, a member of the Parish Council, but speaking as a member of the General Assembly, explained that he had told the Parish Council earlier in the year that significant cost cuts were necessary or the church would be bankrupt and that it was unrealistic to expect that the shortfalls would be closed by increasing stewardship. Dr. Varinos suggested the following cost cutting measures:

- Summer furlough for part-time secretary and other non-essential personnel, estimated savings \$2,100.
- Custodian to work part-time during the summer, estimated savings \$5,000.
- Petition the Metropolis to reassign the assistant priest, estimated savings \$38,000, which assumes that the re-assignment is effective July 1, 2009.
- Charge tuition for Greek School, \$250 per student.
- James Metropolis disagreed with Dr. Varinos that the church will go bankrupt, noting that our parish has many wealthy and generous parishioners, but they need to be approached and asked to help. Mr. Metropolis also felt that the amount St. Vasilios must pay for National Ministries is unfair, and whether we can work out a more beneficial solution.
- Molly Xerras asked if we are required to pay the National Ministries amount regardless of our net income or loss. Mr. Venios answered yes and explained how the National Ministries contribution per church is calculated and that it will be difficult to change this. In prior years the amount was 15% of net income, and three years ago the system was changed such that the each parish's share was based on their total expenses less capital expenditures. If payments are late, there is a 7% interest charged and the parish is considered to not be in good standing with the Archdiocese. The Metropolis of Boston disagreed with such measure. Mr. Venios reported that St. Vasilios pays the 7th highest National Ministries share in the Metropolis of Boston, while the six churches that pay more than St. Vasilios all have fewer stewards than we do.
- Clay Anastopoulos observed that many gratis members will indeed make pledges. He noted that if we have a shortfall, he will find the pledges to make up the shortfall.
- Steve Kalivas commented that the notes to the Income/Expense analysis were enlightening, while observing that the parish has been running deficits the past few years. However, Mr. Kalivas further observed that the expenses have grown too quickly, the deficits have grown and that he has no confidence that the 2009 budget will be met. Nick Collins, member of the Finance Committee of the Parish Council, asked Mr. Kalivas if he would like to offer suggestions for additional expense reductions. Mr. Kalivas replied that the Parish Council should make these types of recommendations.
- Paul Foukas, a member of the Parish Council, also observed that expenses should be reduced.

- Rhea Lesage applauded Dr. Varinos’s bravery for proposing the aforementioned expense reductions. Ms. Lesage asked what will happen if we use up our cash reserves. After Mr. Collins noted that our savings account is about \$65,000, Mr. Venios commented that while we might be experiencing financial difficulty and we very well might need to draw on savings, the term “bankrupt” is not a term that would apply. Mr. Venios noted that St. Vasilios has assets of about \$5 million and if worse came to worse, we could avail ourselves of a line or credit and borrow funds. Mr. Venios further commented that we all have to consider what type of church we want to be, one that is vibrant and growing, or one that is shrinking its membership and services. He noted that as it relates to the notion of reassigning the assistant priest, we cannot make such a decision without first petitioning the Metropolis of Boston. But if we do this, we risk not being reassigned an assistant priest in the future when/if we decide we want one again.
- Nick Chihlas, member of the Finance Committee of the Parish Council, noted that in preparing the Income/Expense analysis, the goal was not only to demonstrate transparency and explain the financial trends, but also to solicit suggestions from the parish to help overcome the financial problems we face.
- Jason Panos suggested that we should be more aggressive in stewardship collection efforts and that we make the Demotses Center available for rent.
- Fr. Panteli posed the following question to the assembly: Can we all explain stewardship? Fr. Panteli observed that stewardship is a complete change as to how one views the Church. It is comprised of Time, Talents and Treasure. He suggested that we stop calling ourselves members and start calling ourselves stewards.
- Arthur Pavlo reminded the assembly that if we needed to borrow against a line of credit, that any loan would need to be repaid and this will create an additional obligation for the parish. Mr. Pavlo commended Dr. Varinos, Ms. Nanis and Mr. Kalivas for their honest comments.
- George Rockas observed that the church cannot be run as a business. Although certain business principles may apply, the church is comprised of people who love the church and give of their time and money.
- Ms. Tracy Franggos asked if the various parish organizations would provide funds to help the church with its operating needs.

- Dr. Marinakis commented that we all need to work together and also that there is no greater potential fund-raiser than a member of the clergy.
- Rhea Lesage asked if we could make a motion on proposed expense reductions. Mr. Maistrellis indicated that any such motion should be made under New Business.
- Chris Venios commented that member of parish organizations should be required to be stewards and that all organizations should disclose their monies. Mr. Venios suggested that stewardship letters be sent to recent college graduates who have received St. Vasilios scholarships. Fr. Chris indicated that this year we started contacting recent college graduates.
- Mr. Franggos reminded the assembly that any questions not asked tonight can be sent to Irene Stephanides in the church office, who will forward such questions to the Parish Council.

Mr. Partaledis then provided an update of the St. Vasilios Endowment Fund, referencing the Endowment Performance Results included in the handouts, noting that the 2008 loss was 19.2%, the Q1 2009 loss was 5.2% and the year-to-date gain through May was 6.8%. The Endowment Fund balance was approximately \$739,000 as of May 31, 2009. Pam Katsiris asked who is managing the funds. Mr. Venios explained that Smith Barney is overseeing five separate funds. In reviewing the endowment results, Mr. Metropolis asked why the ending balance at March 31, 2009 of \$655,834, when added to the second quarter appreciation of \$47,077 did not equal the ending balance of \$739,092. Mr. Partaledis would review this further to provide an answer.

A motion to accept the Financial Report was made by Dr. Kostas and seconded by Jason Panos and was approved by unanimous consent.

VIII. Christian Stewardship Update

Mr. Venios updated the General Assembly on Stewardship, reporting the following statistics as of June 15, 2009:

Total possible stewards	1,392
Pledges as of June 15	621
Gratis	271
Unpledged stewards	771
Total pledges	\$289,935
Total collected	\$229,726

Average pledge	\$467
Most frequent pledge	\$500

Number of pledges by range:

\$0-\$100	66
\$101 - \$299	89
\$300 - \$499	213
\$500 - \$749	183
\$750 - \$999	17
\$1,000 - \$1,499	38
\$1,500 +	15

Mr. Venios emphasized how important it is to continually educate the community on Stewardship. Mr. Venios emphasized the importance of stewardship for the survival of St. Vasilios and its legacy.

Sophia Nanis inquired asked if there will be a much more extensive plan for the June 22 stewardship meeting. Mr. Venios indicated an agenda is being developed. Bill Stephanides asked if non-pledging stewards will be at the June 22 meeting. Mr. Venios replied they will not, but they are welcomed to attend the follow-on stewardship meeting which will take place later in the year.

Mrs. Terzakis suggested the Stewardship Committee ask all organizations to attend the June 22 meeting and bring at least five members to the meeting.

A motion to receive the Stewardship Report was made by Dr. Kostas and seconded by Sophia Nanis. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

IX. Building Master Plan Update – none. To be discussed at a future meeting.

X. Old Business

- a. Arthur Pavlo expressed concern that the bleachers in the Demotses Center would not be repaired or replaced, and he inquired as the how the overall gym floor process was handled. Jim Limberakis, member of the Buildings and Maintenance Committee of the Parish Council, replied that a representative of the manufacturer examined the bleachers and recommended not to keep them given their current state, the cost to repair and the risk of damaging the new gym floor upon re-installation. Bill Stephanides commented that we should have spent \$2,000-\$3,000 to have the bleachers reconditioned.

Dr. Varinos noted that he spoke to a bleacher vendor, The Pappas Company, which indicated that the old bleachers could probably be salvaged with some minimal repairs and maintenance but that we should first speak to the flooring company. Dr. Varinos noted that we emailed Mr. Venios regarding this but did not receive a reply.

Mr. Venios briefly described the timeline of the gym floor work and shouldered any blame for the decision not to reinstall the old bleachers on the new floor.

Ms. Pam Katsiris commented that the bleachers are necessary for many events and asked if the replacement of the bleachers was covered by insurance. Mr. Venios replied that they were not covered because they were not directly damaged by the water. Pam asked the cost to replace the bleachers, to which Mr. Venios replied about \$17,000.

Spero Xerras asked how much it costs to demolish the old bleachers. Mr. Venios replied \$2,000. Mr. Xerras asked what is the purpose of committees such as the Building & Maintenance Committee if the President of the Parish Council can override decisions. Fr. Chris commented that the while the committee process did not work as smoothly as it should have, that there was general consensus among the Parish Council.

Bill Stephanides asked how much the insurance proceeds to replace the floor were. Mr. Venios replied \$79,750, of which not all has been received. Mr. Venios noted the total claim was approximately \$102,000. Mr. Stephanides asked if the Parish Council was aware of the amount of the proceeds, to which Mr. Venios replied yes and that it was discussed at Parish Council meetings.

Dr. Kostas asked if the Building and Maintenance Committee submitted a gym floor report and whether the Parish Council acted on such report. Mr. Foukas defended his actions to obtain a cease and desist order to stop the gym floor work because he observed that the work was not being performed to the manufacturer's specification. Mr. Foukas read aloud a letter sent to Peabody Building Inspector signed by Mr. Venios, Fr. Chris, Eric Zisis, Arthur Vasilakopoulos, and Jim Limberakis, authorizing the floor work to continue. Mr. Venios noted that the cease and desist order obtained by Paul Foukas was done so unilaterally and was not authorized by the Building and Maintenance Committee. Mr. Venios indicated the work needed to be completed by July 1.

XI. New Business

- a. A motion was made by Rhea Lesage and seconded by Effie Chigas, as follows:
 - Summer furlough for part-time secretary, estimated savings \$2,100
 - Custodian to work part-time during the summer, estimated savings \$5,000.
 - Petition the Metropolis to re-assign the assistant priest, estimated savings \$38,000, assuming reassignment is effective July 1, 2009.
 - Charge tuition for Greek School, potential income \$25,000.

Prior to voting on the motion, there were the following comments and questions:

Mr. Venios commented that if we petition the Metropolis to reassign the assistant priest, there exists the likelihood that we may not be assigned an assistant priest in the future, given the shortage of priests. Mr. Venios commented that without the part-time secretary there would be no Church Bulletin. Mr. Venios commented that if the custodian was part-time during the summer, the floors (not the gym floor) would not be stripped and waxed. Mr. Venios commented that the reassignment of the assistant priest would mean fewer sacraments, fewer hospital visits, etc.

Spero Xerras urged that we keep Fr. Panteli at any cost.

Peter Franggos commented that the Parish Council discussed and debated the merits of the three expense reduction proposals, and although there was not unanimity, the decision as a Parish Council was to not propose the reductions.

Effie Chigas commented that the bulletin could still be published without the part-time secretary. Mr. Venios disagreed.

George Rockas commented that Fr. Panteli is a fabulous priest and we should treasure him, and that we should not expect Fr. Chris to solely administer to a community as large as ours.

Bill Stephanides commented that we cannot afford a full-time second priest.

Lola Kalivas suggested that we include the proposals in the bulletin so that parishioners can understand the potential cuts. Mr. Venios agreed this was a good idea.

Pam Katsiris asked why we committed in prior years to transition from a part-time assistant priest to a full-time assistant priest. Mr. Venios replied that it would be very difficult to identify a full-time Proistamenos to replace Fr. Andrew if the assistant priest was only part-time.

Regarding the motion on the floor, an amendment was suggested to vote individually on each of the proposals. Rhea Lesage accepted such amendment to the motion. An amendment was suggested to remove the proposal to petition for the reassignment of the assistant priest. Ms. Lesage rejected such amendment.

Given the time of the evening, a motion was made by Lola Kalivas and seconded by Pam Katsiris to adjourn the meeting and reconvene on Tuesday, August 4, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

XII. Adjournment:

At 11:15 p.m. a motion to adjourn was made by Bill Katsulis and seconded by Victor Fanikos. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicholas Collins
Secretary

Speros C. Venios
President

Rev. Christopher P. Foustoukos
Proistamenos