

Diocese of Scranton



Diocesan Directives for Parish Finance Councils

Definition:

The parish finance council is a consultative body of laypersons 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 the 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.

The Acts of Scranton Diocesan Synod II, Statute #27:

Each parish is to establish a Finance Council to assist the Pastor in the administration of parish temporal goods.

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 it in the competence to assist the Pastor in the administration of parish temporalities. The Revised Code also allows the establishment of Parish Pastoral Councils to assist the Pastor in planning, coordinating, guiding and directing all aspects of parish life. (canon 536) The establishment of Parish Pastoral Councils in every parish is mandated in the Diocese of Scranton. 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 an ex-officio member of the Parish Pastoral Council. He / she shall act as liaison between the two councils and shall provide the parish Pastoral Council regular and timely reports (at least three times a year) on the financial status of the parish and the work activity of the Parish Finance Council.

In the ongoing relationship between the two councils, the premier role of the parish Pastoral Council must be recognized. It is the mission of the Parish Council to work in collaboration with the local Pastor and his Associate Priest(s). in unifying, planning, guiding, motivating 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 as president and not less than three reputable and practicing members of the parish who are knowledgeable and skilled in financial matters and know for their prudent judgment. Members shall be by appointment of the Pastor who should consult widely before making appointment to the Parish Finance Council. If there is a Parish Pastoral Council, he should also consult with the members of this council.
- B. The Pastor is the ex-officio president of the Parish Finance Council.
- C. The parish bookkeeper/business manager 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 associate priests assigned to the Parish.

Terms of Office:

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

Officers:

- A. The Pastor of the parish presides at all meetings of the Parish finance Council and receives the Councils 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, 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 may be re-appointed.

Meetings:

The Parish Finance Council shall meet at least three 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 including indebtedness and all monies on account. Such information must be received and given in a spirit of confidentiality and prudence.

If the pastor in good conscience feels he cannot accept the recommendations of the Council, he shall fully and frankly communicate his reservations to the Council 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 an annual budget is properly prepared for review by the Parish Council.
2. To review, as needed, the implementation of Diocesan bookkeeping and accounting system for all parish finances.
3. To ensure that the submission of the 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 members of the parish community.
5. To develop procedures for the deposit of church funds in interest-bearing checking and savings accounts in accordance with diocesan Statutes.
6. To evaluate and make recommendations regarding the needs and effectiveness of the parish effort of church support through the Sunday Offertory and other fund raising activities.
7. To develop a plan for financing the necessary repairs, renovations, and purchase of equipment, which includes planning, financing and oversight.
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 three times a year) on the financial status of the parish
11. To meet all requirements of Federal and state tax laws and maintain an accurate record of payment.
12. To submit to all 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 review of insurance coverage.
14. To implement all Diocesan policies relative to financial matters.