
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL of the ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

MINUTES
2022 Special Session

Conducted by video conference

Monday, June 27, 2022
Wednesday, July 13, 2022



PARTICIPANTS

CHAIRMAN

His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon

CHURCH OFFICERS (*EX OFFICIO*)

Archpriest Alexander Rentel, *Chancellor*
Andrew Smith, *Treasurer*

Priest Alessandro Margheritino, *Secretary*

MEMBERS ELECTED BY THE ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL

Archpriest Thomas Moore
Archpriest Kirill Sokolov
Archpriest David Rucker

Katherine Vitko
Lynnell Brunswig
Mark Linnehan

DIOCESAN REPRESENTATIVES

Diocese of Alaska

Archpriest David Askoak (*only 6/27*)

Albanian Archdiocese

Archpriest Dennis Rhodes

Donna Dimitri

Bulgarian Diocese

Priest Gabriel Bilas

Deacon Bogdan Popescu

Archdiocese of Canada

Protodeacon Jesse Isaac (*only 7/13*)

Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania

Archpriest Nicholas Solak

Danalisa Radu

Diocese of the Midwest

Archpriest Elijah Mueller

Robert Graban

Diocese of New England

Priest Theophan Whitfield (*only 7/13*)

Evelyn Kreta

Diocese of New York/New Jersey

James P. Kornafel

Diocese of the South

Archpriest Joseph Ciarciaglino

Joshua Godbold

Archdiocese of Washington

Deacon Matthew Prentice

Gregory Honshul

Diocese of the West

Archpriest Michael Anderson

David Lane, Esq.

Diocese of Western Pennsylvania

Priest John Parker

Ray Steeb

ABSENT

Archimandrite Joseph (Hoffman) (*Diocese of NY/NJ*)

Archpriest David Askoak (*Diocese of Alaska - 7/13*)

Priest Theophan Whitfield (*Diocese of New England – 6/27*)

Protodeacon Jesse Isaac (*Archdiocese of Canada – 6/27*)

Dorothy Chaney (*Diocese of Alaska*)

Mark Petasky (*Archdiocese of Canada*)

GUESTS

Judge E.R. Lanier (*OCA General Counsel – only 6/27*)

Alexis Liberovsky (*Recording Secretary*)

Michael Moehle (*Cheiron, Inc. – only 6/27*)

Sean Murray (*Cheiron, Inc. – only 6/27*)

Gregory Reardon (*Cheiron, Inc. – only 6/27*)

MONDAY, JUNE 27, 2022

A. Call to Order

Metropolitan Tikhon opened the session with prayer at 1:03 PM and Archpriest Alexander Rentel then called the meeting to order.

B. Agenda Introduction & Roll Call

Fr. Rentel reviewed the agenda for the Special Session and noted that it has been convened to review and approve both the lease for the new and temporary OCA Chancery space in Virginia and the Memorandum of Understanding with St. Vladimir's Seminary concerning the OCA Archives relocation and to receive the OCA Pension audit report from Cheiron, Inc. He then conducted the roll call,

indicating that Judge E.R. Lanier (OCA General Counsel), Alexis Liberovsky (OCA Archivist) as recording secretary, and three persons from Cheiron, Inc. who conducted the OCA Pension Plan audit are present for the meeting as guests.

C. Metropolitan’s Remarks

Metropolitan Tikhon presented his introductory remarks. Reporting on his activities, he highlighted the funeral of Archbishop Paul during Bright Week. He noted that the Holy Synod will meet tomorrow and would be considering confirmation of any decisions made at today’s meeting as well as episcopal vacancies and other matters. He indicated that he would soon be issuing an archpastoral message addressed to the clergy and faithful of the Church regarding the recent US Supreme Court Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization decision overturning Roe v. Wade. He also reported that he has just relocated to his new residence in Falls Church, Virginia and is pleased to now be residing within his diocese in close proximity to his cathedral, the proposed location for the new chancery and several parishes.

David Lane announced an important change in New York State law to replace the temporary Covid rules governing virtual meetings and made the following corresponding motion. He clarified that all attending such meetings can only be present online and there can be no hybrid meetings.

- C.1. MOTION LANE/GODBOLD - That the Metropolitan or his agent be authorized to call for and notice online meetings with all parties to be appearing online. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

D. Lease Agreement

Priest Alessandro Margheritino, OCA Secretary, presented for consideration the proposed Lease Agreement for temporary office space for the Chancery in Virginia. This lease had been distributed via email for an electronic vote, but inasmuch as not all members of the Metropolitan Council responded, the vote was ineffective and a proper vote must be conducted at this meeting. He detailed the property selection process and the chosen location. Extensive discussion took place.

- D.1. MOTION LANE/GRABAN – To accept the proposed three-year Lease Agreement with addendum for temporary office space for the Chancery in Springfield, Virginia. CARRIED with twenty-three (23) votes in favor and five (5) opposed.**

Metropolitan Tikhon stated that he confirms the motion and would forward it to the Holy Synod for approval.

E. OCA Archives relocation

Fr. Margheritino presented for consideration the proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the Orthodox Church in America and Saint Vladimir's Seminary regarding relocation of the OCA Archives to the Seminary. He outlined the negotiation and joint drafting processes for the Memorandum and a letter regarding transfer to the Seminary of balances remaining in the McGuire Family Charitable Remainder Trust and an anonymous grant, both designated for the OCA Archives. He stressed that the Archives will remain property of the Orthodox Church in America. He highlighted the main provisions of the Memorandum. With minor changes in wording, the Council accepted the Memorandum and letter by the following motion.

E.1. MOTION SOKOLOV/MOORE – To accept the proposed Memorandum of Understanding regarding housing of the OCA Archives at Saint Vladimir's Seminary and attached letter regarding transfer of remaining McGuire Trust and anonymous grant balances. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Metropolitan Tikhon stated that he confirms the motion and would forward it to the Holy Synod for approval.

F. Cheiron report

Andrew Smith, OCA Treasurer, briefly reviewed the process leading up to the audit of the OCA Pension Plan conducted by Cheiron, Inc. at the request of the Metropolitan Council. He introduced Gregory Reardon, Principal Consulting Actuary, along with two other staff members at Cheiron, Inc. Mr. Reardon presented an extensive elaboration of the Executive Summary of the Actuarial Audit prepared by Cheiron, Inc. This was followed by detailed deliberation and numerous questions from the Metropolitan Council. In discussion, it was indicated that two dioceses (West and New York/New Jersey) have requested that proposed amendments of the provisions pertaining to the Pension Board in the OCA Statute be withdrawn, as they are unnecessary and even detrimental to the management of the Pension Plan. In order to conclude discussion and move forward, Metropolitan Tikhon presented for consideration a draft text of a resolution for adoption by the Metropolitan Council. After joint reflection on the text, it was suggested that a 15-minute break take place, while some Council members refine the wording of the text. After additional discussion following the break, the text was adopted as a statement from the Metropolitan Council.

F.1. MOTION LANE/BRUNSWIG – To issue the following statement:

The Metropolitan Council offers its gratitude to Andrew Smith and the members of the Metropolitan Council Pension subcommittee that worked for many hours on addressing the concerns raised by the bishops and dioceses of the Church, and recommended that an external pension audit be performed.

The Metropolitan Council receives with gratitude the requested external audit report and supporting documentation which were provided by Cheiron, Inc., and accepts their careful analysis and recommendations.

The Metropolitan Council has reviewed and recommends that the following action plan be implemented:

1. The report and supporting documentation will be forwarded to the Holy Synod, the Chancellors, and the Treasurers of all the Dioceses of the Orthodox Church in America with a request for support and collaboration from the Holy Synod.
2. That the report and supporting documentation also be provided to the OCA Pension Plan Board and that further collaboration occur.
3. The Metropolitan Council recommends to the Holy Synod and their Dioceses that improvements to the administration of the Pension Plan be implemented:
 - a. That the Pension Plan Board report at each semi-annual meeting of the Metropolitan Council and that comprehensive data and reporting be routinely shared to include all future performance, perceived risks, participation, and funding by providing the requested information not limited to but including assets, liabilities, actuarial funding ratio, market value funding ratio, surplus / deficit, and plan participation.
 - b. That the capability of the Pension Plan Board be ensured by participation of qualified members with subject matter expertise.
 - c. That the Church obtain a new actuarial firm and Plan legal counsel to increase confidence in the guidance received, and that consultants are regularly evaluated to ensure optimum Plan performance. CARRIED with one (1) vote opposed and one (1) abstention.

G. Closing

Fr. Rentel noted that time constraints at today's meeting did not allow for consideration of the OCA funding proposal that is slated to be proposed at the All-American Council and he announced that another special meeting of the Metropolitan Council would need to be convened next week in order to consider this matter. In concluding remarks, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon thanked the members of the Metropolitan Council for diligent work in today's long meeting. He noted the particular importance of caring for clergy in retirement by providing a viable Pension Plan. He concluded this meeting of the Special Session of the Metropolitan Council with prayer at 5:40 PM.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 2022

2-A. Call to Order

Metropolitan Tikhon opened the session with prayer at 1:04 PM and Archpriest Alexander Rentel then called the meeting to order.

2-B. Agenda Introduction & Roll Call

Fr. Rentel reviewed the agenda for this second meeting of this Special Session, which includes opening remarks from His Beatitude, consideration of a resolution from the Property Committee and the OCA budget funding resolution that will be presented by the Treasurer for adoption by the 20th All-American Council next week as well as an update relating to OCA Pension Plan matters from the OCA Treasurer. He conducted the roll call.

2-C. Metropolitan's Remarks

His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon welcomed the members of the Metropolitan Council and stated that he is participating in this meeting from his new residence in Virginia where he has relocated and is pleased to be settling in. He noted that his work is presently focused on preparation for the 20th All-American Council. He enjoined the Metropolitan Council to proceed with the meeting's agenda.

H. Property Committee resolution

Ray Steeb and Gregory Honshul presented the following resolution from the Property Committee. After extensive discussion and clarifications provided to the Metropolitan Council the resolution was adopted as follows.

H.1. MOTION STEEB/HONSHUL - WHEREAS, the Westwood property is for sale and the Property Committee of the Metropolitan Council do coordinate all prospective offers, whose proper evaluation and response, may require the services of New York licensed legal counsel and/or specialty realty advisors;

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Council, during the Fall 2021 Meeting, approved a resolution for funds totaling \$40,000, be set aside and allocated for such services;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, upon request of the Property Committee, the Metropolitan Council hereby approves such previously authorized funds be reallocated and made available for the acquisition of professional advisory services, as deemed necessary by the Property Committee, seeking assistance with the evaluation and/or response of Westwood prospective sale proposals. CARRIED with twenty-eight (28) votes in favor and one (1) opposed.

His Beatitude indicated that he confirms the vote.

I. Presentation of Funding Resolution

OCA Treasurer Andrew Smith introduced a resolution regarding funding of the OCA Central Administration for the coming three years, which is due to be presented for consideration and approval at the 20th All-American Council. The resolution was thoroughly discussed. A straw poll was conducted to determine whether the funding resolution and the Pension funding provision should be proposed at the 20th AAC as a single resolution or as two separate resolutions. The poll determined that it would be prudent to present these as two separate resolutions. Andrew Smith then presented the funding resolution from the Finance/Investment Committee without a pension provision for approval by the Metropolitan Council to be submitted for adoption to the 20th AAC.

I.1 MOTION FINANCE/INVESTMENT COMMITTEE (no second required) - The Metropolitan Council recommends the following funding resolution for adoption by the 20th All-American Council:

For the budget years of 2023, 2024, and 2025 each territorial diocese with the exception of Canada, Mexico and Alaska shall remit its annual financial obligation for the work of the Synodal Chancery according to the following formula:

Dioceses contributing at a rate greater than 34% of their current year “net operating budgets” shall remit 38% of their “budgeted net operating revenue” in 2023, 36% in 2024 and 34% in 2025, decreasing their annual diocesan financial contribution 2% per year, not to fall below 34%.

Dioceses contributing at the 34% rate of their current year “net operating budgets” shall continue to remit their annual financial obligation at the 34% of “budgeted net operating revenue” from 2023 through 2025.

For the budget years 2023 through 2025, the Archdiocese of Canada and the Diocese of Alaska shall remit their annual diocesan financial obligation at the rate of 10% of their current year “budgeted net operating revenue”.

The financial arrangements of the non-territorial dioceses (Romanian Episcopate, Albanian Archdiocese, and Bulgarian Diocese) are based upon agreements made when they entered the OCA and are within the competency of the Holy Synod, subject to periodic review.

“Budgeted net operating revenue” is defined as all revenue budgeted for the current year by the diocese, with the exception of pass-through activity that benefits a third party or funds a special initiative (e.g. scholarship funds, capital campaigns, revenue or expenses associated with donor-restricted funds unless the restriction is for operations). CARRIED with twenty-three (23) votes in favor, three (3) votes opposed, three (3) abstentions.

His Beatitude indicated that he confirms the vote.

J. Pension issues update

Andrew Smith read the Pension funding provision as a separate resolution for presentation to the All-American Council. The Pension provision was extensively discussed, particularly the implications of seeking additional funding over and above contributions to the OCA budget.

J.1. MOTION FINANCE/INVESTMENT COMMITTEE (no second required) - The Metropolitan Council recommends the following Pension funding resolution for adoption by the 20th All-American Council:

Each diocese (excluding Canada, Mexico, and Alaska) shall remit additional 2% of their current year “budgeted net operating revenue” restricted for the purpose of supporting administrative expenses of the OCA pension plan. DEFEATED with twelve (12) votes in favor, thirteen (13) votes opposed, two (2) abstentions.

His Beatitude indicated that he confirms the vote. As a result of the vote, this resolution will not be proposed for consideration at the 20th All-American Council. A variety of matters pertaining to the Pension Plan, Pension Board and related issues were discussed in detail.

K. All-American Council agenda adjustment

So that consideration of Pension matters at the All-American Council take place in a reasonable and prudent manner, several possibilities of revising the 20th All-American Council agenda were discussed. In view of likely further developments in the coming days, no consensus was reached.

L. Adjournment

In conclusion, Fr. Rentel noted that a meaningful conversation on Pension has begun. He indicated that a major recent achievement of the Metropolitan Council has been the relocation process. He expressed his enthusiastic expectation of the All-American Council and its anticipated accomplishments.

Metropolitan Tikhon thanked everyone for the serious discussions taking place here and those that will occur during the upcoming All-American Council. He declared the Special Session of the Metropolitan Council closed and adjourned the meeting with prayer at 4:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexis Liberovsky,
Recording Secretary