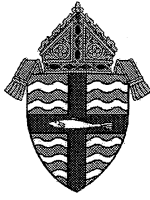


Diocese of Madison



Policies Relating to Parish Finance Councils

A. Policy – Parish Finance Council Definition

The Parish Finance Council is a consultative body of lay persons, mandated by canon law, whose purpose is to advise the pastor in matters pertaining to the financial affairs of the parish.

Canon 537 of the Code of Canon Law states, “Each parish is to have a Finance Council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the Diocesan Bishop; in the Council, the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the Pastor in the administration of parish goods with due regard for the prescription of Canon 532.”

The pastor has authority from the Bishop and the universal law of the Church to decide and act on behalf of the parish (Canon 532). The Parish Finance Council is strictly advisory to the pastor, and its decisions/recommendations are valid only when accepted and ratified by the pastor. It is important, therefore, that the pastor be central to the deliberations and the functioning of the Parish Finance Council. The relationship between the Finance Council and the pastor is one of support and mutual cooperation.

B. Policy – Membership of the Parish Finance Council

1. The Finance Council shall be comprised of appointed, *ex-officio*, and non-voting members.
2. There shall be not fewer than three and not more than eight appointed members, all of whom must be fully initiated, practicing Catholics; at least 18 years old; registered members of the parish who are reputable, knowledgeable, and skilled in financial, accounting, insurance, legal, fundraising, and/or building construction and maintenance matters; known for their prudent judgment and understanding of Church operations; sensitive to spiritual and pastoral issues; and abreast of Church developments.
3. Appointments shall be made by the pastor.

4. At the discretion of the pastor, one representative from the building/maintenance committee, one representative from the cemetery board/committee, and one representative of a building project committee may serve as non-voting members on the Council.
5. The Parish Business Manager/Accountant/Bookkeeper shall not be a member of the Parish Finance Council. However, his/her attendance at Council meetings may be helpful and at times required.
6. Members of the Parish Finance Council may not be related to each other (e.g. husband and wife), nor to the pastor or the Parochial Vicar, nor to any employee of the Parish.
7. Dual membership in the Finance Council and the Parish Council or other committees/boards in the parish is highly discouraged to avoid conflicts of interest. However, ex-officio, non-voting members such as the parish trustee would be acceptable as members of both the Finance Council and the Parish Council.

C. Policy – Officers of the Parish Finance Council

1. The officers of the Council shall be a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, and a secretary. They shall be appointed from the Council by the pastor at the annual transition meeting.
2. Ex-officio members are ineligible to serve as Council officers or committee chairpersons.
3. The pastor of the parish presides over meetings of the Parish Finance Council and receives the Council's proposals.
4. The chairperson assists the pastor in coordinating the work of the Council, in preparing for meetings, and in implementing Council proposals which have been accepted by the pastor. The chairperson performs other such tasks as may be delegated to him/her including, if the pastor so desires, chairing and conducting the regular meetings of the Council.
5. The chairperson's name and contact information must be published on the front of the Parish Sunday Bulletin. He/she is an active participant in the parish's finances, and therefore a means whereby parishioners can express their concerns about parish finances must be provided.

D. Policy – Meetings of the Parish Finance Council

1. The Parish Finance Council shall hold regular meetings at least four times a year (monthly meetings are highly recommended).
2. Special meetings of the Parish Finance Council may be called by the pastor, the chairperson, or a quorum. A quorum consists of two-thirds of the total membership. No business other than that stated as the purpose shall be conducted at a special meeting.
3. Meetings and agendas shall be arranged by the chairperson in consultation with and with the approval of the pastor. The pastor and members are expected to attend all meetings.
4. Priests and deacons of the parish should be invited to all meetings of the Parish Finance Council and encouraged to attend.
5. Parish Finance Council meetings shall be held at such time, place, and date as the Council may designate. Prayer shall be an integral part of the meeting.
6. Advance notice of the time and place of the meetings of the Council shall be published in the parish bulletin, and all members of the parish shall be entitled and welcome to attend as observers.
7. Minutes of the Parish Finance Council meetings must be recorded and retained by the secretary. These minutes are an important record of Council activities and should be made available upon request to parishioners who are interested in Council activities.
8. For the Parish Finance Council to fulfill its mission of review and deliberation, fiscal information such as parish financial reports and records must be accessible to Council members. Such information must be exchanged on a confidential basis.
9. The pastor and chairperson may call for the creation of committees of the Parish Finance Council to deliberate and advise on specific areas – for example, a Budget Committee, an Audit Committee, a Strategic Planning Committee, or an Investment Committee.
10. While Council meetings are normally open to parishioners, the pastor reserves the right to close the meeting to visitors. When a question arises at a Council meeting that relates to a person's right to privacy, the Council may request the absence of visitors for that portion of the meeting. The content of the closed session is confidential, not recorded as part of the formal minutes of the meeting nor made public.

E. Policy – Mission of the Parish Finance Council

The mission of the Parish Finance Council is to assist the pastor in the following ways:

1. Assist the pastor with the preparation of the annual budget for review by June 1, for the following fiscal year, which begins on July 1.
2. Assist the pastor with the preparation of quarterly financial reports.
3. Assist the pastor with the Annual Financial Report, as of June 30. The report is to be prepared and submitted to the Diocese in a timely manner, but no later than August 31.
4. Assist the pastor with the preparation and publication of the Annual Financial Statements and a Report for the Parish Council and all parishioners at large. This should be completed by September 30.
5. Evaluate and make recommendations to the pastor regarding the needs and effectiveness of the parish's support through the offertory as well as the various fundraising activities that the Parish initiates.
6. Assist the pastor with the development of a long-range plan, for the financing of necessary repairs, renovations, and purchase of equipment as needed.
7. Assist the pastor with the development of a plan for systematic repayment of any parish debt.
8. Assist the pastor in monitoring all parish fundraising programs and investments.
9. Assist the pastor in ensuring that appropriate measures are taken to safeguard the assets of the parish from loss or damage.
10. Assist the pastor in monitoring the implementation of all diocesan policies relative to financial matters, detailed in the Parish Manual of Financial Policies & Procedures.
11. Propose to the pastor specific parish spending guidelines.