

Metropolitan Council Report to the Archdiocesan Assembly for the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh
and Western Pennsylvania February 27, 2021
DuBois, PA
Reported by: Ray Steeb

To say it has been an odd year would be to say the least. The Metropolitan Council (MC) did meet in person from February 5, 2020, to February 6, 2020, just prior to the shut down of most travel and most in person meetings in March 2020. The MC fall meetings were held via Zoom on August 27, 2020, September 16, 2020, September 17, 2020 and November 19, 2020 of this year. Ray Steeb is on the Finance and Investment Committee (FIC) and Property Committee (PC) of the MC. In addition, there are two subcommittees of the PC, the Westwood Property Sale subcommittee and the “move” subcommittee which is focused on the relocation of the Chancery, Archives and His Beatitude to Washington D.C. Fr. Nikolai Breckenridge is on the Internal Governance Committee.

Amongst many topics discussed, these seemed to have the most interest by the MC members present:

Move the Orthodox Church in America from New York to Washington, D.C.

There was much discussion on the reasons to move the church headquarters to the capital city of the largest country it represents most of which can be seen in the February 2020 MC meeting minutes. The decision was to move ahead with plans to sell the Westwood property, secure the archives in an appropriate location, and relocate the chancery and His Beatitude to the nation’s capital.

There are four distinct components to the relocation process, as articulated in the resolution adopted by the Metropolitan Council and approved by the Holy Synod: 1) the sale of the present building and property, 2) the identification of a location for the central administration offices, 3) the identification of a location for the Archives of the Orthodox Church in America, and 4) the identification of a location for the residence of the Primate.

Westwood Property Sale

The Westwood Property currently houses the OCA Chancery, the OCA Archives, and the residence of the Primate. It is currently for sale through a real estate brokerage on Long Island for \$6.5 Million. We have had one interested party that proposed a “bottom feeder” offer which the MC rejected. The moving of the Chancery and Archives are being discussed and their timing is meant to coincide with the disposition of the property.

Departments

There were ten departments in the OCA prior to the 19th All American Council. One of the main topics presented to and discussed by the MC during the February meeting was what the departments would look like going forward. Questioned were the needs vs. the expectations vs. the requirements vs. the reality of parishes across the OCA. The discussion surrounded the

use of part-time services to fulfill these expectations to meet budgetary constraints and to acquire the proper subject matter expertise.

All American Council

The 20th All American Council (ACC) has been postponed to July 11, 2022 to July 15, 2022 in Baltimore, MD at the Hilton Baltimore Inner Harbor. The Hilton has agreed to honor the same deal we had for the 2021 meeting.

Finance

PPP loan for the national church was applied for in March 2020 and received in the amount of \$195,000 some of which is being shared with the Pension Board. Two archdioceses took advantage of the deferral of 50% for 2020 that would be caught up and paid in 2021, Washington, DC and Western Pennsylvania. All other archdioceses paid their full proportional payment or more depending on revenue.

In general, the OCA spending for the 2020 budget year was significantly less than budgeted due primarily to the reduced travel of His Beatitude. In general, the OCA revenues were about what was budgeted (even without the PPP loan) so the budget surplus for the 2020 calendar year was better than expected. The MC has not determined how the fund balance increase will be handled moving forward.

Pension Board

The Pension Board presented a proposal to increase the contribution by parishes from 8% to 14% to 16% of priests salaries. The question was asked, if all parishes fairly participated would our pension fund be underfunded...the answer was, we will get back to you. So there was an alternate proposal that was accepted that changed the 8% to 10% effective on January 1, 2021 with a future report by the pension board to the MC requested.

There will be a review of each parish and their contribution to the pension fund.