



SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

HELPING NEIGHBORS STARTS AT HOME

Council Board Meeting – Minutes

July 25, 2019

4:00-6:20 p.m.

Presiding: John Luth, Secretary

Present:

- *District Council Presidents:* Annette Bligh, Jeff Bunten, Ken Gebken, Bob Hook, Carole Johnson, Ed McCarthy, Phil Schwab, Ray Suda, Wes Karna
- *Members at Large:* John Fallah, Ellen Harshmann, John Luth, Jim Wilson, Rhae Yancey
- *Ex Officio members:* Rev. James Cormack, Dave Winslett
- *SVdP staff:* John Foppe, Gena Bast, Ryan Carney, Denise Chachere, Debra Downey, Mike Goering, John Heithaus, John Walters
- *Guests:* Tom Yeager (substitute for Dan Asahl), Bernie Huger (attorney)

Absent: Elizabeth Barbieri, Judy Belford, Derek Collins, Steve Polk, Dan Schlafly

Quorum: Yes

1. Opening Prayer

Fr. James Cormack led the opening prayer.

2. Spiritual Reflection / Mission Moment – John Heithaus

A particular Neighbor in Need had financial concerns, including the cost to care for her child who had special needs. She was worried about losing her home, and she had issues with her quality of life. She was desperate. Vincentians helped her. She was “blown away.” She wanted to become a volunteer herself. As she said in a thank you message, it’s about loving others with God’s love.

3. Review of Agenda / Any Other Business

Due to recent developments, an item was added to discuss the proposed Cool Valley distribution center and outlet store.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting – approval

The Board approved the previous meeting minutes.

5. Proposed Cool Valley Distribution Center and Outlet Store

Attorney Bernie Huger joined the group to help explain the status and answer questions regarding the proposed center. There has been some pushback from the City of Cool Valley. A non-profit store would provide no tax revenue. The municipality is already financially strained. Also, the City attorney found that the proposed center's mix for light industrial and warehousing would violate the city's zoning laws.

One option would be a Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT). The seller, Schnucks, indicated they may be amenable such a proposal. Another option would be to take the situation to court, asking for a declaratory judgment, given a 2002 Missouri statute which states that a municipality cannot prohibit a non-profit entity from operating a thrift store.

The situation brought a great deal of discussion. It reminded some in the group of past pushback from other areas, such as Crestwood and Affton, although there are differences. There is a question of whether the Society would want to take a municipality to court. Some have issues with the image it would have, while others do not. Schnucks might not want to hold up sale of the property while a case works its way through court. Staff members have been upfront with city officials, but as of yet there has not been any indication that the city wants to support SVdP's proposed plans. There are questions about alternative sites, however in a review of dozens of sites, this was the optimal fit. Legal fees and other potential payments need to be considered, as they could change the business case for the center.

It was decided SVdP should make the appropriate applications with the city and decide next steps if there is a roadblock. One subsequent action, if needed, could be to write the city and cite the state statute as a way to help push the issue.

6. Treasurer's Report – Ed McCarthy/Debra Downey

a) Q3 Financials – review

Ed and Debra reviewed the prepared report. The fiscal year ends 9/30. The year-end negative \$2 million Operating Income is a sign of the Society doing its job. There is a great deal of funding for Program Services to help those in need. Disaster relief, particularly in June and July, was largely supported by twinning. Investments continue to do well. Overall, the Society continues to do well financially. There will be upcoming discussions with the District Presidents regarding finances.

b) Investment Policy revision – approval

The Finance Committee is recommending a slightly more conservative split in the managed investment account, to move some of the equity investments to fixed income.

MOTION: The Board approved the Investment Policy dated July 25, 2019.

c) National store loan request – approval

The National Council is interested in supporting thrift store operations across the country. Phoenix might be an initial site with more to follow. A loan to the National Foundation can help support this endeavor.

MOTION: The Board approved a 3-year loan to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul National Foundation at the rate of 7% per annum, with full interest and principal due on September 30, 2022.

7. Executive Director’s Report – John Foppe

a) Q3 Strategic Progress

John reviewed highlights from his written report. This was another very good, busy quarter. The strategic goal for Gospel Leadership continues to go well. A most recent example is the launch of a Pregnancy Support Initiative, supporting women in troubled pregnancies. There is a new Manager of Conference Growth and Revitalization, Deacon Jim Sigillito. Work on the Neighbor Relationship Management Database continues. Mike Goering is meeting with staff in all the stores, particularly helping those who have been struggling. He is showing good people leadership. Development efforts accomplished several goals. They continue to bring results above the national rate. The Finance work includes an updated Conference Treasurer Handbook, which will come with training this fall. Marketing & Communication has very good work in public relations. An Employee Culture/Climate Survey indicates significant improvement from the past, and turnover rates remain within the goal.

b) United Way recommendations – report

Staff provided a written response to the United Way’s Biennial Panel Recommendations. There is an effort to set the record straight regarding several misunderstandings the Panel has had. The United Way will be moving to more of a grant program in the future, raising questions of how SVdP would want to participate. There is also some controversy over the United Way’s national operations. Regardless of how those aspects develop, at this point there is still interest to continue the meaningful relationship for referrals from the 211 Helpline Center.

c) St. Anthony of Padua proposal – approval

This has been a long-standing situation. The food pantry has operated as a Special Work of the local Conference. It provides a great deal of support for the poor. The local Conference however has been very small, and neither it nor the local parish

had provided much oversight in years past. There are financial and other risks to SVdP. For various reasons all parties see benefit to the food pantry becoming fully independent. They will however need help, financially and otherwise.

A proposed grant brought some discussion. It would provide “seed money” to help the food pantry launch its first year of independent operations. The SVdP National is supportive of the generous proposal. It would be a way to safeguard the Society’s name and remove some potential liabilities. Within the Board however there is a question of whether this grant would be rewarding those who don’t abide by established rules. There are risks of whether the food pantry will survive or fail, with the poor standing to lose the support they have today. Despite the potential issues, most see this as a positive way to separate from the food pantry. Coupled with initial support and guidance from Staff, this grant could bring the food pantry its best chance to operate independently and support the poor for the long term.

MOTION: The Board approved a resolution to provide support to help ensure the transition of the St. Anthony of Padua Food Pantry to an independent food pantry, including a one-time grant of \$100,000 for various uses, and contingent on the Food Pantry meeting specific standards by December 31, 2019.

8. Development Report – Ryan Carney

The program is on track to be 3-4 percent above its goal. There is a goal to increase the number of direct mail solicitations, the number of donors, and the number of major gifts.

a) Donor Privacy Policy – approval

This item was proposed last year. It has undergone further review.

MOTION: The Board approved the adoption of a website donor privacy policy.

9. Vincentian Services report – John Heithaus

a) Formation activities – report

Formation helps answer the question, “Who are we?” Its three key elements are to *leverage* by helping people help others, to provide *training* of who and where and how, and *broaden* our Gospel Leadership.

- b) Family Structure and Poverty event – reminder

W. Bradford Wilcox will provide a community discussion on single parent families, titled “Family Structure, Poverty, & The Way Forward.”

HOLD THE DATE: Saturday, September 14, 2019, 8:00-12:30, at the St. Louis University Busch Center. Please RSVP.

10. Governance Committee – John Luth

- a) By-laws review – reminder

John sent details to all the Board members on June 29. Please review the material. We plan to vote on the proposed By-law changes at the September meeting.

One item was mentioned for possible consideration. Instead of At-Large members renewing for up to one three-year term with a new Board president, there could be more flexibility to allow up to *two* three-year terms for such situations.

- b) Board Survey – review

John reviewed some highlights. Results are overall improved from years past. One of the results of this survey process has been the introduction of Board development and training, which is the intent of the next item.

- c) Board Governance training – reminder

It is good to refresh the Board on this subject periodically, particularly since there is turnover. Governance covers do’s and don’ts. The primary audience is the Board, but others might benefit if that can be accommodated.

John Berry, CEO of SVdP Georgia and a member of the SVdP National Board of Directors, speaks on this subject across the country. He will present “Board Governance – It’s more than just the Rule.”

HOLD THE DATE: Saturday, November 2, 2019, 9:00-12:00, at the SVdP Council Office, 1310 Papin Street. The morning will begin with Mass followed by a continental breakfast and the presentation. Please RSVP to Clair Bowe (claireb@svdpstl.org or 314-881-6035).

11. Disaster Committee report – Annette Bligh

Annette talked about the tornado that hit Jefferson City in May. That area has only a couple active Conferences, so they were grateful to receive help from Annette, several other St. Louis area Vincentians, and a few from the Staff. In addition to \$5,000 from National and a matching \$5,000 from the St. Louis Council, the visiting Vincentians managed to gather

and distribute \$10,000 in gift cards to Neighbors in Need. One of the local Conferences was grateful to receive an additional \$29,000 in aid.

This year also brought significant flooding, particularly in May and June. At least ten counties were affected. Help was provided to various areas, particularly to neighbors in the St. Charles area.

12. Voice of the Poor Report – Dianne Marshak

The written report was made available to the Board. We are blessed to have Dianne Marshak to lead this committee.

13. Other Business

Following the discussion on the Disaster Committee, all are encouraged to take the opportunity to help at some point when major disasters hit. It is quite an experience helping neighbors in these situations.

14. Closing Prayer

Fr. James Cormack led the closing prayer.

Submitted by John Luth
SVdP Council Secretary