
Parish Informational Meetings

Monday, April 19, 2021 at 6:30 pm
Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 6:30 pm
St. Hyacinth Church | 61 Pulaski Street, Auburn

“...it is compulsory that during this next year, 2020-21, significant progress must be made in developing and implementing a pastoral plan which respects the entire city of Auburn and Northern Cayuga County.”

“...it is absolutely necessary to make decisions that focus on...addressing the significant amount of unused or underutilized property and reducing that costly footprint”

Letter from Bishop Matano
June 4, 2020

Message from Planning Committee

Thank you for attending this informational meeting to learn about important decisions that are being considered for the future of the Catholic community in Auburn and Northern Cayuga County. Following the meeting and after reviewing this material, we invite parishioners to complete an online survey to provide input to the planning committee. Please use the link or QR code below to access the survey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AuburnCayugaParishSurvey>



Parish Life Trends

Auburn & Northern Cayuga County Region (St. Alphonsus, Holy Family, Sacred Heart, St. Mary, Ss. Mary & Martha, St. Ann, and Our Lady of the Snow)			
	2011	2019	Change
Households	4,994	4,296	-14%
Attendance	4,204	2,694	-36%
Masses	20	20	0%
Faith Formation	722	297	-59%
Baptisms	187	112	-40%
First Communion	152	71	-53%
Confirmation	201	91	-55%
Weddings	60	38	-37%
Funerals	257	232	-10%

*Figures above are all pre-pandemic and do not consider probable and possible permanent effect of the COVID restrictions which may result in people not going to Mass at all or relying on video streaming.

Financial Trends

Auburn & Northern Cayuga County Region (St. Alphonsus, Holy Family, Sacred Heart, St. Mary, Ss. Mary & Martha, St. Ann, and Our Lady of the Snow)			
	2011	2019	Change
Offertory Support	\$2,260,000	\$2,024,000	-12%
Operating Expenses	\$3,233,000	\$3,358,000	4%
Total Assets	\$3,527,000	\$2,993,000	-15%

Priest Statistics
Diocese of Rochester

	2016	2021	Change
Priests < 70 years of age	86	55	-36%
Priests ≥ 70 years of age	75	86	15%
Total number of priests	161	141	-12%

- 78 assigned DOR Priests (not counting externs or religious orders)
- 22 working Priests between 70-80 in assignment
- 38 Priests under age 69 or lower
- 7 DOR Special Works, Chaplain, Migration Vietnamese, Administration
- 64 locations (parishes or clusters) needing Pastors
- Currently have 2 Administrators
- Currently have 1 parish staffed by a religious order
- Two extern Priest Pastors leaving the DOR in June, but no externs coming
- Will have 7 ordained in the next 5 years, but one of those years will have no ordination

Retirement Policy

- By June 30, 2023, a Priest must be 73 years old to retire.
- By June 30, 2025, a Priest must be 74 years old to retire.
- Therefore, the Priest retirement age will be 75 years old.

Building Conditions - Summary

CHURCH	EXISTING FACILITY ISSUES	EST. COST
St. Joseph	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. ADA accessibility issues b. Sidewalk needs replacing c. Ground water issues on south side of building d. Floor tiles with asbestos on both levels e. No fire alarm or security systems 	\$158,450
St. Mary	Lack of ADA accessibility to Lower Level Parish Hall	\$28,500
St. Hyacinth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> f. Non-compliant ADA accessibility g. School roof replacement h. Church exterior repairs (limestone, brick masonry) i. New finishes in school interior j. School kitchen req. commercial exhaust hood/fire suppression system k. Church fire alarm system with local alarm only/ no monitoring l. School fire alarm systems only has pull stations 	\$293,500
Sacred Heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Parish Hall low slope roof replacement (seam repairs recently completed) b. No fire alarm system 	\$480,000 (roof only)
St. Patrick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Non-compliant ADA main entrance, travel path is tight, need designated seating and rest room on 1st floor. b. Loose interior ceiling tiles c. Fire suppression system needed in kitchen d. Fire alarm system needed 	\$14,500
St. Ann	No inspection conducted – observed to be in good condition	N/A
St. Francis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Parking Lot in poor condition b. Non-compliant ADA accessibility c. Repointing church exterior masonry d. Parish Hall addition in poor condition e. Kitchen does not meet minimum NYS Building Code (may have been corrected) f. Add fire alarm system in Church 	\$258,164
St. Alphonsus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. School roof needs to be replaced in near future b. School window replacement 	\$1,098,000
Holy Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Non-compliant ADA access b. Church roof and flashings needs replacement c. Church exterior has faux finish that is deteriorating and requires repair d. School roof replacement is urgent e. Poor drainage on school roof is major concern, drainage needs to be improved and insulation added – school roof issues must be addressed f. School masonry has severed deterioration due to water infiltration over years, including cast stone elements and lintels 	\$2,311,000

	g. School interior finishes in poor condition	
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NOTES:

1. Sean Moran, a licensed architect and Manager of Buildings & Properties for the Diocese, visited the properties and prepared a comprehensive existing conditions report for the committee’s review and consideration.
2. The Report also listed satisfactory or better aspects of each campus, which were not delineated in the above chart, as well as other minor issues and/or suggestions.
3. Providing this list should not imply to individual parishes that making repairs is a good way to address closure decisions to be made by the diocese. This list is merely one of several factors that were considered during our decision-making.
4. The listed dollar amounts for the repairs are estimates only and were developed using consistent estimating methodologies and are subject to change based on scope of work, labor and material costs.
5. The facilities were assessed primarily from the perspective of which would most successfully accommodate the many existing successful ministries and fundraisers and could expand to new activities and ministries that will be part of a viable and welcoming Catholic community.

Proposed Restructuring Plan

	Churches in Auburn	Churches outside Auburn
CURRENT	6	3
PROPOSED (*see note below)	Sacred Heart St. Mary St. Hyacinth	St. Ann St. Patrick

*NOTE: No decisions have yet been made. The planning committee will consider all input received before submitting final recommendations to our pastors, with subsequent submission to the Diocese. Any and all final decisions and timing to implement any changes will be determined by the Bishop.

Why Were These Churches Selected?

SACRED HEART & ST. MARY

- o Represent the largest number of parishioners (50%), highest mass attendance (50%) and most offertory support (46%).
- o Auburn families choose these two churches more than any other two; builds on current strength.
- o One from each of the existing clusters.
- o Maintaining these churches minimizes disruption/ risk of losing parishioners.
- o Facilities are in very good condition, well-maintained.
- o Two important, geographically distinct locations- Downtown Auburn and Owasco.
- o A variety of facilities (halls, rectories, offices, classrooms, kitchens, etc.) Capable of serving a multitude of parish needs.
- o Distinctive styles: one contemporary, the other historic/traditional.

ST. HYACINTH

- o Of the remaining Auburn churches, the committee believes St. Hyacinth's campus has the most unique and compelling attributes and capacity to meet the continuing needs of Auburn's Catholic community.
- o Largest seating capacity of all churches (610 seats)
- o Campus includes rectory, gym, kitchen, classrooms, and offices.
- o Campus is in good condition and requires minimal immediate repairs.
- o Located on northwest side of Auburn with closest proximity to parishioners living north of Auburn.

ST. ANN & ST. PATRICK

- o Important to maintain and support parish life in rural areas of the county.
- o Both churches are in good condition and have modest overhead costs.
- o One located to the north and one to the south.
- o Cato (St. Patrick)...furthest from Auburn (17 miles).
- o Parishioners of St. Joseph (Weedsport) will have options to travel north to Cato or south to Auburn (both equal distance 8 miles).
- o If full scale pastoral support and/or weekly masses become too onerous in the future, may need to consider seasonal operations and/or missionary model at one or both churches.

For More Information

Comments of Bishop Salvatore R. Matano made on April 3, 2021 at St. Mary's Church in Auburn at Easter Vigil Mass regarding the planning process can be viewed at link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aG94VryNdWg&t=3766s>

Answers to some Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can the selected churches provide adequate seating capacity for weekly Mass attendance?

Prior to the Covid outbreak, a normal week in our church community saw 19 Masses at 10 locations. The highest total weekend Mass attendance during the six months prior to the pandemic was 2,655 parishioners. The three Auburn churches named in the committee's proposal have a total seating capacity of 1,398 (St Mary's – 484, Sacred Heart – 304, St. Hyacinth - 610). Therefore, if three Masses are conducted per weekend, per church, the total seating capacity for the nine Masses would be 4,194, 50% higher than the total attendance figure. Even if only six Masses are conducted each weekend the total seating capacity would be 2,796 seating capacity which is still more than the highest total attendance figure. It must also be noted that these figures do not include the seating capacity of any masses conducted at St. Ann's and St. Patrick's. Therefore, these three Auburn churches are more than capable of providing seating capacity far more than pre-Covid attendance figures.

2. What will happen to the Saint Alphonsus Food Pantry and other current church ministries if a sponsoring church is closed?

Even though this topic was not a part of our mission, the committee did address this issue. Overall, it was the consensus that the three churches proposed have facilities to support a wide range of parish ministries. With regards to the food pantry specifically, it is the committee's opinion that it does not need to be reassigned to a specific church building at this time. As with the CYO program/gyms, a particular church doesn't have to own a space to manage such an outreach program. Space can be rented or borrowed if that is practical. Or a program can be moved to another church. In any case, these are managerial/logistical decisions to be made on a case-by-case basis, always with the goal of making the most of our collective spirit of charity and appreciating the efforts of those involved. Our thought is that by this proposal, our ministries will be more fully supported both monetarily and with additional volunteers. Since the food pantry is such a well-supported program, we cannot imagine our Catholic Community continuing without it.

3. Instead of closing churches, why don't we form a committee to focus our efforts on increasing church attendance?

This committee has no standing to say that another committee could not or should not be established to brainstorm ideas for increasing church attendance. Despite this disclaimer, we did ask ourselves these same questions, which are natural questions to ask. They are just not easy ones to answer. We do have data that shows part of the problem is a matter of fewer people living in our region than lived here in decades past. Further data shows that the average age of parishioners is increasing and the number of families, with children is noticeably decreasing. But admittedly, that does not tell the whole story. The world is changing. It has been changing for Catholics for 2000 years. We know we must never raise the white flag to the challenges of growing our faith. But devising a single dynamic plan to alter a larger trend was not our committee's mission.

4. How did the financial situation of our parishes factor into the committee’s evaluation?

The committee reviewed a significant amount of financial data and related analysis. In the aggregate, the current financial trends are not sustainable – income and assets are decreasing while operating expenses continue to increase. Reducing the amount of unused and underutilized properties is just one response, but an important one to address this situation.

5. How did the expected availability of priests to serve our community in the future factor into the planning committee’s consideration?

Priest availability was just one of many factors taken into consideration by the planning committee. However, the impact and reality of the situation cannot be overstated. The number of priests in the Diocese is decreasing at a concerning rate and the Diocese has made it clear the number of priests serving our community will necessarily decrease in the near future. The planning committee believes it is prudent to restructure our parishes now in preparation for this reality, before placing too great of burdens on fewer priests who will serve our community.

6. How was information about building conditions obtained and considered?

Information about facility conditions was lacking and/or inconsistent. Therefore the committee relied on a comprehensive report developed by Sean Moran, manager of building and properties for the Diocese of Rochester and a licensed architect. Mr. Moran visited all sites in our region earlier this year and developed a professional assessment of facility conditions and necessary upgrades. The estimated costs for repairs are estimates only, but were developed using consistent estimating methodologies and are subject to change based on scope of work, labor and material costs. The committee has a number of members with real estate experience who are capable of discerning the information provided. It is important to know the committee did not rely upon the estimated cost of facility repairs alone in arriving at its conclusions; this information was one of many factors considered.

7. What is the time frame for the proposal and any subsequent church closings?

The planning committee intends to submit its recommendations to our pastors in early May who will subsequently submit them to the Diocese for consideration. The Bishop will make any and all final decisions, including when or if to implement any changes.

8. Where will the records of closed parishes be kept?

All church records will all be kept in the Auburn area in a location yet to be determined.

9. How will closure plans affect the Catholic Schools currently operating in the Auburn area?

Catholic Schools in the Auburn area operate independently of our parishes and will continue to do so.

10. Can we hire more priests from abroad?

The Diocese shared information that it has become more difficult, not less, to hire priests from abroad. In this fiscal year alone, we will be losing some of the international priests that assist us due to visa rules.

11. Did the committee consider the possibility of selling a portion of a campus (e.g. school building), but keeping the church?

The Diocese strongly advises against subdividing campuses.

12. What happens to the proceeds when church-owned real estate is sold?

All proceeds are maintained by the local, surviving parish, as well as any remaining financial assets.

13. What will happen to the properties that may be closed?

All religious properties will be appropriately relegated to profane use before being offered for sale. There is strong evidence to suggest there are many alternative, beneficial uses for former religious buildings.