

Report of Diocesan Metropolitan Council Representatives

The Fall 2020 meeting of the Metropolitan Council has been taking place through a series of teleconferences on August 27, September 16-17, and with another session scheduled for October 21. The OCA's summary can be found at <https://bit.ly/36t1nB1> and <https://bit.ly/34IRUZB>. This report will focus on items of particular interest to the Diocese and other potentially actionable items.

On August 27, there were only 3 items on the agenda: (1) Financial and appointment of a new internal auditor, (2) location discussion and contracting a realtor to list the Syosset property, and (3) possible postponement of the July 2021 All American Council.

Financial: After presenting favorable financial performance for 2020 through June (expenses are down to more than offset the slight decline in income) and reviewing the 2019 report from our external auditors, discussion evolved to our PPP loan and potential (likely) forgiveness of between \$160k to \$195k of our \$195k PPP loan. Since the process for loan forgiveness is in flux, it was deemed advisable to wait to make our request. The PPP loan has been used for the intended purpose, to maintain employee jobs and salaries. Loan forgiveness would make funds available for other use; further discussion was tabled pending PPP disposition. Also, the nomination of Ms. Maha Adranly to the internal auditing committee was approved unanimously.

Location / contracting of a realtor: At the February MC meeting, as reported, it was resolved and passed that the Syosset property should be put up for sale. The location committee investigated multiple realtors, and with the assistance of Fr. Joseph Ciarciaglino, selected a realtor: Fran Mazer team, representing Compass Realty. The term of the agreement is until 5/31/2021, with a commission of 5% of the selling price. The asking price is \$6,500,000. This realtor will pursue sale to either an individual who would keep the property as residential, or to a developer. In the case of a developer, it would likely take 2-3 years for the sale to go through, with the necessary government approvals. The motion was approved. Because of the heritage of the Syosset property as the only Chancery the OCA has known, this is potentially a sensitive topic. Subsequent to the meeting, Metropolitan Tikhon published a statement (<https://bit.ly/36rmlAr>).

Possible Postponement of 2021 AAC: Deacon Peter Ilchuk presented the status of the upcoming July 2021 AAC in Baltimore. Currently, the hotel, owned by the city of Baltimore is shut down and is being used to isolate first responders and others. Social distancing and other precautions would preclude the type of AAC envisioned if restrictions are still in place next June. If held in some physical form, we do not know how many people would stay away due to COVID-19 concerns. The vote on the planned resolution to delay the AAC to July 2022 was tabled. The OCA is potentially liable for up to \$165k of cancellation fees if we cancel. If the hotel is unable to deliver on their end, we do not expect to pay this fee. There is the need to balance the desire to wait until more is known with the need to plan the significant preparations required for the AAC. Normally, the upcoming AAC is announced one year in advance, and the OCA would be assessing the dioceses, which would in turn assess the parishes. However, this is not happening now because of the pandemic.

On September 16-17, the virtual meetings continued. His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon commended everyone in adjusting to new circumstances resulting from the pandemic, particularly the chancery staff led by Archpriest Alexander Rentel. Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak, His Beatitude's personal secretary asked to leave the staff for personal reasons and has been replaced by Deacon John Thetford. There is also the need for a communications and web person to pick up the work that had been done by Archdeacon Joseph. Archpriest Thomas Soroka has recently been appointed Project Manager of the Departments of the OCA. Department Chairs and their stipends have been eliminated. Departments will have leads and experts and can apply for grants for projects that (1) relate to one of Metropolitan Tikhon's 4 Pillars, and (2) can be accomplished within a year. There is an ongoing project coordinating the creation of 16 one-hour-long adult catechism lessons. Fr. Joseph Lucas has evangelization videos, and Fr. Matthew Markewich has new apologetics to address internet issues.

The Property Committee reported the Syosset property has been listed for sale. The listing with photos may be viewed online at <https://bit.ly/2ESZSkj>

Treasurer Andrew Smith presented the audited 2019 financial statements and reports for the first half of 2020. The external auditors gave a clean opinion and commended the timeliness and accuracy of OCA financial records and operations. The MC unanimously accepted the audit report. Budget discussions will take place in October.

An update on preparations for the 20th AAC was presented by Deacon Peter Ilchuk. “After thorough deliberation of all issues, it was decided, that due to the changing and unpredictable circumstances related to the pandemic, to defer for the time being any decision on the possibility of postponing the 20th All-American Council.”

His Beatitude concluded the meeting by talking about the uncertainties we face, including the budget and holding the AAC at the scheduled time. Metropolitan Tikhon expressed the hope that we will continue to push forward in this time of uncertainty “with hope in Christ and do not allow ourselves to be weakened. ... moving from glory to glory as we labor together to fulfill the vision and mission given to us by Saint Herman and all the saints and good men and women who came after him. Amen.”

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Graban
Fr. Elijah Mueller
October 5, 2020

Reminder: While this relates to an item reported previously from the February 2020 meeting, the MC approved the OCA Pension Plan’s proposal that parish contributions be increased from 8% of covered payroll to 10% of covered payroll, effective January 1, 2021. The Holy Synod endorsed this recommendation. Parishes should budget accordingly for 2021. <https://bit.ly/2Sih71J>