



MINUTES
Extraordinary Session of
the Metropolitan Council
of the Orthodox Church in America

Thursday, November 19, 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

DIOCESAN REPRESENTATIVES

Diocese of Alaska

Dorothy Chaney

Albanian Archdiocese

Archpriest Dennis Rhodes

Donna Dimitri

Bulgarian Diocese

Priest Gabriel Bilas

Bogdan Popescu

Archdiocese of Canada

Protodeacon Jesse Isaac

Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania

Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky

Sharon Shingara

Diocese of the Midwest

Archpriest Elijah Mueller

Robert Graban

Diocese of New England

Priest Theophan Whitfield

Evelyn Kreta

Diocese of New York/New Jersey

Archimandrite Joseph (Hoffman)

James P. Kornafel

Diocese of the South

Archpriest Joseph Ciarciaglino

Archdiocese of Washington

Archpriest Valery Shemchuk

Gregory Honshul

Diocese of the West

Archpriest Michael Anderson

David Lane, Esq.

Diocese of Western Pennsylvania

Priest Nikolai Breckenridge

Ray Steeb

ABSENT

Archpriest David Askoak (*Diocese of Alaska*)

Christopher Lewis (*Diocese of the South*) Mark Linnehan (*Member elected by the All-American Council*)

Mark Petasky (*Archdiocese of Canada*)

GUESTS

Priest Alessandro Margheritino (*Executive Assistant*)

Deacon Peter Ilchuk (*All-American Council Manager*)

Alexis Liberovsky (*Recording Secretary*)

A. Call to Order

Metropolitan Tikhon opened the session with prayer and called the meeting to order at 1:04 PM

B. Agenda: Introduction (attached) & Roll Call

Father Alexander Rentel reviewed the agenda for this special session of the Metropolitan Council and indicated that this meeting has been convened for two issues that require urgent decisions by the Council: the possible postponement of the 20th All-American Council and a purchase offer that has been received on the Westwood property. He then conducted the roll call.

C. Metropolitan's Report

Metropolitan Tikhon presented a brief oral report. He welcomed Matushka Evelyn Kreta, who is the newest member of the Metropolitan Council, representing the Diocese of New England. He provided an update on the serious condition of Archbishop David of Alaska, who was able to join the teleconference meeting of the Holy Synod the previous week for 30 minutes. He stressed that the process of selling Westwood is above all a matter of good stewardship. He indicated that there is no particular rush to finalize a sale and that finances are not necessarily a primary factor. It is a positive move and should be enacted with dignity to bring the Church to a better place. He noted the threefold process of finding new locations for the Chancery, Metropolitan's Residence and Archives. To further the process, a new committee, tentatively called the Landing Committee, will be appointed in order to investigate local factors and possibilities for relocating the OCA Chancery and Metropolitan's Residence to the Washington, DC area.

Fr. Rentel announced that an online portal is being created in order to allow members to more efficiently access documents and reports. He indicated that a hybrid (in person/distance participation) meeting of the Holy Synod will take place on December 3 in Parma, Ohio in order to approve the decisions of this meeting, especially concerning the All-American Council. He noted that November 15 was Stewards Sunday, that over

\$10,000 in donations has been received since October 29 when a new web link went live and that year-to-date contributions total nearly \$85,000. This is due to the efforts of most of the chancery staff after the departure of Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak, former Stewards of the OCA Director.

D. 20th All-American Council (attached)

Deacon Peter Ilchuk, All-American Council Manager, summarized his attached report. He indicated that the Hilton Inner Harbor Hotel in Baltimore, MD is now willing to host a full 20th All-American Council in early July 2022, with precise terms still to be negotiated. Should agreeable terms not be possible in Baltimore, two sites in Dallas, TX are being explored as alternatives. He outlined three options for consideration: to postpone the Council to 2022 in Baltimore, to postpone the Council to 2022 in Dallas or to attempt to convene the Council in July 2021 in Baltimore as originally planned. He suggested that attendance would likely be substantially reduced if the Council convenes in 2021. After lengthy discussion, the following resolution was adopted with the understanding that the Preconciliar Commission would decide on the location after all contract terms are known. Metropolitan Tikhon suggested that some other type of virtual gathering could be held in 2021 instead of the All-American Council.

D.1. MOTION BRUNSWIG/RHODES – To postpone the 20th All-American Council for one year from July 2021 to July 2022. CARRIED with one (1) opposed (SOKOLOV).

Father Rentel indicated that this motion would now be forwarded to the Holy Synod for final approval.

E. Retention of Legal Counsel in New York (attached)

David Lane explained the need to retain legal counsel licensed in New York State to assist the Church in legal issues pertaining to the sale of Westwood and introduced the following motion.

E.1. MOTION LANE/MUELLER - To adopt the following resolution regarding retention of legal counsel in New York:

WHEREAS, General Counsel of the Orthodox Church in America has recommended that the Church retain New York admitted legal counsel to assist with legal matters relative to a potential sale of the Chancery property in Oyster Bay Cove, Nassau County, New York; and WHEREAS, Seth Levine, Esquire, of the Nassau County law firm of Richman & Levine has been recommended to the Church by Frances Mazer, the licensed realtor presently assisting the Church in this regard; and

WHEREAS, General Counsel of the Orthodox Church in America concurs in the recommendation of Ms. Mazer;

BE IT NOW RESOLVED by the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America that the Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America be authorized to retain the professional services of Seth Levine, Esquire, on a written retainer agreement at a fee rate not to exceed \$450 per hour and that the Chancellor be further authorized to advance an initial financial retainer to Seth Levine, Esquire, not to exceed the amount of Three Thousand Dollars (\$3000). CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

F. Property Committee (attached)

Ray Steeb and Gregory Honshul presented an oral report from the Property Committee and elaborated on the attached PowerPoint on potential next steps in conjunction with the offers received on the property. They reported that there have been nine showings of the property and that there is a formal written offer of \$5.5 million from a developer and a verbal offer of \$5 million from an individual who intends to renovate the house. The three possible options are to accept the written offer, to counteroffer or to decline. They further explained various details relating to the offers and the possible sale of Westwood. A straw poll was conducted regarding the three options. There were 25 votes for a counteroffer, 4 votes to decline the offer and no votes to

accept the offer. Extensive discussion took place on all issues and numerous clarifications were presented. To conclude deliberations, Ray Steeb presented the following motion.

- F.1. MOTION STEEB/GRABAN – To adopt the following resolution providing directions to the Property Committee for negotiations toward the sale of the Westwood property:**
- WHEREAS, The Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America has previously authorized the offering for sale of the Westwood property located in Syosset, New York;**
- WHEREAS, The Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America has previously engaged the services of a Real Estate Broker to list the said property for sale and otherwise seek a purchaser;**
- WHEREAS, The Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America has previously established a “Property Committee” to facilitate the said sale and desires that the said Committee engage in negotiations toward that end and recognizing that it is desirable and necessary that said Committee be given both guidance and authority for such anticipated negotiations;**
- THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America does hereby authorize the Property Committee:**
- 1) To engage in all negotiations on behalf of the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America necessary to arrive at a contract for sale of said property;**
 - 2) In furtherance of such negotiations, the Property Committee by majority vote of its members and without prior approval of the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America may in the course of such negotiations lower the asking price, demand such terms of sale as it sees fit and otherwise negotiate with a prospective buyer;**
 - 3) Every counteroffer made by the Property Committee shall contain the following caveat in writing; “This counteroffer upon acceptance by the prospective purchaser constitutes a binding contract ONLY if subsequently approved in writing by both the Metropolitan Council and The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America and such written approval has been delivered to the said prospective buyer.”;**
 - 4) The Property Committee may reject, without prior approval of the Metropolitan Council, any offer to purchase that the majority of the committee members deem not in the best interest of the Orthodox Church in America. CARRIED with one (1) abstention (KRETA).**

G. Adjournment

In his closing remarks, Metropolitan Tikhon expressed his gratitude for the work of the Metropolitan Council and requested volunteers for membership in the “Landing Committee” which would also include people from the Archdiocese of Washington. He reported that he has been formulating ideas for a new chancery and would prefer the construction of a new building. Metropolitan Tikhon then declared the Extraordinary Session of the Council adjourned and led the gathering in a closing prayer at 3:27 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexis Liberovsky,
Recording Secretary