

An overview of the Parish Pastoral Council (parish council or “PPC”)

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Legal guidelines given by the Archdiocese (Clergy bulletin April 20, 2010)

1. The parish council is a visioning body of prayer discernment and reflection.
2. The parish council’s role is essentially pastoral (and administrative only secondarily).
3. The parish council is consultative to the pastor.
4. The parish council’s membership should be representative of the parish.
5. The pastor presides over the parish council and has the final decision as to whether and how to implement the recommendations of the council.
6. The parish council and finance council are interdependent.
7. The parish council should establish those committees and commissions that will directly assist in the work of the parish.
8. The parish council’s operation is governed by its constitution.
9. The constitution of the parish council must be confirmed by the canonical ordinary or his delegate

Bishop

A few helpful excerpts:

“The Parish Pastoral Council participates in the responsibility for pastoral ministry and not just in the administration of the parish. Its purpose and goals are extensive. It should research the needs, the ideas, the hopes, the life and activity of the people of God, so that the whole parish community can effectively carry out the mission of the parish and fully participate in the ongoing conversion that is central to its life. The Parish Pastoral Council should constantly evaluate the parish in its conformity to the Gospel and those constitutive elements of the Gospel which call for understanding the implications of justice. In this sense, the Parish Pastoral Council shares in the decision making process which assists the pastor in carrying out the leadership role that is his within the parish.”

“Council members can be identified through a process of discernment, appointment by the pastor, or election. Discernment and appointment are appropriate to consultative councils. Election is appropriate to councils which are more deliberative in nature.”

What is the dynamic between the PPC, the parish staff, and the pastor?

1. The pastor oversees the parish staff. Staff report to the pastor, receive direction in their ministries from him, and support each other as a team.
2. Parish Council, Finance Council, and related Committees assist the pastor and the staff through research, feedback, idea generation, discernment, and prayer. At times they may be called upon to help with parish activities such as Town Halls, All Parish Meetings, Stewardship Campaigns, etc.
3. Each Committee has a staff liaison who is present at Committee meetings. Like the relationship of the Pastor and the Parish Council, the staff liaison does not necessarily lead the Committee meeting. Committees do not oversee staff members; they are consultative to them and collaborative with them.
4. Action Teams are groups of parishioners tasked with specific projects and deadlines.

Questions for reflection

1. Is our current process for appointing and forming PPC members sufficient?
2. Do council members and staff and the pastor understand their respective roles? Do parishioners understand how these groups interact?
3. What unspoken assumptions are helping or hindering the parish's communion and mission?
4. How can the parish council help discern the direction of the parish over the next 1-3-5 years?

A model of communion and mission in a parish setting

