



**MINUTES
2020 Fall Session of
the Metropolitan Council
of the Orthodox Church in America**

**Thursday, August 27, 2020
Wednesday, September 16 – Thursday, September 17, 2020
Wednesday, November 4, 2020
conducted by video conference**

These draft minutes are subject to approval at a subsequent meeting of the Metropolitan Council

PARTICIPANTS

CHAIRMAN

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon

CHURCH OFFICERS (*EX OFFICIO*)

Archpriest Alexander Rentel, *Chancellor*

Andrew Smith, *Treasurer*

MEMBERS ELECTED BY THE ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL

Archpriest Antonio Perdomo

Katherine Vitko

Archpriest Thomas Moore

Lynnell Brunswig

Archpriest Kirill Sokolov

Mark Linnehan

DIOCESAN REPRESENTATIVES

Diocese of Alaska

Archpriest David Askoak (except 9/16-17/2020)

Albanian Archdiocese

Archpriest Dennis Rhodes (except 11/4/2020)

Donna Dimitri

Bulgarian Diocese

Priest Gabriel Bilas

Bogdan Popescu

Archdiocese of Canada

Protodeacon Jesse Isaac

Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania

Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky

Sharon Shingara (except 11/4/2020)

Diocese of the Midwest

Archpriest Elijah Mueller

Robert Graban

Diocese of New England

Priest Theophan Whitfield

Michael Danchak

Diocese of New York/New Jersey

Archimandrite Joseph (Hoffman)
(except 11/4/2020)

James P. Kornafel

Diocese of the South

Archpriest Joseph Ciarciaglino

Christopher Lewis

Archdiocese of Washington

Archpriest Valery Shemchuk

Gregory Honshul

Diocese of the West

Archpriest Michael Anderson (11/4/2020 only)

David Lane, Esq.

Diocese of Western Pennsylvania

Priest Nikolai Breckenridge

Ray Steeb (except 11/4/2020)

ABSENT (for all meetings unless otherwise indicated)

Archimandrite Joseph (Hoffman) (Diocese of New York/New Jersey) – 11/4/2020

Archpriest Michael Anderson (Diocese of the West) - 8/27 & 9/16-17/2020

Archpriest David Askoak (Diocese of Alaska) – 9/16-17/2020

Archpriest Dennis Rhodes (Albanian Archdiocese) – 11/4/2020

Dorothy Chaney (Diocese of Alaska)

Mark Petasky (Archdiocese of Canada)

Sharon Shingara (Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania) - 11/4/2020

GUESTS (for all meetings unless otherwise indicated)

Archpriest Thomas Soroka (Project Manager for the Departments) – 9/17/2020

Priest Alessandro Margheritino (Executive Assistant) – 9/16-17 & 11/4/2020

Deacon Peter Ilchuk (All-American Council Manager) – 8/27 & 9/17/2020

Stephanie Crocenzi, CPA (external auditor from Satty, Levine & Ciacco, CPAs, P.C.) – 9/17/2020

Judge E.R. Lanier (OCA General Counsel)

Alexis Liberovsky (Recording Secretary)

Frank Lou, CPA (external auditor from Satty, Levine & Ciacco, CPAs, P.C.) – 9/17/2020

Susan Wisnewski (Accounting Manager) - 8/27 & 9/16-17/2020

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2020

A. Call to Order

Metropolitan Tikhon opened the session with prayer and called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM

B. Agenda: Introduction (attached) & Roll Call

Father Alexander Rentel reviewed the agenda for the meeting and conducted the roll call.

C. Metropolitan's Report (attached)

Metropolitan Tikhon presented his attached report in which he particularly highlighted the agenda items for the meeting, including an update on the Church's finances and the appointment of a new member of the Auditing Committee, consideration of a motion from the Property Committee to engage a realtor in order to sell Westwood (the OCA Chancery property), as well as an update on planning for the 20th All-American Council including consideration of possible postponement of the Council until 2022. He stressed that all of these issues involve our stewardship for the Church, manifested in various ways.

D. Treasurer's Report (attached)

Andrew Smith, OCA Treasurer, highlighted his attached report including audited financial statements for 2019 (attachment A) and a preliminary accounting of the Church's financial situation for the first six months of 2020 (attachment B), which indicated the stability of the Church's finances in the wake of the pandemic. Mr. Smith noted that this was in part due to lower than anticipated expenses. He also reported that the Orthodox Church in America was able to obtain funding from the Paycheck Protection Program of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed by Congress in March 2020 (attachment C). After discussion, it was decided to defer further consideration of this funding and related issues to the next meeting of the Metropolitan Council.

- D.1. MOTION LANE/CIARCIAGLINO – To table further discussion of the Paycheck Protection Program including appropriate disposition of surplus monies remaining from this funding to the next meeting of the Metropolitan Council in September. CARRIED with two (2) opposed (GRABAN, LINNEHAN) and two (2) abstentions (BILAS, ISAAC).**

In view of the resignation of Auditing Committee member Dimitri Pletz last year, Mr. Smith reported on the careful search conducted to fill this vacancy (attachment D). He then proposed Ms. Maha Adranly (attachment E) for membership in the Auditing Committee and requested authorization for the upcoming internal audit to be conducted virtually.

- D.2. MOTION SMITH/VITKO - In accordance with Article V, Section 9 of the OCA Statute, to appoint Maha Adranly as a new member of the internal Auditing Committee and to authorize staff to work with the Internal Auditing Committee to conduct an audit in the 4th Quarter of 2020 virtually, due to the coronavirus pandemic. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

To conclude the Treasurer's report, Mr. Smith offered a preliminary glimpse at the tentative 2021 budget (attachment F), which will continue to be refined in the coming weeks, and will be formally presented to the Council for approval at its next meeting in September.

E. Property Committee (attached)

Ray Steeb, Cochairman of the Property Committee, began his oral presentation by introducing for approval the following resolution from the Committee together with the attached listing agreement contract indicated in the resolution.

- E.1. MOTION STEEB/VITKO – To adopt the following resolution as presented by the Property Committee:**
Whereas, the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America, voted to carry the motion made by LANE/STEEB at the February 2020 meeting, mandating the following actions:
- **Efforts shall be made immediately towards the sale of the Chancery property.**
 - **Efforts shall be made immediately to determine a location to house the offices of the OCA Chancery administration.**
 - **Efforts shall be made immediately to determine a location for the residence of the Metropolitan, and**
 - **Efforts shall be made immediately to determine a location to house the OCA archives.**

Whereas, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, further voted to carry the motion at the June 2020 meeting;

Whereas, The Property Committee, duly organized for the above stated purposes, proceeded to identify prospective Real Estate Brokers and request that they submit their sale plans and strategies;

Whereas, The Property Committee identified required characteristics of a successful real estate firm whose qualifications will include provision of excellent customer service, have a national and local presence, be technology and data driven, and develop a marketing strategy that will maximize financial return in a timely manner;

Whereas, The Property Committee has discussed the Chancery sale prospect with three candidates and further auditioned two agents, including review of submitted written plans;

Whereas, The Property Committee, has identified an agent who meets the above stated criteria and terms, now recommends Broker Fran Mazer and Team, representing Compass Realty;

Whereas, The Legal Committee has completed review of contractual documents;

Whereas, The Property Committee now recommends that the Orthodox Church in America engage Fran Mazer and Team, for a term period of 9 months, at the list price of \$6,500,000.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America directs the Orthodox Church in America, by the Metropolitan or his designee to engage Fran Mazer and Team, representing Compass Realty, to execute the final documents, attached and incorporated as Exhibit A. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

In discussion of the motion, Ray Steeb outlined the three independent and possibly diverging aspects of relocation that would result from the sale of Westwood (the current Chancery property): a) Archives, b) Metropolitan's residence, c) Chancery offices. He stressed that each of these interrelated facets is being considered as a separate project. Mr. Steeb also reported on the various considerations in selecting a realtor to market the property and possible marketing strategy. He noted that it would likely be more advantageous to sell to an individual rather than a corporate entity that would seek to develop the property. In view of accountability and transparency before the entire Church, it was suggested that the reasoning for selling the property and the steps of the process being undertaken toward the sale be more prominently publicized on the OCA website.

F. 20th All-American Council

Deacon Peter Ilchuk, Council Manager, delivered an oral report with a PowerPoint presentation on preparations for the 20th All-American Council (AAC) scheduled for July 26-31, 2021 in Baltimore, MD. He reported on the various difficulties and obstacles for the Council due to the pandemic. These include safety measures that would have to be put in place. He indicated that the Baltimore Hilton, where the 20th All-American Council is scheduled to be held has not yet reopened to the public. He suggested that the Church might consider postponing the Council or conducting a Council with limited attendance and other restrictions in 2021. However, this hotel has no openings in 2022. In deliberations, it was suggested that the possibility of a virtual All-American Council should also be considered. Deacon Peter indicated the need to further discuss some new factors with hotel management regarding possible postponement and rescheduling of the All-American Council. The Metropolitan Council decided to defer any decision on the possible postponement of the 20th All-American Council until its next meeting in September.

G. Adjournment

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon adjourned the first meeting of the Fall Session of the Metropolitan Council with a closing prayer at 9:18 PM. The Fall Session will reconvene on September 16-17.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

2-A. Call to Order

Metropolitan Tikhon opened the meeting with prayer and called the gathering to order at 1:05 PM

2-B. Agenda: Introduction (attached) & Roll Call

Father Alexander Rentel reviewed the agenda for the meeting and conducted the roll call.

2-C. Metropolitan's Report (attached)

Metropolitan Tikhon presented his attached report highlighting the life of the Church and his own ministry since the Spring Session of the Metropolitan Council in February, especially in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. He commended everyone for their labors in adjusting to new circumstances resulting from the pandemic, particularly the chancery staff led by Archpriest Alexander Rentel, OCA Chancellor. He indicated the staffing changes taking place at the Chancery, including the departure of his longtime personal secretary, Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak, and the appointment of Deacon John Thetford to that position. His Beatitude reported on his two recent archpastoral visits in the Albanian Archdiocese and the Diocese of New England for the celebration of memorial services marking the first anniversary of the repose of Archbishop Nikon (Liolin). In his account of the Church's external contacts in recent months, he noted his phone contacts in the spring with Patriarchs Bartholomew of Constantinople and Kirill of Moscow, as well as increased activity in the work of the Executive Committee of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the USA, which is taking place virtually. He announced that in addition to his written reflection, posted on the OCA website earlier this week, on the upcoming sale of Westwood, the building housing his residence and the OCA Chancery, he is also preparing video reflections on this and other topics. His Beatitude answered questions from Council members and wide-ranging discussion took place.

H. Chancellor's Report (attached)

Archpriest Alexander Rentel, OCA Chancellor, began his attached report by reviewing various aspects of the Church's Covid-19 response, personnel matters and staffing changes.

H.1. MOTION HOJNICKI/BRECKENRIDGE - To move into executive session. CARRIED.

A confidential personnel matter was discussed in executive session.

H.2. MOTION BRECKENRIDGE/LANE – To move out of executive session. CARRIED.

Continuing his report, Fr. Alexander discussed the postponement of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the granting of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in America and the glorification of St. Herman of Alaska, as well as the efforts being undertaken toward the relocation of the OCA Chancery and Archives and noted the recent meeting of the Archives Advisory Committee.

2-E. Property Committee

Ray Steeb, Cochairman of the Property Committee, provided an oral update. He reported that in fulfillment of the decision by the Metropolitan Council on August 27, the approved contract with the realtor was signed on August 31 and the Westwood property was listed for sale. Mr. Steeb indicated that the listing with photos may be viewed online and that several interested individuals have already visited the property for onsite viewing or will be coming in the next few days. Discussion ensued.

2-D. Treasurer's Report (attached)

Andrew Smith, OCA Treasurer, highlighted his attached report including audited financial statements for 2019 (attachment A) and comprehensive reports on the Church's finances for the first six months of 2020 (attachment B). The Council also continued discussion of the funds received by the OCA through the Paycheck Protection Program of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed by Congress in March 2020. Mr. Smith indicated that the 2021 budget would be submitted for approval by the Metropolitan Council at its next meeting in October. He also noted that in accordance with the motion adopted by the Metropolitan Council at its previous meeting in August authorizing a virtual internal audit, it would be scheduled soon with the Auditing Committee.

The meeting adjourned with prayer at 3:11 PM.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

3-A. Call to Order

After prayer led by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, he called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM. Fr. Rentel reviewed the agenda for the day.

2-D. Treasurer's Report (attached) – continued

Mr. Smith introduced Frank Lou, CPA from Satty, Levine & Ciacco, CPAs, P.C., the present external auditing firm for the Orthodox Church in America, who delivered the attached PowerPoint presentation to report on the recently conducted audit of OCA finances for 2019. He indicated a clean opinion from his firm and commended the timeliness and accuracy of the OCA financial records and operations. He then responded to questions from Council members.

2-D.1. MOTION SMITH/GRABAN – To accept as presented the external audit report for 2019 from Satty, Levine & Ciacco, CPAs, P.C. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

I. OCA Departments update (attached)

Archpriest Thomas Soroka delivered the attached report detailing his initial work as the recently appointed Project Manager of the Departments of the Orthodox Church in America. He outlined his vision and strategies for productive and cost efficient work by the OCA departments and provided updates on current departmental work. He indicated that department activities going forward would be project oriented and highlighted the approved projects currently undertaken by each department. Father Thomas also announced steps to streamline and unify the web presence of OCA departments. Finally, he briefly reported on his ongoing project coordinating the creation of a new adult catechism, consisting of 16 one-hour long lessons, including a catechist's guide, a catechumen's guide, PowerPoint slides, and a list of accompanying online resources. Extensive discussion ensued particularly regarding liturgical texts and music.

2-F. 20th All-American Council

Deacon Peter Ilchuk, All-American Council Manager, provided an oral update with a PowerPoint presentation on preparations for the 20th All-American Council highlighting a variety of complex issues and obstacles for convening the Council as scheduled due to the pandemic. After thorough consideration and discussion of all issues, including the changing and unpredictable circumstances related to the pandemic, a straw poll among Council members indicated a majority in favor of deferring for the time being any decision on the possibility of postponing the 20th All-American Council. This course of action was then affirmed.

2-G. Adjournment (attached)

Fr. Rentel indicated that the next and likely final meeting of the Metropolitan Council's Fall Session would take place by video conference during the third week of October and that the main issues for consideration would be the OCA budget for 2021, a report on the Pension Plan with proposed amendments from the Pension Board, as well as further updates and discussion regarding the 20th All-American Council.

Metropolitan Tikhon delivered his attached concluding remarks in which he expressed encouragement for the Metropolitan Council and the Church to continue moving forward in uncertain times. He added some comments on the relocation of the chancery and closed the meeting with prayer at 3:38 PM.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2020

4-A. Call to Order

After prayer led by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, he called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM.

3-B. Agenda: Introduction (attached) & Roll Call

Father Alexander Rentel reviewed the agenda for the meeting and conducted the roll call. He noted that this meeting had been originally scheduled for October 21, but was postponed due to the repose and funeral of retired OCA Primate, Metropolitan Theodosius (Lazor).

J. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting (attached)

Father Rentel presented for approval the attached draft minutes of the regular Spring Session of the Metropolitan Council on February 5-6, 2020 and the Extraordinary Session on March 31, 2020. The minutes of both sessions were approved by consensus as presented.

3-C. Metropolitan's Report (attached)

Metropolitan Tikhon began his attached report by expressing hopes for a productive meeting. Among recent events in the life of the Church, he particularly noted the funeral of Metropolitan Theodosius, where he had presided, the grave illness of Archbishop David of Alaska and the serious condition of former Metropolitan Council member, Gregory Nescott. He asked for prayers for them and all who are ill, especially those afflicted by the pandemic. He then offered his perspective on key agenda items for this meeting.

3-E. Property Committee (attached)

Gregory Honshul, Cochairman of the Property Committee, presented the attached report to update the Council on efforts to sell Westwood, the property where the Metropolitan's residence and OCA Chancery are located, since a contract with a realtor was signed on August 31. He detailed marketing strategies being undertaken by the realtor and noted that there have been several showings for both developers and an individual who wishes to renovate the building as a residence, but no offers have been received. Metropolitan Tikhon suggested that that Church-wide discussion regarding the sale of Westwood should be encouraged and that the historical significance of the property should be memorialized. Questions and discussion ensued.

K. Legal matters (attached)

Judge E.R. Lanier, OCA General Counsel, presented the attached joint report of the Legal Committee of the Metropolitan Council and the General Counsel. He noted litigation involving the Church and other legal matters of concern. He expressed particular satisfaction with OCA involvement in the Committee for Legal Matters of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, which is chaired by

Archbishop Michael. The Committee has been active this year in advising and assisting with issues related to the pandemic. He also reported that he had recently presented a lecture to students at St. Vladimir's Seminary.

L. Presentation of 2021 Budget (attached)

The Church's proposed budget for 2021 was presented and explained by OCA Treasurer, Andrew Smith. He indicated that this was strictly the operating budget of the Central Church Administration and does not take into account expenses for the All-American Council, which entails its own budget, and does not include possible expenses associated with the sale of Westwood. Any changes in circumstances, including those related to the pandemic, which might entail revisions to the budget will be presented to the Council for budgetary amendments during its next meeting. After questions and discussion, a motion was made to adopt the budget as presented.

L.1. MOTION VITKO/DANCHAK – To approve the proposed 2021 budget as presented. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

L.2. Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) resolution (attached)

Following up on discussions at previous meetings of the Fall Session, Mr. Smith presented for approval by the Council the attached motion to authorize the Chancery Administration to pursue and submit an application for forgiveness of the loan it had received through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act passed by Congress in March 2020. Mr. Smith indicated that, in consultation with legal counsel, it has been ascertained that the OCA has satisfied the intent and all parameters of the program. After discussion and clarifications, the motion was adopted as follows. It was agreed that the wording of the motion implies that the application for the loan forgiveness would be submitted by the Treasurer with the knowledge and blessing of the Metropolitan and overseen by the Chancellor.

L.2.A. MOTION CIARCIAGLINO/DIMITRI – To authorize the Chancery Administration to pursue and submit an application for forgiveness of 2020 CARES Act Paycheck Protection Program loan funding. This authorization is granted to the extent that the Orthodox Church in America has satisfied the intent and parameters of the program by retaining payroll during the measurement period and incurring other allowable expenses in accordance with the most recent available guidance from the Small Business Administration. CARRIED with one (1) opposed (LINNEHAN) and two (2) abstentions (BILAS, ISAAC).

M. Church Planting Grants (attached)

The attached proposals for Church Planting Grant funding in 2021 totaling \$68,000, prepared by Father Thomas Soroka, Project Manager for OCA Departments, who was unable to participate in the meeting, were presented to the Council for approval by Father Alessandro Margheritino, Executive Assistant. Father Rentel stated that after approval at this meeting, the proposals would be submitted to the Holy Synod for final confirmation. The proposals were approved as presented.

M.1. MOTION BRECKENRIDGE/HOJNICKI - To approve funding for three planting grants in 2021 as presented totaling \$68,000. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

N. OCA Archives Relocation (attached)

Fathers Rentel and Margheritino presented the attached memorandum with an attached proposed resolution regarding the process of relocating the OCA Archives and the role of the Archives Advisory Committee and its role in launching this process by issuing Request for Proposals to parties interested in providing housing for the OCA Archives. The resolution was adopted as follows.

N.1. MOTION BRUNSWIG/MUELLER - To adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Westwood property that houses the Archives of the OCA is for sale; WHEREAS, it seems urgent to initiate the planning process for the relocation of the aforementioned Archives;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Council of the OCA directs the Archives Advisory Committee:

A. That the Metropolitan Council officially formalizes the advisory panel previously appointed by the Metropolitan known as the OCA Archives Advisory Committee. Members of the Committee are: Archpriest Alexander Rentel, Priest Alessandro Margheritino, Alexis Liberovsky, Archpriest John Erickson, Archpriest John Perich, Mat. Tamara Skvir, Dr. Anatol Shmelev, Daria Safronova-Simeonoff, Matthew Garklavs. This Committee will assist with advisory functions in respect to the relocation process and will support the work of the OCA Archivist, Alexis Liberovsky.

B. To issue a Request For Proposals (RFP) from interested parties that would:

- a. Provide support and assistance to the OCA Archivist, Alexis Liberovsky, for the curation and storage of the OCA Archives;**
- b. Provide appropriate storage services for the OCA Archives;**
- c. Provide display/access to OCA archives as needed/requested.**

C. To set up the necessary criteria for the RFP, specifying that:

- a. The OCA always owns all archival materials and information submitted for storage services;**
- b. The OCA is always consulted on the disposal of any submitted archival materials or information;**
- c. The OCA can at any time take over the management, curation and/or storage services of its archives. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3-G. Adjournment (attached)

Fr. Rentel noted that while this year's events to celebrate the 50th anniversaries of the granting of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in America and the glorification of Saint Herman of Alaska had to be postponed, he reported that the new edition of "A Commemorative List of the Departed Servants of Orthodoxy in North America" will soon be published and that this will allow for ongoing prayerful remembrance of those who came before us, which is a fitting way to mark the anniversaries. He indicated a new feature on the main page of the OCA website, which is a constantly updated listing of upcoming events, which is especially useful in view of often changing scheduling circumstances due to the pandemic.

Metropolitan Tikhon delivered his attached closing remarks (included at the end of the text of his attached report for this meeting) in which he expressed appreciation for the amount of work accomplished during the Fall Session of the Metropolitan Council and conveyed his gratitude for the ongoing efforts of Council members and OCA Chancery staff. After leading the Council in prayer, he declared the Fall Session of the Metropolitan Council adjourned at 3:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexis Liberovsky,
Recording Secretary