

## ABBREVIATED GUIDELINES FOR PARISH COUNCILS

The following abbreviated Guidelines have been developed in response to questions received and out of the experience of a number of our parishes. The governing text remains the Statutes of the Archdiocese; this document's aim is to try to offer a more detailed view of the Parish Council work.

The PARISH COUNCIL GUIDELINES are intended to:

- assist existing Parish Councils to review and improve their current operating procedures, as well as assisting Parishes as they prepare to elect new councils;
- encourage Parish Councils to reach their full potential as they work for the good of the Church.

### WHAT IS A PARISH COUNCIL?

Election to serve on the Parish Council is a ministry and all those who serve are called to represent Christ and the Orthodox faith to all whom they meet in every aspect of life. The Parish Council is responsible to the Parish General Assembly and to the Archbishop for conducting all Parish affairs in keeping with the mission, aims and purposes of the Church as set forth in the Statutes. The Parish Council shall be deemed to mean also Board of Trustees or Board of Directors when such designations are required by local statute.

The Parish Council *is* not another lay organization of the Parish, but rather a shared effort of the clergy and laity to collaborate *in* the ministry of the parish community.

### GOALS OF A PARISH COUNCIL

The parish priest and the Parish Council are together the executive body of the parish. The main purposes of the Council are to give direction, to serve and to be catalyst for development. The Council should:

- advise and take decisions with the parish priest on present and future directions for the parish community; and
- be a model of Christian unity and cooperation to the parish and the Church.

The primary tasks of the Council are:

1. to form itself into a prayerful and united Christian body;
2. to develop a parish mission statement;
3. to establish goals and objectives for the parish and set a strategy to for their implementation;
4. to coordinate parish-related activities and insure follow-through on goals, objectives and priorities;
5. to promote meaningful dialogue within the parish, followed by fair and reasoned decision-making;
6. to identify and encourage the use of the gifts and talents of all parishioners for the good of the whole Church.

Under the leadership of the Priest, the Parish Council shall:

- (a) assist the Priest in the administration of the affairs and ministries of the Parish;
- (b) establish appropriate committees, including but not limited to Stewardship, Finance, Fund - raising, Planning and Real Estate;
- (c) prepare budgets for the Parish's administration and ministries and see to the financial well-being of the Parish;
- (d) provide for the Priest's remuneration and benefits in accordance with the Clergy Compensation Guideline of the Archdiocese;
- (e) provide financing for the salaries of the Parish personnel;

- (f) provide for financial resources for the Parish's administration and for the Parish's spiritual, educational and other ministries and expenses;
- (g) buy, sell or mortgage Parish property, subject to the approval of the Parish Assembly and the provisions of the Statutes;
- (h) provide for payments and assessments for support of the Archdiocese as fixed by the Congress;
- (i) submit to the Archbishop and the Archdiocese, at the end of each year, the annual financial statement of the Parish, certified by the Parish Auditors, as well as the Parish budget for the ensuing year;
- (j) submit annual Parish profile reports that may be required by the Archdiocese;
- (k) adhere to the Statutes and decisions promulgated by the Congress.
- (l) and otherwise provide for compliance with any other policies, rules, regulations or requirements of the Archdiocese.

## **ROLES**

The parish priest is to provide a ministry of spiritual leadership and pastoral supervision to the parish community. He bears the ultimate responsibility for the development of the faith community. Pastoral leadership is not effective without communication and consultation with the parish community through the Parish Council.

The Parish Council shall consist of:

- the Priest, as the head of the Parish,
- the First Chanter,
- and up to fifteen (15) elected lay members. The General Assembly may fix a lesser number of elected lay members, but in no case shall it be fewer than five (5).

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

The Parish Council is established to advance the faith, growth and mission of the parish community. Persons called to this ministry should be:

1. persons of prayer, of personal growth in Christ and a living sign of Christ;
2. aware of the issues currently facing the Church and how people can be engaged in assisting with the work;
3. knowledgeable concerning the history and traditions of the Orthodox Church;
4. have a vision of the parish as a community and center for spiritual growth; ,
5. willing to become involved in the parish and willing to help set a positive direction;
6. ready to become actively involved in parish programs and activities;
7. willing to offer a talent, skill, or knowledge to the Council's ministry
8. have had activity or experience in parish activities.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The commitment to serve as a Council member carries certain obligations:

1. active involvement in personal and parish spiritual renewal;
2. participation in council meetings;
3. participation in goal setting and program evaluation; study and preparation for each meeting.

## **NOMINATION PROCESS**

The Parish Council should name a Nominating Committee in accordance with the provisions of Article 32.03.

The Nominating Committee should identify sufficient candidates to serve on the Parish Council, taking into consideration the size of the parish. The Committee should also make an effort to propose a Council membership that is balanced, being both representative of the Parish community and able to work well together in assisting the Parish Priest in the administration of the Parish. It is recommended that this nomination committee be formed no later than December of each year. Members of this committee, not Council members, are charged with the responsibility of planning the elections. Members of the Nominating Committee should be not on the list recommended by the Committee itself to the General Assembly for election. (But, should a member of the Committee be nominated from the floor, that person may stand for election.). The parish priest shall also serve on this committee.

The committee should:

1. seek nominations from the parish at large - all interested individuals should be encouraged to be a part of the council; candidates may submit their own name or be nominated;
2. contact nominees to apprise them of the purpose, function and work of the Council;
3. obtain written consent for candidacy, and biographical data;
4. present the slate of candidates and their qualifications to the parish priest for his approval;
5. present the slate of candidates to parish at least 2 weeks prior to election;

### **ORIENTATION OF PARISH COUNCIL**

It is vital that all new Council members meet with the parish priest and become acquainted with their responsibilities. This discussion should include:

1. background material regarding Orthodox Christian leadership;
2. information regarding the purpose, function and structure of parish council; the history and operation of the parish council;
3. a copy of the Statutes of the Archdiocese and all the official documents approved by the Congress or Eparchial Council.
4. signature on the Conflict of Interest form.

### **TERM OF OFFICE/ VACANCY/REMOVE**

The members of the Parish Council are elected for a term of two (2) years by the Parishioners in good standing. A Parish Council member may be elected to successive or multiple terms of service. A vacancy on the Parish Council shall be considered to exist in the event of: the death or resignation of a member; the physical or mental incapacity of a member; the invalidation of the election of a member; or the failure of a member to be current in his stewardship financial obligations to the Parish. A member of the Parish Council may be removed in accordance with the following provisions of the Statutes:

- (a) Removal from the Parish Council shall also be considered when a member: (1) is not or has ceased to be loyal to the doctrines, canons, worship, discipline, customs and practices of the Church; (2) is in violation of these Regulations or the Hierarchical Encyclicals of the Archdiocese; (3) does not recognize the duly constituted ecclesiastical authorities of the Archdiocese; (4) is guilty of a serious moral transgression; or (5) has violated his/her oath of office or has engaged in actions which do not further the administrative or spiritual well being of the Parish or the Archdiocese.
- (b) In the event that the Parish Priest and a majority of the Parish Council members believe that the removal of a Parish Council member is required for one or more of the reasons listed in subsection (a) (1) through (5) above,

the Priest shall submit his recommendation, in writing, for the removal of the member to the Archbishop with a copy sent to the effected Parish Council member.

(c) If the Archbishop, upon the recommendation of the Priest and the Parish Council members, or for any other reason, determines that the removal of a Parish Council member is necessary for one or more of the reasons listed in subsection (a) (1) through (5) above, the Archbishop shall submit his recommendation regarding the matter to the Archdiocesan Council for its decision and shall notify the Priest and Parish Council of such decision. If any member(s) of the Parish Council is removed, the matter shall not be brought before a Parish Assembly, without the consent and participation of the Dean, the Archbishop or his representative.

(d) Prior to removing all or a majority of the members of a Parish Council for any reason(s) during the same twenty four (24) month period, the Archbishop shall consult with and obtain the consent of the Archdiocesan Council. When an individual or individuals are removed from the Parish Council by the Archdiocese, the vacancy(ies) created shall be filled through direct appointment by the Archbishop from among the Parish's Parishioners in good standing to fulfill the term of the person removed. The interim Parish Council shall serve for such period of time as the Hierarch may determine, but in no event longer than twenty four (24) months.

(e) The effected Parish Council member(s) shall be afforded an opportunity to challenge the grounds on which they are being removed before the Archdiocesan Council.

Members of the Parish Council must attend Parish Council meetings. No proxies are permitted. In the event of an emergency, a special telephonic meeting may be called by the Priest and Parish Council President. A member who misses three (3) consecutive meetings without justifiable cause, may be relieved of his/her office upon prior notice to the member and the majority vote of the Parish Council. Except as specified above with respect to removals by the Archbishop, a vacancy on the Parish Council shall be promptly filled by the Parish Council by electing a successor therefore from among the Parishioners in good standing of the Parish. Such successor shall serve for the unexpired portion of the term of the vacant office. If a vacancy on the Parish Council occurs after the Parish Council elections but before the first meeting of the Parish Council the vacancy shall be filled after the first meeting of the Parish Council.

## **OFFICERS**

The officers of the Parish Council shall be a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, two (2) Auditors, and such other officers as the Parish General Assembly may by vote establish. The members of the Parish Council shall attend divine services regularly and participate in the sacramental life of the Church, thereby setting an example for the Parishioners.

## **DUTIES**

### **PRESIDENT**

The president/chairperson is responsible for:

1. communication with the parish priest;
2. communication between council and parishioners;
3. organization and coordination of council activities to accomplish goals;
4. chairing all regular and special meetings of the council;
5. communication with committee chairs and parish priest;
6. chairing all executive committee meetings.
7. preparing with the secretary the agenda for the parish council meetings prior to the date of the council

8. signs with the parish priest and the secretary the minutes of the parish council meetings

#### **VICE PRESIDENT**

The vice president/vice chairperson performs duties ascribed to the president/chairperson in the latter's absence and assists the latter in execution of his/her duties.

#### **SECRETARY**

This person is responsible for:

1. recording the minutes of all meetings;
2. maintaining membership roster and attendance records;
3. distributing information and correspondence to members as necessary
4. receiving and forwarding all council correspondence;
5. sending notices of parish council meetings at the request of the president

#### **TREASURER**

This person is responsible for:

1. overseeing and maintaining the financial functioning and good order of the parish
2. having signature authority on the bank accounts, to sign checks and pay all parish obligations
3. reporting monthly to the parish council on the parish's financial situation
4. issuing the tax receipts to parishioners and donors at the end of each tax year

#### **AUDITORS**

Two Auditors shall be elected by the Parish Council from among its ranks. They shall have the financial competency to properly execute their responsibilities. The Auditors shall audit the financial records of the prior year and prepare a report of such audit for presentation to the Parish General Assembly which report shall be completed and presented at a Parish General Assembly no later than three (3) months following the close of the Parish's fiscal year. After review by the Parish General Assembly, the Parish Council shall transmit copies of the final audit to the Archbishop and the Dean. The service of a Certified Public Accountant shall be engaged whenever Parish's annual gross income exceeds five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000).

#### **MEETINGS**

The Parish Council shall hold regular meetings usually once a month, and such special meetings whenever the Priest, the President, or a majority of the Parish Council may deem it necessary. A majority of the entire (fixed) membership of the Parish Council shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Vacancies on the Parish Council shall not be used in order to establish a quorum. The minutes of the meetings of the Parish Council shall be signed by the Priest, the President and the Secretary. Members should receive an agenda at least 1 week prior to meeting from the president of the council. Each meeting should include:

1. Opening Prayer
2. Call to order
3. Roll Call
4. Approval of the previous meeting minutes
5. Approval of the Agenda
6. Correspondence
7. Reports:

- Parish Priest
- Parish Council President
- Financial Report
- 8. Old business
- 9. New business
- 10. Closing Remarks and adjournment
- 11. Closing prayer

Meetings should be focused and usually not last longer than 2-3 hours. Time should be set aside at the outset for Scriptural reflection and spiritual discussion. Goal setting is important for Parish vitality; goals should be set, reviewed, and evaluated regularly. If the Council is faced with deliberating difficult or important issues, special meetings should be called for that single purpose.

### **VOTING -- DECISIONS**

Each member of the Council has one vote regardless whether they are elected, appointed, or ex officio. Members are to work with the Parish Priest in formulating Parish policies and programs, keeping in mind general Archdiocesan policy.

In order for proposals decisions to be effective they should be:

1. thoroughly explained;
2. discussed openly, thoroughly and honestly in a reflective atmosphere.
3. made with a vision for the long-term good of the whole parish community;

### **COMMITTEES**

The Parish Council committees are a means to implement parish goals and broaden participation and representation of the parish. Ad hoc committees are formed as needed for specific tasks. Standing committees should be established to address at least the following areas:

1. Parish Religious Education
2. Issues of Social Concerns

Each committee acts as a "task force" to research its assigned mandate and make recommendations to the Council. Upon council approval, recommendations are implemented by the committee.

- THE PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOARD develops, recommends, promotes and evaluates religious education programs for all parishioners under the supervision of the Education Committee of the Archdiocese, according to the provisions of the Rules and regulations of the Parish School approved by the Archdiocese, and with the guidance of the Parish Council

- THE SOCIAL ACTION Committee develops and coordinates programs that promote charity and social work.

- The PLANNING Committee assists in planning, providing for and supervising administrative projects approved by the Parish Council. The final decision remains with the Parish Council.