

THE PARISH FINANCE COUNCIL

DEFINITION:

The parish finance council is a consultative body of lay persons established to advise the Pastor in matters pertaining to the financial affairs of the parish.

CANON 537:

“Each parish is to have a Finance Council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the Diocesan Bishop; in this council, the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the Pastor in the administration of the parish goods with due regard for the prescription of Canon 532.”

RELATIONSHIPS:

The relationship between the Pastor and the council is one of support and collaboration. The authority of the Pastor as defined in Canon 532, to act and decide in behalf of the parish, is not lessened by the establishment of the Parish Finance Council.

The 1983 Revised Code of Canon Law which requires the creation of a Parish Finance Council clearly places in it the competence to assist the Pastor in the administration of parish temporalities. The Revised Code also allows the establishment of parish councils to assist the Pastor in planning, coordinating, guiding and directing of all aspects of parish life (Canon 536). It has been the consistent policy of the Diocese of Charlotte that a parish council be established in each parish. While the two councils are separate and each has a different and specific role in the life and operation of the parish, they must work together for the good of the parish.

Therefore, for the purpose of good planning, cooperation and accountability, the person chosen to be the Chairperson of the Parish Finance Council might be ex-officio a member of the Parish Council. He/she shall act as liaison between the two councils and shall provide the Parish Council regular and timely reports (at least four times a year) on the financial status of the parish and the work activity of the Parish Finance Council.

The Finance and Administration Commission, currently a commission of the Parish Council, ceases to exist.

In the ongoing relationship between the two councils, the premier role of the Parish Council as the unifying and coordinating structure of the parish community must be recognized. It is the mission of the Parish Council to work in collaboration with the local Pastor and his parochial vicar(s) in planning, guiding and directing all aspects of parish life.

In fulfilling its responsibilities, the Parish Finance Council must be directed by the values of the Gospel as well as by good business practice. Efficient and effective use and management of parish resources must be measured as much by their contribution to parish mission and ministry, as by commonly accepted business standards.

STRUCTURE:

Membership:

- A. The Parish Finance Council shall be composed of the Pastor and not less than three reputable and practicing members of the parish who are knowledgeable and skilled in financial matters and known for their prudent judgment. Membership shall be by appointment of the Pastor, who shall consult with the Parish Council in making appointments to the Parish Finance Council.
- B. The Pastor is an ex-officio member of the Parish Finance Council.
- C. The parish bookkeeper shall not be a member of the Parish Finance Council. However, his/her attendance at Council meetings may be helpful and at times required.
- D. Members of the Parish Finance Council may not be related to the Pastor, nor to any Parochial Vicars assigned to the parish.

TERMS OF OFFICE:

Members of the Parish Finance Council shall serve a three-year term and may be appointed to a second three-year term.

OFFICERS:

- A. The Pastor of the parish is the President of the Parish Finance Council. He presides over the meeting and receives the Council's proposals.
- B. There shall be a Chairperson appointed by the Pastor. The Chairperson assists the Pastor in coordinating the work of the Council, in preparing for meetings and in implementing those proposals of the Council which have been accepted and ratified by the Pastor. The Chairperson performs other such tasks as may be delegated to him/her, including, if the Pastor so desires, chairing and conducting the regular meetings of the Council. The Chairperson is appointed for a term of one year; he/she may be re-appointed.

MEETINGS:

The Parish Finance Council shall meet at least four times a year. Meetings and agenda shall be arranged by the Chairperson in consultation and with the approval of the Pastor. The Pastor and members are expected to attend all meetings.

COMPETENCE:

The Pastor has authority from the Bishop and the universal law of the Church to decide and act on behalf of the parish (Canon 532). The Parish Finance Council is advisory to the Pastor and its decisions/recommendations are valid only when accepted and ratified by the Pastor. It is important, therefore, that the Pastor be central to the deliberations and the functioning of the Parish Finance Council. The relationship between the Council and the Pastor is supportive and by no means adversarial.

In order for the Parish Finance Council to fulfill its mission, it must have access to such fiscal information which it shall need for its deliberation, such as parish financial accounts and records. Such information must be received and given in a spirit of confidentiality and prudence.

If the Pastor in god conscience feels he cannot accept the recommendations of the Council, he shall fully and frankly communicate his reservations to the Council's membership.

FUNCTIONS:

Pastors and parish administrators are obliged to administer parish goods, according to the Church Law as found in Canons 1281-1288. The Parish Finance Council assists the Pastor in fulfilling the following responsibilities:

1. To assure that annual budget is properly prepared for review by the Parish Council (this included the parish school).
2. To review as needed the implementation of the Diocesan bookkeeping and accounting system for all parish finances.
3. To ensure that the submission of the Semi-annual and Annual Financial Report is prepared and submitted to the Diocese.
4. To prepare and publish an Annual Financial Statement and Report for the Parish Council and the members of the parish community.
5. To develop procedures for the deposit of church funds in interest-bearing checking and savings accounts.
6. To evaluate and to make recommendations regarding the needs and the effectiveness of the parish's effort of church support through the Sunday offertory and other fund-raising activities.
7. To develop a plan for the financing of necessary repairs, renovations, purchase of equipment and future building.

8. To develop a plan for systematic payment of any parish debt.
9. To coordinate all fund-raising programs.
10. To provide the Parish Council with periodic reports (at least four times a year) on the financial status of the parish.
11. To meet all requirements of federal and state tax laws, all requirements of the Diocesan Lay Retirement Program and maintain an accurate record of payment.
12. To submit to appropriate civil authorities tax exempt forms as required by law and to maintain records of same for all Church-owned properties.
13. To safeguard the assets of the parish from loss or damage through appropriate monitoring following the recommendations of the diocesan insurance representative.
14. To implement all diocesan policies relative to financial matters.

Approved on October 16, 1987

Most Reverend John F. Donoghue
Bishop of Charlotte
(original contained Bishop Donoghue's signature)