



SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

HELPING NEIGHBORS STARTS AT HOME

Council Board Meeting – Minutes

January 25, 2018

4:00-6:20 p.m.

Presiding: Elizabeth Barbieri, Board President

Present:

- District Council Presidents: Annette Bligh, Ken Gebken, Bob Hook, Wes Karna, Rene Lorio (filling in for Jeff Bunten), Ed McCarthy, Matt Medina, Steve Polk, Phil Schwab, Clay Whitener
- Members at large: Derek Collins, John Fallah, Ellen Harshmann, John Luth, Dan Schlafly, Jim Wilson, Rhae Yancey
- Spiritual Advisor: Rev. James Cormack
- SVDP staff: John Foppe, Gena Bast, Denise Chachere, Debra Downey, John Heithaus, Andrew Kassebaum, Anne Kirwan, John Walters

Absent: Dave Winslett

Quorum: Yes

1. Opening Prayer

Fr. James Cormack led the opening prayer.

2. Review of Agenda/Any Other Business

No additions

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Approval

The Board approved the previous meeting minutes.

4. Treasurer's Report

a) Financial Statements

Ed McCarthy and Debra Downey reviewed the financial statements from FY 2017Q1. Store revenue is down slightly compared to budget as a result of lower sales of donated items. The stores increased the minimum wage to \$10 per hour and also had a modest increase in clothing prices. Development revenue from

major donors and bequests is up considerably compared to budget. Program Services matches expenses to income. Direct assistance to Districts and Conferences is up this year. Overall the Council is doing well financially, staying on plan.

b) Auditor Reports

Ed reviewed the independent auditor report from Conner Ash, PC. It found that the Archdiocesan Council's financial statements are stated fairly and in accordance with accepted accounting principles.

Debra reviewed highlights from the Conner Ash Management Letter. Overall the Council has done very well. All prior year recommendations are closed.

- Conference audits: The staff conducts 5-7 audits per quarter, likely to review all Conferences in 4-5 years. The schedule will be shared but could change, for example if a Conference is not responsive with its CAR report. The goal is mainly to help Conferences and also to remain compliant with the 501(c)(3) tax designation. Most audits are routine, focusing on bank balances, documented expenses, and thank-you letters to donors. District presidents and other key people are notified of upcoming audits in their District. Their support may be needed in some cases.
- Data security: The plan is under way. There will be an IT audit this year.
- Disaster recovery: Denise Chachere is heading this team, and the plan is in place.

For this current year the Management Letter identified an opportunity to make minor improvements in the inventory count procedures. Those are under way.

5. Executive Director's Report

a) Strategic Plan Progress

John Foppe reported great work from the staff and the Vincentians. A survey of the Vincentians showed significant improvement in communication, responsiveness, and training.

On Saturday, February 10, there will be a unique opportunity for a morning of inspiration and reflection with Sister Dominga, Formator for the Missionaries of Charity, Saint Mother Teresa's Congregation. All are welcomed and encouraged to bring fellow Vincentians.

The stores are having good success with recycle bins. The Volunteer Program is gaining traction.

In Development it is important to recognize donors.

Among the HR work, Denise has addressed market wage adjustments.

John introduced Gena Bast, the new Director of Marketing and Communications. Gena has already developed a new program. She is leveraging the Conference secretaries as a communication network. Gina can help with registration for the event with Sister Dominga.

b) Strategic Partnerships

John Foppe and John Heithaus reviewed the SVDP partnerships. Successful systemic change requires a variety of competencies. The process is very complex. SVDP helps “keep the pot holes filled” with basic needs for neighbors, while partner agencies can provide other services, such as case management, employment, financial literacy, and poverty training. MOU’s are ongoing, and they include a 30-day exit clause. The goal is for committed partner agencies to work collaboratively and bring systemic change for those who need it most.

c) Vincentian Formation

John Heithaus introduced Andrew Kassebaum, the new Manager of Vincentian Formation. Andrew holds a Masters in Pastoral Theology. He formerly supported evangelization for the Archdiocese. His work in Vincentian Services will include adult faith formation and spiritual issues. He sees this opportunity as a tremendous blessing.

Andrew can coordinate poverty training at the People’s Community Action Corporation for those who are interested.

6. Stores

John Foppe and John Walters reviewed a proposal to open a Creve Coeur Thrift Store. In recent years the Council has expanded its operation from four to eight stores. This year the plan was to hold off with further expansion and focus on stabilizing existing operations. However recently there arose a special opportunity given that the Red Racks thrift stores are pulling out of the St. Louis market.

The Red Racks store at 11015 Olive Boulevard in Creve Coeur can be leased for \$189,100 annually. Capital expenditures will total \$100,000. The forecasted 12-month sales are \$599,000, with earnings of \$79,000. The location can be secured in April for a possible opening in mid-May.

Beds will be display-only due to space limitations. There will be referrals to the St. Ann store.

Benefits include the ability to serve a new area. The area includes both those in need and the relatively well-off who are likely to donate. There is good support from the City of Creve Coeur and five local Conferences. There is good public

transportation to this location. This is an established business with good traffic. Although the existing store is not very clean and the merchandise is overpriced, SVDP can improve the services considerably. The store can support 16-20 jobs.

RESOLUTION: The Board approved opening a Creve Coeur Thrift Store.

7. Vincentian Services

a) Legal Services Structure

John Heithaus reviewed the proposed structure. Legal issues have been a barrier for those helped by SVDP. There has been an interest to provide legal services but also protect the Council's liability. A new, separate entity would best meet the need. The Legal Services Corporation would have its own Board of Directors. Michael Forster will be a founding member. The organization is starting with 16 volunteer attorneys, all Vincentians. The organization would look for volunteer administrative help.

There is a considerable need. Example services would include warrants, landlord issues, and disability insurance. There would be no litigation, but there could be referrals to firms looking for pro-bono work. Capacity can likely grow to meet the need.

Services would only be available for Conferences of the Archdiocesan Council. So far there has been good response from District presidents.

RESOLUTION: The Board authorized the creation of the nonprofit corporation St. Vincent de Paul Legal Services Archdiocesan Council of St. Louis, with its own Bylaws, Board, authority, and \$5,000 for start-up costs.

b) SLU Scholarship

John Heithaus discussed how education is an element of systemic change. The Council has been working with St. Louis University over the past couple years. An initial clothing donation bin on the campus generated \$300 per month. Expanding that to four bins, offering the full recycling revenue, and taking the University's offer to match the funds can raise on the order of \$56,000 per year. These funds would be made available for scholarships at the University. It would cover tuition. Housing is a possibility but might not be optimal. Eligibility would include anyone who needs SVDP services and who meets the University's academic qualifications. This scholarship could be an add-on to other assistance. The goal would be to provide assistance through a four-year program.

After some discussion the Board decided to TABLE this resolution until the next meeting. If anyone has thoughts or questions on this proposed program, they are asked to contact John Heithaus.

8. Culture Committee

John Heithaus reviewed work of this committee. There will be listening sessions for Vincentians and those who work in the stores. Dates are to be determined. There is also focus to help the District presidents.

9. Development

Anne Kirwan reviewed the Development Report. Donations have exceeded goals. Direct mailings have been very successful. In one example, a donor with one \$62,000 check has covered the entire pharmacy program. Dollars primarily support the poor. Over \$40,000 is passed directly to Conferences. There is also a great deal of volunteerism. The organization is very grateful.

Anne reviewed a packet distributed to each Board member. Among other items it includes an Annual pledge, a survey of skills, experience, and interests, the Responsibilities and Expectations statements, a Conflict of Interest review, and a Board roster. There is a goal to have 100% of the Board participating as donors.

Development materials include good stories in the newsletters and flyers. These bring good response from donors. The Christmas cards and thank-you letters were also very good.

Anne reports that impact from the new federal tax law is expected to be minimal. It might affect only 1-5 percent of SVDP large donors. There is however a question of what impact there may be on smaller donors.

Rhae Yancey discussed the Development Committee. It is important to let donors know that their donations are helping the poor. The committee will have a focus on the stores, starting with the Florissant Store. There will be a job description for volunteers. There are goals to increase volunteers and foot traffic.

10. Voice of the Poor Update

Steve Polk provided an update. Goals of this committee include informing and engaging people on the Voice of the Poor. These include policy makers.

A December event in St. Charles attracted 60 attendees. They included Missouri Senator Bill Engel, Missouri Representative Phil Christofanilli, and County Executive Steve Ehlmann. Catholic Charities and SVDP were among the speakers.

Jim Wilson, chair of the Advocacy subcommittee, is pursuing passage of the Earned Income Tax Credit in Missouri. This can help the working poor. There is support from other agencies and little opposition in the Capital.

11. Governance Committee

John Luth provided a recap of several points. Some of the most important work from the Governance Committee happened several years ago. For now, the staff is updating Board information. The committee will be looking at what information should be covered with new Board members and renewed periodically with existing members. Examples may include policies and resolutions. For the longer term there will be an interest to make reference material available to Board members on a secure page of the SVDP Web site.

Board members generally reported good experience from the Board Retreat held in November. There was good energy, and the length and timing were good. Activities such as these are good ways to help Board members get to know one another better.

12. Other Business

a) SVDP International President

In January, 2019, the SVDP International President General Renato de Lima Oliveira will be visiting St. Louis for two days. There is a request for volunteers to form a steering committee to organize events around this honor. Possible opportunities include day of recollection, formation activities, or social events. There may be need to help usher visitors through the area.

b) 175th anniversary (2020)

The SVDP national convention will be held in St. Louis in late August, 2020. There will be about 800 attendees. Events will be at the downtown Hyatt Regency and the New Cathedral Basilica. This is primarily an event for the national office, but the Archdiocesan Council will have a role. There is a request for volunteers to form a steering committee to organize events through the year. There will be a need for recruitment and contact with donors.

c) Other

Ken Gebken mentioned that he has two Conferences, St. George and St. Dominic Savio, which will be consolidating into one. There may be similar cases in the future. The North District has also had cases like this in the past.

13. Executive Session

The Board entered an Executive Session to discuss the Executive Director's compensation. The Board approved an adjustment based on performance and market rates.

14. Closing Prayer

Fr. James Cormack led the closing prayer.

Submitted by John Luth
SVDP Council Secretary