

**SAINT MARY'S PARISH COUNCIL**

**BY-LAWS**

**Article I - Membership**

**A. Parish Council Composition**

The council will consist of the following members:

1. Five (5) At-Large Representatives seated via a parish election;
2. The chairperson (or the chairperson's designee) of each of the Standing Committees provided for by Article VI, Sections B, C, D, and E of these By-Laws;
3. A representative of the Finance Committee (or that representative's designee, provided that in the case of a designee the designee shall not be a voting member of the Parish Council), elected annually by the Finance Committee in May of each year, or at such time as a vacancy in such position may occur;
4. A representative of the St. Mary's School Board, (or that representative's designee, provided that in the case of a designee the designee shall not be a voting member of the Parish Council), elected annually in May of each year, or at such time as a vacancy in such position may occur, by the St. Mary's School Board and who shall be a parishioner of St. Mary's Church;
5. The Pastor and assigned clergy; and
6. Two (2) youth members to be selected in accordance with the procedures provided for in Article III, subject to the eligibility requirements of Article I, Section B.2.

**B. Parish Council Eligibility**

1. All adult members of the parish who have received the Sacrament of Confirmation and are 18 years of age or older are eligible to serve on the Parish Council.
2. Eligible youth members must be at least 16 years of age and must either have received the Sacrament of Confirmation, or be active in the Youth Group.

C. Voting.

Except as provided in Article I, Sections I.A.3. and I.A.4., and Article VIII, Section D.6.c. and d., all Parish Council members shall be full voting members with one (1) vote on all matters put to a vote.

D. Terms of Office

1. At-large Representatives shall be elected by the parish at-large for three-year terms commencing with the 2015 Parish Council elections. Elections of At-Large Representatives shall be staggered such that two (2) representatives shall be elected to full 3-year terms in 2015 and three (3) representatives shall be elected to full 3-year terms in 2016. There will be no election in 2017. The election cycle will continue thereafter with elections in 2018 and 2019, but not in 2020, and so on.

2. Members of the Parish Council shall hold only one seat on the Council.

E. Term Limits

1. At-Large members may be elected to no more than two (2) consecutive 3-year terms. At-Large members who have been elected to two (2) full 3-year terms shall not be eligible to stand for election to the Parish Council again except following the expiration of one (1) year.

2. There shall be no term limits for Standing Committee chairs or the representatives of the Finance Committee and School Board.

F. Parish Council Vacancies

1. A vacancy on the Parish Council shall occur when a member retires, resigns, dies, ceases to be a member of the parish or otherwise fails to meet the eligibility requirements as outlined in Article I, Section B.

G. Filling of At-Large Council Vacancies

1. A vacancy of an At-Large seat on the Parish Council (those council members elected by the whole parish) shall be filled by the council appointing the un-elected candidate from the most-recent election who received the greatest number of votes.

2. In the event that there are no un-elected candidates from the most-recent election, the President of the Parish Council, with the approval of the Executive Committee, shall appoint a qualified parishioner to fill the unexpired term.

3. Any member chosen to fill a vacancy shall be eligible to serve two (2) full three year terms thereafter as defined in Sections D and E of this Article I.

H. Accessibility

All Parish Council meetings and activities are open to all members of the parish, except for the following:

1. Matters considered by the Parish Council in Executive Session; and
2. Meetings of the Executive Committee of the Parish Council, as defined in Article V of these By-Laws.

I. Separation of Duties

1. Per Article I.A.3, the representative of the Finance Committee, elected by the Finance Committee, shall be an independent member of the Parish Council. The Finance Committee shall be governed by its own policies and procedures and shall not, itself, be considered a committee of the Parish Council, but shall work in cooperation with the Parish Council.
2. Development and implementation of fiscal policies and programs, property management, and advice on parish staff hiring and evaluation are reserved to the Finance Committee and the Pastor, and are outside the scope of the duties and responsibilities of the Parish Council.
3. Per Article I.A.4, the representative of the St. Mary's School Board, elected by the School Board, shall be an independent member of the Parish Council. The St. Mary's School Board shall be governed by its own policies and procedures and shall not, itself, be considered a committee of the Parish Council, but shall work in cooperation with the Parish Council.

**Article II - Selection and Election of At Large Parish Council Members**

A. The nomination and election of At Large Parish council members shall be the responsibility of the Nominating Committee, provided for per Article VI of these Bylaws, which shall ensure the orderly administration and integrity of the nominating and election process in accordance with the procedures set forth in this Article II.

B. Communication with Parish

1. A general announcement shall be made to the Parish that nominees are needed for the election of Parish Council members.
2. The announcement shall include the purpose of the Council, its role and function, qualification requirements for candidates and the length of terms for members.

C. Nominations

1. All parishioners may self-nominate or nominate others.

2. All efforts shall be made to solicit nominees who will well represent the diversity of the parish. The Council should strive to be representative of the people of the Parish with respect to age, gender, race, economic status, and viewpoints.
3. The Pastor may, in his discretion, advise against any nominee for good cause.

D. Pre-Election Process

1. A time line shall be established to allow ample time for nominations to be submitted, candidates to be contacted for orientation and time for discernment, and consent of candidates.
2. The Nominating Committee shall strive to ensure that for each election there are at least two more nominees than the number of seats to be filled in order to guarantee a genuine election.
3. Following the approval of a slate of candidates, plans shall be made to prepare bulletin and website notices and posters prior to the occurrence of voting.
4. Each candidate shall submit a photo and brief description of his/her qualifications and reasons for wishing to serve on the Parish Council.
5. Candidate information shall be used to introduce candidates to the parish via the bulletin for two weeks, as well as via the parish website and any posters to be displayed.

E. Election Process and Timing

1. The voting procedure shall be clearly defined by the Nominating Committee.
2. Ballots shall be cast at all masses over the course of two weekends in May of each year in which an election is required per these By-Laws. Votes may be cast only by members of the parish who have reached the age of 16 years and have received the sacrament of confirmation.
3. Absentee ballots may be obtained at the parish office.
4. Completed ballots shall be tabulated by the election committee. In the event of a tie, the winner shall be determined by a vote of simple majority of the sitting Parish Council, via secret ballot.
5. Those not elected shall make up the pool of candidates from which Council vacancies shall be filled per Article I., Section G.
6. After all candidates have been informed of the election results, an announcement of new members will be placed in the bulletin and on the parish website.

**Article III - Youth Members of the Parish Council**

The process and timeline for the selection of Youth Members to the Council shall be determined by the Director of the Youth Group program in consultation with the Parish Council.

**Article IV - Officers of the Parish Council**

A. Parish Council Officers

1. Parish Council officers shall include a President, Vice President and Secretary.
2. The Council, after prayerful consideration, with a quorum of the members present (as defined in Article VIII, Section D.6.a), shall select the officers who can best serve the needs of the community and the Council for the ensuing year.
3. The selections shall take place at the June meeting each year.
4. The President must have been a member of the Council in the previous year, in order to maintain continuity, unless an exception is made by the Executive Committee in place for that previous year.
5. Each officer shall serve a one year term, following which he or she may be re-elected to the same or any other office for as long as he or she is a member in good standing of the Parish Council.

B. Duties of Officers

1. The duties of the President of the Parish Council shall include:
  - a. Preparing the agenda for Parish Council meetings, in consultation with the Pastor and Executive Committee;
  - b. Chairing all regular and special meetings of the Parish Council;
  - c. Responsibility for the basic functions of the Parish Council in accordance with its constitution;
  - d. Appointment of Ad Hoc committees as needed; and
  - e. Ensuring that candidate orientation meetings are conducted.
2. The duties of the Vice President of the Parish Council shall include:
  - a. Acting as President in the absence of the President;
  - b. Chairing the Nominating Committee; and
  - c. Assisting in overall responsibility for the functioning of the Council.

3. The duties of the Secretary of the Parish Council shall include:
  - a. Recording, publishing and distributing minutes for all Council meetings, including distribution to parish website;
  - b. Recording attendance and absences at all meetings;
  - c. Assisting in the overall responsibility associated with the basic functions of the Council; and
  - d. Responsibility for any and all correspondence of the Council.

**Article V - Executive Committee**

- A. There shall be at all times an Executive Committee of the Parish Council comprised of the Officers of the Parish Council and the Pastor.
- B. The membership of the Executive Committee may, from time to time, be expanded as deemed necessary by members of the Executive Committee.
- C. Members shall serve on the Executive Committee for the term of their office or position.
- D. Executive Committee Tasks
  1. Planning the agenda for Parish Council meetings;
  2. Reviewing absences of Parish Council members at regularly scheduled Council meetings;
  3. Reviewing the activities of the Committees to ensure they are supportive of the mission statement of the parish;
  4. Reviewing the Parish Council Constitution once per year and recommending amendments as appropriate.

**Article VI - Parish Council Standing Committees**

The following committees shall be permanent Standing Committees of the Parish Council with duties and responsibilities as specified:

- A. The Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall consist of the Vice-President of the Parish Council, who shall serve as chairman of the Nominating Committee, and such other members who need not be members of the Parish Council but who shall be appointed by the Parish Council. The Nominating Committee shall have the duties and responsibilities set forth in Article II of these By Laws.
  
- B. The Liturgy Committee. The Liturgy Committee shall consist of those members of the Parish who shall be appointed by the Pastor in consultation with the Parish Council and shall have the following duties and responsibilities:
  - 1. To grow in familiarity with the Church's liturgical documents and Archdiocesan guidelines for the celebration of the Liturgy and Sacraments;
  - 2. To review, as necessary, and make recommendations for the improvement of the Liturgy consistent with liturgical documents and Archdiocesan guidelines for the celebration of the Liturgy and Sacraments;
  - 3. To assist the Pastor in preparing the Liturgy, especially during the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter; and
  - 4. To promote an appropriate environment for worship, and to foster communication, collaboration and consultation among all participants in the liturgy, especially those in charge of the scheduling of lectors, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, sacristans, music ministries, altar servers, ushers, greeters.
  
- C. The Religious Education Committee. The Religious Education Committee shall consist of those members of the Parish who shall be appointed by the Pastor in consultation with the Parish Council and shall have the following duties and responsibilities:
  - 1. To review the religious education of children in elementary, middle, and high school, and to make recommendations, as appropriate, for the improvement of the same;
  - 2. To coordinate and communicate with St. Mary's School and to serve as a liaison between the School and the Parish in matters of religious education;
  - 3. To review the Vacation Bible School Program and make recommendations, as appropriate, for the improvement of the same; and
  - 4. To review Youth Ministries and make recommendations, as appropriate, for the improvement of the same.

- D. The Adult Enrichment and Spiritual Development Committee. The Adult Enrichment and Spiritual Development Committee shall consist of those members of the Parish who shall be appointed by the Pastor in consultation with the Parish Council and shall have the following duties and responsibilities:
1. To grow in familiarity with church teachings and follow Archdiocesan guidelines regarding education and catechesis;
  2. To determine the needs for growth in faith formation in St. Mary's Parish;
  3. To suggest and implement adult enrichment programs as needed; and
  4. To review all adult education and spiritual programs, including the Bible Study Groups, Men's Prayer Groups, Prayer Lines, Retreat Groups, and Small Christian Communities, and make recommendations, as appropriate, for the improvement of the same.
- E. The Social Action and Outreach Committee. The Social Action and Outreach Committee shall consist of those members of the Parish who shall be appointed by the Pastor in consultation with the Parish Council and shall have the following duties and responsibilities:
1. To grow in familiarity with the Church's social teachings and Archdiocesan guidelines;
  2. To promote sensitivity and proactive response to the needs of others in our communities, including needs related to (but not limited to) poverty, hunger, homelessness, health care and discrimination;
  3. To promote a sense of evangelization and outreach within the Parish so that the Gospel will be preached to others in word and deed;
  4. To promote a welcoming attitude and attention to the needs of others, especially to new parishioners; and
  5. To review the work of those who are already engaged in various activities of social action, outreach, and evangelization and make recommendations, as appropriate, for the improvement of the same.



## **Article VII - Ad Hoc Committees**

- A. Ad Hoc Committees shall be authorized by the Parish Council on an as needed basis to coordinate and implement policies of the Council.
- B. Ad Hoc Committees shall exist to accomplish specific objectives as identified by the Parish Council and the Parish Council shall receive regular progress reports concerning the efforts and activities of all Ad Hoc Committees.

## **Article VIII - Parish Council Meetings**

### **A. Meeting Rules**

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the Parish Council in all cases to which the rules are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these Bylaws and any special rules of order the Parish Council may adopt.

### **B. Schedule**

- 1. The Parish Council shall meet monthly from September through May each year, inclusive, except where the Executive Committee in its discretion, may determine that there is insufficient business for the Parish Council to meet. Scheduled meetings may be delayed or postponed with notification of at least 3 days in advance of meeting.
- 2. An annual meeting shall take place each June.
- 3. The schedule of meeting dates shall be prepared during the initial meeting of the newly constituted Council each year.
- 4. The schedule of meeting dates shall be published in the bulletin, posted on the website, and distributed via e-mail and other electronic means.

### **C. Meeting Communications**

- 1. The Secretary of the Parish Council shall post the agenda for each meeting on the Parish web site one week prior to meetings.
  - a. Submissions for inclusion on agenda should be submitted 3 days prior to scheduled meeting.
  - b. Parishioners may request in writing to have an issue considered for inclusion on the agenda.
    - 1. Agenda inclusion shall be at the discretion of the Council President or the Executive Committee

2. Issues may be tabled until the next meeting, discussed in committee or discussed in a different forum.
  2. The Secretary of the Parish Council shall post summaries of all discussions and decisions made by the Council to the parish website within one week of meeting.
- D. Meeting structure
1. The President shall preside as chair at all meetings of the Parish Council. In the absence of the President, the Vice President shall preside as Chair. In the absence of the President and Vice President the Pastor shall serve as Chair.
  2. Meetings shall start promptly and every effort should be made to keep the length of meetings under 90 minutes.
  3. All regularly-scheduled meetings of the council are open to all parishioners.
    - a. Parishioners who are not members of the Parish Council may be present as observers.
    - b. Parishioners wishing to make comments to the Council may do so during the “open forum” portion of Council meetings.
  4. Order of business. The order of business at regularly scheduled meetings shall generally proceed as follows:
    - a. Opening prayer
    - b. Attendance
    - c. Consideration and approval of minutes of previous meeting
    - d. Committee Reports
    - e. Old business
    - f. New business
    - g. Recommendations to the Pastor (if any)
    - h. Pastor’s report
    - i. Open forum
    - j. Closing prayer
  5. Consensus
    - a. The Council shall strive for consensus in all decisions.

- b. The Council shall seek fair resolution once all members' views have been seriously considered. The Chair, in his or her reasonable discretion, may limit discussion he or she deems repetitive or not germane.
- c. In the event of a lack of consensus:
  - 1. The President may request further discussion in an attempt to reach consensus;
  - 2. The President may table the matter until the next meeting; or
  - 3. The President may put the matter to a vote of the Parish Council.

6. Council voting

- a. A quorum of the Council must be present for all questions or issues requiring a vote of the Council. A quorum is here defined as a simple majority of council members (half of the filled positions of the council plus one).
- b. A simple majority vote, presuming the presence of a quorum, is sufficient to reach a decision or pass a resolution.
- c. The President shall not have a vote except where his or her vote may produce or break a tie.
- d. Inasmuch as the Parish Council is an advisory body to the Pastor, the Pastor shall not have a vote.

7. Pastoral response

- a. Under Church law, the Pastor has the right to veto any decision made by the Parish Council.
- b. The Pastor shall provide the Council with the rationale for any veto unless there is serious reason not to do so.

E. Special Meetings

A special meeting of the Parish Council may be convened by the Pastor or President of the Council. All Council members shall be notified, including by e-mail or other electronic means, as soon as possible.

F. Absences

- 1. A member of the Council shall notify the Secretary by either phone or e-mail if he/she is unable to attend a scheduled meeting or arrive on time.

2. Members who are elected or appointed to the Parish Council pursuant to Article I, Section A.1.-4., who are absent from two (2) consecutive meetings or three (3) meetings in any given year without sufficient reason or without notifying the President of the Council, will be considered to have voluntarily resigned their seats on the Parish Council.
3. Prior to a member being deemed resigned, the President shall assess the reason(s) for the absences. Absences may be excused for situations involving, but not limited to, illness or business trips.
4. An affected member may present information pertinent to the issue of voluntary resignation.

**Article IX - Amendments**

- A. This document may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the full Parish Council membership.
- B. Any amendment must be proposed at a meeting prior to the meeting at which the vote will take place, allowing council members to have time to consider and discuss the proposal