

**Minutes**  
**Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**Voice of the Faithful, Inc.**  
**Hilton Long Island, Melville, NY**  
**October 31, 2009 (7:30 P.M. - 9:30 P.M.)**  
**November 1, 2009 (8:00 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.)**

**Trustees present:** Bill Casey (presiding), Dan Bartley, Ron DuBois, John Hushon, Mary Pat Fox, Pat Gomez, Elia Marnik, Jayne O'Donnell, Ed Wilson.

**Officers Present:** Kevin Connors, Janet Hauter, Julie McConville.

**Executive Director:** Donna Doucette

**1. Introductory Session:**

a. Ron DuBois guided participants in a spiritual reflection on saints and souls that have influenced their lives, personally, and to whom they look for guidance and counsel. Together they prayed The Prayer for All Saints Day by Michael Morwood. Bill Casey briefly reviewed the agenda and stressed the priority of Board discussions and decisions about VOTF's financial condition and Business Plan. The Board then shared their thoughts and praise about the success of the National Conference, including the Friday night presentations on the five strategic platforms and the ACC, and the moving and powerful stories of the survivor and the Long Island (LI) VOTF group that holds monthly vigils outside the cathedral. The Board agreed that the Saturday program was well-planned and executed by the Long Island Conference Committee with a thought-provoking agenda, comfortable venues, outstanding speakers and inspiring awards presentations.

b. President Dan Bartley reviewed progress on the Strategic Plan and urged that VOTF's efforts be directed at capitalizing on the energy generated by the presentation of the platform initiatives. The Branding Committee has developed a Strategic Plan Campaign slogan, "Voices In Action, Transforming Our Church Together." A one-page document, supporting the branding statement, has been written for Core Team leaders and Affiliate leaders so that everyone has a consistent understanding and message when communicating about the Voices in Action Campaign. The committee is led by Francis Piderit and Jessica Lillie.

**2. Administrative Matters:**

a. Upon a motion duly moved and seconded, the Board approved the minutes, as amended, of the meeting on September 22, 2009. (9-0-0)

b. Chairman Bill Casey proposed a resolution to send a letter to the LI Conference Committee, expressing the Board's heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for the extraordinary conference that they held. Upon a motion duly moved and seconded, the Board approved the following resolution.

*RESOLVED: The Board of Trustees expresses appreciation and gratitude to VOTF, Long Island, for the superb planning and execution of the VOTF National Conference in*

*2009. Kudos to each member whose contributions led to the unqualified success of the conference. (9-0-0)*

### **3. Business/Financial Plan (Part One)**

a. President Dan Bartley outlined his thinking on streamlining the focus and activities of the Officers and office staff on a fuller integration of media, fund-raising, the Strategic Plan, and management of revenue and expenses. Dan reiterated VOTF's need to institute immediate contingency plans should cash reserves fall below the Liquidity Standards the Board adopted at its September meeting. Treasurer Kevin Connors reviewed the financial statements for September which indicated that VOTF has cash reserves of \$91,000 based on the successful appeal for member contributions since mid-July.

b. Bill Casey reviewed the fiduciary framework that the Board developed in response to the financial crisis in July as a basis for a review of VOTF's current financial status and expectations for expenses and revenue during the remainder of FY 10. Dan Bartley introduced a revised budget of \$357,000 for FY 10, a reduction of 15% from the \$418,000 budget approved at the beginning of FY 10. This plan projects monthly revenue of \$37,000, an expense budget of \$30,000, and a \$7,000 per month addition to VOTF's cash reserve. It reflects the revenue raised since the beginning of the fiscal year and a reasonable projection of revenue expected from dues, 2 targeted mail solicitations and contacts with major donors. Upon a motion duly moved and seconded, the Board adopted the revised budget. (9-0-0)

c. Dan Bartley also summarized the additional reductions that would be required should VOTF's cash reserves fall below the Liquidity Standard of Adequate (minimum of 2 months of operating expenses—currently \$60,000). These reductions would directly affect the compensation of staff or contractors since all other expenses are at a minimum level.

### **4. Revenue/Expenses Financial Plan (Part Two)**

a. The Board discussed the merits of postal mail solicitations relative to other modes of soliciting contributions from members. In recognition of the costs of printing and mailing postal solicitations, the Board agreed that the President should have the flexibility to authorize postal solicitations other than the two included in the revised FY 10 budget should VOTF's revenue exceed projections.

b. Lynette Petruska, a former college chaplain who was dismissed by the Erie, PA, diocese after serving on a committee to investigate discrimination and sexual abuse at a university operated by the diocese, proposed a restricted donation of \$75,000 to be administered through VOTF in support of women that experienced similar treatment as she did. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Board approved the acceptance of the restricted donation and authorized the Executive Director to execute a Memorandum of Understanding between VOTF and Lynette Petruska that specifies the commitments by each party. (9-0-0)

## **5. BOT Decision Making Process**

The Board agreed that making specific decisions and then changing a decision can create a degree of tension that everyone wants to avoid. In the discussion, the Board agreed that the standard process should be to define clearly the issue/problem, research the facts, consider the alternatives and merits of each decision and decide on the most practical and workable option to implement. If Trustees want to reconsider a decision, the Board should follow the same process.

## **6. Governance Structure**

Committee Chair Elia Marnik reported that by the end of 2009 the Governance Committee will seek to propose amendments to the VOTF by-laws in order to reflect the elimination of the National Representative Council (NRC) and its governance roles. The committee will also look anew at the relationship of the Officers to the Board (and vice-versa) as well as the procedures to elect members to the Board. These latest considerations may require more time to complete than the end of 2009.

## **7. Officer Elections 2010**

Committee Chair Elia Marnik reported that Bob Ott is chairing the Nominations Committee and Sheila Peiffer is chairing the Election Committee. The Nominating Committee will shortly solicit nominations for the position of each Officer, leading up to an election in February 2010. Nominations will be due in the first week in December. Dan Bartley indicated that he will run again for the office of President, but Julie McConville has decided not to seek election again as Secretary.

## **8. The American Catholic Council (ACC)**

a. The ACC planning committee is making substantial progress toward the national convocation to be held in June, 2011, in Detroit. Organizations across the broad spectrum of Catholic thought have been invited to attend, but organizations from the middle to the more conservative end of the spectrum of Catholic perspectives have declined or not responded to the invitation. The ACC planning committee has developed a Working Tool Kit (available through their ACC website) as a resource for local gatherings of Catholics to begin a series of local and regional assemblies in order to offer their experience of Church and what they want our Church to be as input for the ACC agenda and conversation.

b. Board Chair Bill Casey proposed a statement for the Board to issue regarding its relationship to and support for the ACC's call for open and candid dialogue about the governance and life of the Catholic Church—given the pushback expected from hierarchical leaders about some of the anticipated conference topics or actions. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Board approved the attached statement. (9-0-0)

## **9. Relationships with the Survivor Community**

Board Chair Bill Casey reported on several conversations that he and Janet Hauter have had over the past few months with representatives of the survivor community

regarding the expectations that each group has of each other. Working with Tom Doyle, Bill and Janet have been able to solidify expectations with some in the survivor community but not with others. They recommended continuing outreach and efforts to forge common ground while honoring respective interests.

#### **10. State of the Priesthood**

The Board briefly reviewed the materials forwarded to it by John Ryan on behalf of the Priests Support Working Group that is seeking to establish serious conversations among clergy and laity regarding the significant risks to the state and health of the priesthood in the U.S.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 P.M.

**The next Board meeting is December 15, 2009.**

## VOTF'S RELATIONSHIP TO AND SUPPORT FOR THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC COUNCIL

From its inception in 2002, VOTF has been consistently guided by its foundational mission to provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the Faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church. An early vision was to engage diverse Catholic "voices" in serious conversation about reforming those patterns in our Church that enabled the most serious scandal in the history of the American Catholic Church to occur—the systemic sexual abuse of children and the cover-up of abuses by hierarchical leaders. However, efforts to engage Church leaders and a broad spectrum of lay Catholics in conversation have largely fallen on deaf ears.

Over the past year, an opportunity for serious conversation has been taking shape with the planning of the American Catholic Council (ACC)—a series of regional listening/education dialogues leading up to a major convocation in Detroit on June 9-11, 2011 (the weekend of our Church's celebration of Pentecost). Although some of VOTF's leaders initiated a call for such a convocation and remain foundational planners, the ACC evolved into a separate entity in September 2008 and began to chart its own course as a 501(c)(3) organization.

VOTF shares a common desire for open, genuine conversation about the many challenges facing our church today as we search for solutions that engage full participation by the laity in its life and governance. VOTF supports the ACC's desire to work towards concrete ways to improve our beloved Church while conducting itself in a spirit of open and honest dialogue. As the vision and focus of the ACC have taken fuller shape, however, two realities distinguish the interests of VOTF and the ACC. One is the spectrum of Catholic voices in the convocation, the other is the agenda.

The ACC planners made it very clear that all Catholic voices were encouraged to participate and that all individuals and organizations that join the conversation maintain their unique identity and missions without thereby automatically endorsing those of other participating individuals and organizations. Despite repeated outreach by ACC planners, those Catholic voices considered center and right-of-center on the theological spectrum have declined to participate in the planning.

The current shape of the ACC makes it clear that the theme of the convocation (Celebrate Vatican II as Individual, as Community and as Catholicism) fits squarely within VOTF's mission and goals. The anticipated agenda topics, however, will extend well beyond VOTF's mission and goals, including topics that are deemed controversial at best by many hierarchical leaders (e.g., married priesthood, ordination of women, moral positions). Some expected speakers have already been shunned in some dioceses, including Sr. Joan Chittister whom VOTF featured at its own national conference in October. In addition, liturgical celebrations at the convocation are not likely to fit all the norms required by diocesan regulations.

In light of the expected push-back from Catholic voices that oppose the desires and actions of other Catholics to engage in serious conversation about the life and governance of our Church, VOTF has a choice to make regarding its support for the ACC. From its

inception, VOTF maintained that Catholic voices of all stripes can stand on respectful common ground in seeking the healing and reform of institutional dysfunction and abuse, especially of children, in our Church. Efforts during the last seven years to find spaces for respectful and common ground have failed more often than succeeded, and voices at opposite ends of the spectrum have found VOTF guilty by association. The ACC offers an opportunity for serious conversation, but it could lead some VOTF members outside their comfort zone.

Therefore, the Board of Trustees and the Officers have decided to inform members on the VOTF website about the plans and developments of the ACC and to encourage members to participate in local or regional assemblies as well as in the 2011 convocation in so far as members are comfortable with the current or eventual shape of the ACC. VOTF's leaders will participate in the convocation as an exhibitor and attend the conference presentations. They will not, however, endorse any statements or actions of the ACC that exceed or are inconsistent with VOTF's mission and goals. They will also encourage members who are comfortable with doing so to contribute to the costs of the ACC, but they will not share VOTF's mailing lists with the ACC. You can find more information about the ACC on its website (<http://americancatholiccouncil.org>).

Adopted by the Board of Trustees, November 1, 2009.