

Minutes (Final)
Board of Trustees Meeting (at Wellesley College Club)
Voice of the Faithful, Inc.
March 25-26, 2011 – Friday, March 25, 2011, 6: 00 PM to 9:00 PM;
Saturday, March 26, 2011 9:00 AM to 3:45 PM EST

Board Members Present: Bill Casey, Mary Pat Fox, Pat Gomez, Elia Marnik (presiding), Dan Bartley, Ed Wilson, Ron DuBois, Jayne O'Donnell, and John Hushon (not present) Mark Mullaney, Mary Freeman.

Officers Present: Janet Hauter (not present), Kevin Connors, Nick Mazza.

Executive Director: Donna Doucette.

Development Associate: Julie Dutcher (Friday evening partial)

Opening Prayer Service was led by Bill Casey- Halleluiah meditation

1. Administrative Matters: Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Board approved the revision of three amendments to the minutes of the meeting on February 22, 2011, as presented (6-0-4). Secretary Nick Mazza is to incorporate these revisions into the previous set of minutes.

2. Finances: Kevin Connors reported that we are managing our finances well. We are at adequate status and maintaining our financial goals. We should be maintaining at least a six month reserve goal to operate comfortably.

3. Development: Julie Dutcher presented a review of major donor cultivation and solicitation activities. Most of the "in person" solicitations occurred within the Boston area and she is recommending that we expand beyond the Boston area. The donor reception planned in Wellesley was cancelled because too many people had conflicting schedules.

Foundation solicitations were basically unsuccessful despite our strong commitment in this area. Foundations are very overwhelmed these days and are a difficult area from which to receive support for religious reform.

Individual foundations have been supportive in the past and we are trying to re-cultivate support from these groups but with the ongoing financial crisis in the country the task has been difficult.

Julie said she will be leaving VOTF for another professional opportunity. Her experiences have always been positive and she complimented the VOTF staff for their professionalism
Elia commended Julie on the excellent job she has done for VOTF.

Individual foundations have been supportive in the past and we are trying to re-cultivate these groups but with the recent financial crisis in the country the level of support has been difficult.

Donna Doucette and Julie O'Donnell asked the Board to consider a future development position with a thirty week hour arrangement. The Board will have to consider this suggestion and the quality of future applicants.

4. Discussion on Faithful Revolution: How Voice of the Faithful Is Changing the Church by Tricia Bruce. Pat Gomez provided a review of the book and its content especially as we evaluate

our current organizational commitments and understanding of VOTF goals and mission. Pat Gomez provided some points to consider as we move and plan for our future as an organization.

Saturday, March 26, 2011 meeting began at 8:30 am with a meditation lead by Bill Casey.

5. Discussion on the Future of VOTF: Chair Elia led the discussion and covered the following issues:

- A. Advisory Council recommended that a primary goal in planning for VOTF's future is the goal of reaching out to youth. One recommendation was to create youth focus groups and acquire a better understand of what youth are thinking and their views of the church and organized religion.
- B. Chair Marnik referred to a discussion with VOTF member and supporter, Dr. Frank Hartman, professor at the Kennedy School of Government. He also recommended that we reach out to younger Catholics through focus groups. He also suggested that VOTF be more relentless as an organization in staying with its goals.

Some additional issues relating to youth that were discussed are:

Defining Youth (age range)

Determining areas that interest them.

Can VOTF respond to what youth are interested in?

- *Connect with youth.

- *We should connect with youth in general and outreach to them about our goals and mission as an organization.

- *Organize focus groups: Development Committee will act as a clearinghouse

Locations for Focus groups suggested are:

- *Washington DC area with Bill Casey and Mary Pat Fox.

- *University of Rhode Island: Mary Freeman

- *Boston area; Ron DeBois and Elia Marnik

Timetable and timeline for these groups should be determined by next Board of Trustee conference call.

- C. Other important topics:

Is VOTF over engaged with VIA initiative programs? Is VOTF as an organization effecting change in the church? A suggestion was made that we should record our accomplishments i.e. Priest of Integrity, Bishop Selection and determine soft and hard successes for our public relations efforts.

Financial accountability: Discussion took place on creating a financial accountability website as a means of addressing financial mismanagement in the church and which should raise awareness among the faithful.

Survey of Affiliates: The results of the survey indicate that affiliate leaders are tired, no new membership, few speakers – but the members remain in contact within the affiliate through emails or periodic meetings. We might need another model other than the affiliate structure.

Mutual expectation of the American Catholic Council and VOTF needs to be discussed further:

Update on ACC: Presented by John Hushon:

A lengthy discussion took place on this issue and the following items were mentioned:

1. John was asked about the number of youth attending ACC conference: He indicated that very few were registrants. However, youth are participating in the choir at the closing liturgy and campus ministry individuals from local Catholic colleges and universities will be present.
2. John indicated a need for help with developing a press release asking for a national day of prayer for renewal of Vatican II set for Friday April 15th
3. Need assistance in generating additional registrations to cover an additional \$130,000
4. VOTF presence at ACC will include Ron DuBois with a mandatory celibacy initiative; Nick Mazza, Ed Wilson and Dan Bartley will conduct a session on Bishop Selection and Francis Piderit on Local Action initiatives. Most supportive reform organizations toward the ACC have been VOTF, Corpus and Future Church.
5. John discussed post ACC expectations. He indicated that the current vision for the ACC would be to organize national efforts in support of Vatican II initiatives. A meeting will take place after the ACC to determine next steps. Chris Schenk is conducting discussions with her Board to determine the role of Future Church. Contact has been made with international groups observing and participating at ACC to organize country meetings and call for Vatican III.

Kevin Connors suggested that the Sunday morning liturgy be an acclamation of the Catholic Bill of Rights. John indicated that it was important to have all reform organizations provide their insights about the future of reform in the church at both the April COR meeting as well as after the ACC.

Chair Marnik asked about a follow up questionnaire for future input. Nothing is developed now and plans to have something developed later with input from listening sessions and conversations at the breakout sessions.

Dan Daley hoped to experience a resurgence of interest and energy especially with youth.

VOTF's expectations of ACC: A variety of expectations were presented including:

The conference is a great opportunity to get laity out of their seats. Big press coverage needed for momentum. Provide a unified organization and message that represents a larger number of Catholics.

Success for Dan Bartley is that other organizations in the church to support this renewal effort.

Bill Casey suggested that VOTF arose as an organization with a unique purpose, namely, to address the sexual abuse of children by clergy and the cover-up of hierarchy. In charting VOTF's direction following the ACC, he asked the question, Is VOTF a reform organization in the same context as other reform organizations like CTA or Future Church, or does it have a unique mission that pursues reform through the lens of the sexual abuse crisis, rather than through the lens of reform itself.

Mark Mullaney: This is a critical time when the church is at its weakest. Need to come out with something unique.

Donna: Success is our presence.

Proposed Membership Survey: Presented by Mary Pat Fox

Mary Pat and the committee continue to work with Joann Vanek, sociologist and consultant. The goal of the survey is to provide an opening introduction and then a series of questions relating to VOTF's activities and to solicit the memberships' awareness and opinion of our initiatives. The committee needs more time to work on the survey. It is currently in a draft format. The committee's intention is to solicit information from members while not asking questions that are too long and onerous so that the survey will be completed. Discussion continues on the quality of the questions, format etc. Consensus on the survey was well received and refined by the group so that it could get this survey out sooner than later. Donna will obtain two goals from each of the Initiatives to be included in the survey.

Officer's Election: Chair Marnik asked for suggestions from the officers concerning their future plans with their officer's positions. Furthermore, she indicated the importance of selecting Nominating and Election Committee Chairs. It was agreed that logistics and cost, including hardship issues in joining the organization would be the same as the last officer election which seemed to go well.

Leadership reports on VIA initiatives: Dan Bartley indicated that the VIA is currently experiencing problems in leadership burnout and energy. He indicated that VOTF needs victories. We have few victories. It was decided that the office would compile a list of victories hard and soft for the Boards' information for our upcoming 10th anniversary.

Executive Directors report: Donna provided a report on new membership. She also suggested that we conduct a new donor acquisition mailing in the Philadelphia area since it provides an opportunity to acquire new members and donors since there is a widespread dissatisfaction among the Catholic population. She also intends to solicit donors and members from the alumni lists of Catholic colleges and universities in the Philadelphia area.

Bill Casey questioned the wisdom for VOTF to limit its response to inclinations of the Philadelphia affiliate if VOTF itself prefers a broader response. He suggested that we not look at the question in either/or terms but in a both/and point of view and that the national office should offer its perspectives and resources to local affiliate leaders in order to serve the mutual interests of both parties. He encouraged Dan Bartley to go to Philadelphia to meet with the affiliate leaders for this purpose.

Bill and Dan will meet on March 31 with Teresa Kettelkamp, USCCB's Office of Child and Youth Protection, and with Diane Knight, Chair of the National Review Board, to discuss VOTF's reactions to and recommendations for the NRB in light of the recent revelations in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Bill Casey finally suggested that VOTF make a harder, more forceful position in our public response to church scandals, like in Philadelphia. We must assume the mantle of reform for the people in the pews. Kevin stressed again the importance of financial withholdings.

Finally, the Tenth Anniversary planning and publicity for Theresa Bruce's book need our attention.

Summary: Future of VOTF; Chair Marnik summarized the full two day meeting.

1. Follow up with Youth focus group planning.
2. Stick to our goals as an organization.
3. Hard data to be collected on successes.
4. Narrative on soft successes needs to be developed.
5. ACC expectations are to promote attendance at the event and follow up with listening groups.
6. Philadelphia: Dan to visit and motivate affiliate. VOTF national to follow up as well.

Closing prayer:

Next meeting: Tuesday evening April 26, 2011 at 7:00PM EST.