

30 Oct 2008

MEMO FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Special Meeting of the Parish Council

1. A special meeting of the St. Francis of Assisi Parish Council was held on 22 Oct 2008 to discuss updated information on the Building Project received earlier from Bishop Farrell on 17 Sep and confirmed later in a meeting with the Diocese on 16 Oct. Also attending were heads of the parish ministries and the parish staff.

2. GENERAL BACKGROUND: Charlie Donner, Parish Council, filled in on the design discussion for Steve Hulsey, Chairman of the Building Committee, who was unable to attend and also briefed the Diocesan financial rules.

a. Charlie indicated the parish has had many trials and challenges in the last few months, several of which were unforeseen and significant.—among them:

- Father Timothy resigned in June and the project was paused per Canon Law (we need a Pastor to make new decision)
- The economy has become increasingly grim, which may affect our contributions
- We learned in Mid-Sep that Holy Cross parish in the Diocese of Ft. Worth will move from its current location in the Colony to the SW corner of Teel and Lebanon. Although we don't have an exact idea of the implications, the move is nevertheless a consideration that we believe will not have a near-term on building our church.
- Since starting the project, leadership at the Diocese changed with a new Bishop who is new to the project and to our design
- Cost and design considerations came increasingly into play.

b. In an effort to learn more about “rumors” floating throughout the community, our parish leadership had wanted since early July to meet with the Diocese and the Bishop to clarify plans for our new church. Unfortunately, Bishop Farrell was not available to meet before mid-September due to Business in Rome and vacation. Members of the Parish Council and the Building and Finance committees met with the Bishop at St. Francis on 17 Sep.

c. At the 17 Sep meeting, the Bishop presented new guidelines for our church project concerning budget and loan requirements along with the concern he expressed about the complexity and size of the current design. He did confirm, however, the need for our community to have a 1500-seat church.

d. Parish leaders recognized the need to clarify with the Diocesan committees what the Bishop has said before we could get this new information and its impact to the St. Francis community. These items were subsequently discussed in a meeting with leaders from the Parish and Finance councils, the Building Committee and staff with Msgr. Joseph on October 8th and were later further clarified on 16 Oct at the Diocese with members of the Parish leadership.

e. Based upon the confirmation and clarification received from the Diocese on 16 Oct, the following is provided for this meeting. Two meetings are scheduled in the Great Hall to update the parish with the same information; one on 30 Oct and another on 6 Nov for the Hispanic community.

3. DESIGN INFO:

a. The Diocese had approved the construction design documents only to the 25 percent. The parish was requested to return and submit the 75 percent drawings in July/August—Father Timothy resigned in June and the project was paused.

b. In July and August, Msgr. Joseph informed us Diocesan concerns regarding our project and building budget, complexity of the design, details of the design, spaces in the building, coffee bar, chapels, etc., not being able to see the entire community from every seat, etc., these items were addressed by Bishop Farrell in our 17 Sep meeting and then clarified in our later meeting with the Diocesan leaders on 22 Oct. The point behind all these meetings, after our meeting with the Bishop, was to confirm and coordinate the information as to the details and impacts.

c. In the 16 Oct meeting, Msgr. Fisher, head of the Diocesan Sacred Places Commission, indicated the need for to design a building of “Noble Simplicity” as per Vatican II and the Built of Living Stone Documents approved by the church (Which we have been using).

d. Msgr. Fischer also prefers inclusion of more natural materials, wood, stone, granite linking the spirituality of St. Francis and the way he lived his life. The church will be focused on this spirituality, the altar and the service and reflect the parishes Hispanic heritage. Parish attendees were reassured that we will build a beautiful church, a spiritual church focused and centered on the altar.

e. Bottom Line: As a result of the direction from Bishop Farrell confirmed in subsequent meetings with the Diocese, the parish will not be building our new church as designed. We do know the new design will be less expensive, less complex and have a “noble simplicity.

4. FINANCIAL INFO:

- a. The parish must have 50 percent of the total project in cash before construction start—we are in discussions with the Diocese about whether we can count money already spent as cash.
- b. The parish cannot borrow more than \$10 million—that is all the Bishop can approve without going to Rome.
- c. Can only amortize a loan for no more than 15 years.
- d. These requirements point us to a maximum project total of \$20 million.
- e. Before Father Timothy left, our financial team had visited with 6 banks, 4 were very interested in our business. We will visit with those banks again once the final budget is approved.
- f. Charlie indicated St. Francis parish has an A credit rating. This rating is excellent and indicates we are viewed very well by banks due to paying off our debts and is important for any loan we may obtain in addition to funds gained from the Capital Campaign. Clearly, with the new financial rules we will be spending less and asking for a smaller loan.

5. NEXT STEPS:

- a. Update Msgr. Pichard, our new pastor, who will work with the architect, our Building Committee, and the diocese to design a building that will meet all of our spiritual and financial requirements. This process will be facilitated by Msgr. Joseph who has been appointed by the Bishop to be the coordinator all Diocesan construction projects. We have Msgr. Joseph full support and commitment to help guide the entire team through the process to design a church that looks like a church, meets our spiritual needs and provides an outstanding and beautiful place of worship. We will be revising our financial model to show how we can pay for the new design that will be shared with the parish.
- b. We believe it will be after January before project activities resume in any manner. Msgr. Pichard's initial and most important focus as our new pastor will be on the season of Advent and learning about our community. Focus on the Building Project will come soon enough. We will report back as soon as that is determined.

SIGNED

Lisa Nelson

Secretary