St Matthew Orthodox Church Parish Council Meeting

Meeting: June 14, 2026

Meeting called order at 12:08 pm

Opening prayer was given by Father John

Council members attending: Father John Thetford - rector

Paul Novak – president

Matt Tomac - vice president

Danny Panella – treasurer

Vera Limberopoulos - recording secretary

Noah Becker – corresponding secretary

Guests – Sarah Tomac, Mark Massopust

Paul made a motion to approve the April 21st and May 17th meeting minutes. Approved by all.

Priest's report – Father John

-Recently, preparing of bagged lunches went well.

- Ezra joined the ministry of prosphora bakers.

-Today we had 10 new people in attendance at liturgy.

- Jennifer Kribs scheduled an adult craft night for July17th. Men and women are welcome.

-The new welcome packets (informational brochures) have been well received by new attendees. It does include church dress code, including asking adult men to refrain from wearing shorts.

-August 9th will be the semiannual informational meeting. During coffee hour, Fr John and Paul will share updates with the parish. Paul will have handouts with the agenda. Noah suggested once again utilizing babysitters upstairs so that the adults would be able to hear the presentation. We will address stewardship/giving, similar to subscription services. This can help bring awareness and connection to younger adults.

-St Macrina Chapel: Father John will identify a core group of people from the Fox Valley. He plans to hold a meeting with them in November / December, including discussing a 2027 goal savings plan for their future

chapel. Paul will look into figuring out the number of people from south of Appleton mall and the possibility of adding the region to the directory.

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-August 2nd the ministry team will have a Fall Fest planning meeting after liturgy.

-Bishop Daniel formalized the ministry that three member families are doing on Washington Island. Father John would like to apply for a grant of $1750 in the name of our parish to aid this ministry. This is through Elsie Skvir Ganister Foundation. Alessandra Rolffs and her husband Russell run the farm there. Father investigated and found the approximate amount to set up a chapel would be about $1750, for the necessities. We will also include in our 2027 budget approximately $1,000 to help with some additional items (ie, candles, charcoal, etc). By next fall, they will be doing three reader services there a month. This information will be included in the grant application. This is St Lawrence Chapel. They have had retreats up there and would like to expand their program. Russell (from Washington Island) is halfway through the Diocesan program. Father added that the OCA just announced this week that they are changing the deocin program to follow a school year model. Father Daniel will be taking over the program, at The St John of Chicago Pastoral Institute. In fall of 2027, Marty Gilow will possibly be starting the program.

-Father John made a motion to apply for a $1,750 grant to support Northern Door County Orthodox Christian Chapels, specifically St Lawrence Chapel. Matt seconds the motion, approved by all.

-Sarah asked if there is a shortage of priests. “Would it be possible if we could have a second priest here, and when the time came, he would be able to go down to the Fox Valley (as St Macrina grows)?” Father relayed that it doesn’t make sense and it’s working fine. Old data indicated a shortage due to age group thing. Father reports that there are 15 seminarians now in our Diocese, for 79 chapels.

President’s report: Paul

Paul will be attending the Parish Development Forum July 9th – July 7th. This is a national OCA sponsored meeting to help figure out the process.

-Paul N and Danny P transitioned to keep Tom J on the bank accounts initially. Now they will remove Tom from the bank accounts.

-Our bylaws stipulate that when we take on debt, we must first take it to the parish for pre-approval. The $35,000 HELOC (line of credit) will sit there once approved. The debt is taken on when funds are withdrawn. Once we make a withdrawal, it will say the balance withdrawn and the remaining amount available will. That is when the interest starts. Funds will not be withdrawn until we get a bill from the contractor. If the feds reduce rates, then our loan rate would go down with our line of credit.

-With the contractor that we chose for the kitchen, we did not need money up front.

-Paul is working with Keith (the floor guy) on a bid to do the stairs. The estimate is $2315 plus materials. Paul speculates it could be approximately $5000 total. We could pay from the special projects fund on hand. Tom J will pay for half of the materials for the stair project.

- In November Ionut Munteanu and David Niemi will be painting the walls which will be an additional expense. While the labor will be donated, we should get a balance for materials for the painting, for council approval prior to the project starting. Father guestimates the materials cost $2100. The painting will fall under the iconography budget.

-June 30th we will hold a 6-month informational meeting for the parish. Danny will present the budget summary. Our actuals versus what we budgeted for.

Vice-president's report: Matt

-Matt will have the appropriate outlets covered for kid protection.

Treasure report: Danny

-A budget report was submitted to PC members for review.

-The insurance was transitioned on June 1st.

-Vacation church school will utilize $500 from bookstore profits.

-Aplos is changing their form to one that is more visually appealing. This will go into effect on August 14th. This improved visual aid could help as a PR tool for tithing. Aplos charges a 2% fee. It gives the donator the option to pay the fee themselves or to have it taken out of their donation

- Accounts are where we want them to be. We will start receiving some tithing via a retirement account. The details were emailed to Danny.

new business:

-Building usage: Dinners, showers, etc

We've been having a lot of people using the building. When it's our parishioners, would assume that they clean up after, empty garbage cans, etc. Paul suggested having a one-page guideline for cleanup. We need to confirm that lights are off doors are locked. We should have a check-off sheet with boxes to check the tasks are completed. (Garbage is in appropriate location, lights are off, AC is turned back down, doors are locked, signed by the assigned event clean up person. The sheet could be photographed and texted to the parish point person to confirm completion. This person should be preassigned before the event. The downstairs door must be

pushed in to lock. The check off list could say: thanks for coming, here is your check off list. The list could be laminated and also given to the event people.

-It was suggested for Sundays to have the cleaning captain confirm who is going to confirm that the lights are off and the doors are locked

-Father John is undertaking his Doctoral program for his PhD, starting this fall. The program costs $1,000 per year and takes 5 – 6 years to complete. When he graduates, he will have to go to Scottland. Paul made motion to give Fr John an $1,000 extra pay per year to help offset the program. Father abstained from the vote. The motion passed with 5 yes votes. This falls under the classification of supporting our clergy/seminarians.

-Paul and Matt talked to Ian Sedlacek about finishing up the siding(between the windows), completing the header board under the window and painting the back side of the cross (on the roof). Ion will donate his time/labor and could complete it this summer. The expenses should be minimal, possibly buying some boards.

-(St Macrina chapel options)- There is an old church that is a wedding chapel west of the airport, east of Appleton. It is for sale for $274,000. It does not have a parking lot. Paul and Danny will go look at it to evaluate it and to see what kind of old churches are available in the Fox Valley.

- Our parking lot: It would cost $13,000 -$22,000 to create 8 additional parking spaces on our property. Father pointed out the cost isn't justified since we have plenty of street parking. Matt recommended more designated spots for the less abled parishioners. We will continue to encourage the young men to park on the street, to have the easier access spots for older people.

- Paul: Are we locking this upper door at 9:45? Tom and Issac have been locking the door. It can be an issue for those that arrive mid-liturgy, especially in inclement weather. (Members have expressed this concern, through the grapevine.) There was mixed feedback about the locking the door upstairs. Noah made a motion to keep the upstairs doors unlocked during liturgy. The motion passed 5 to 1. Vera voted nay.

- New parish council positions for 2027: Ideas were shared for new positions including a supply person/ inventory technician (disposable goods, paper goods, etc). Do we include the building committee. They address projects and advice. What are some ways to get more people on council. Could we assign some people to a committee do defer some tasks from council. We struggle to get people on council. We could add at large positions with voting capacity (have a voice without having a responsibility). Father suggested adding position(s) with defined roles and other position(s) with a voice. It was agreed to add an odd number of positions to aid when voting. Father liked the idea of having nine council members. It was suggested not adding the bookstore to council since the responsibilities are currently large and time consuming.

- Also, we consider possibilities for a future PC president. If there is not a good replacement candidate option, we would need to vote to override the term limit. We could also try to create buzz, to have members sit in for PC

meetings and generate interest in the council. Ideally the council president should reside within 50 miles due to the responsibilities.

- Do we need to establish an evacuation plan in case of emergency, ie fire. Something to consider.

- It was suggested to have some of the thicker candles available for baptisms. The thinner candles do not last through the service.

- Vera suggested that the bookstore manager (currently Cheryl J) be put on the church credit card. This would simplify bookstore purchases. Danny made a motion to get a third credit card for book store purchases, with a credit limit of $1,700. The motion passed unanimously.

- Vera suggested looking to hire a part-time secretary to assist Father with office work. There is no budget for that this year, but we could look at options for next year. It would also need parish approval.

Paul made a motion to adjourn the meeting, agreed by all.

Father John gave a closing prayer.

The meeting adjourned at 1:31.

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Paul made a motion to adjourn, approved by all.

Father John gave the closing prayer.

The meeting adjourned at 7:01.

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