

ST. GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH – PISCATAWAY NJ
DRAFT GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING – OCTOBER 24, 2021

1. Opening Prayer - Father Nektarios Cottros (1:05 p.m.)

2. Roll Call

Present - Father Nektarios Cottros
John Lyssikatos – President
Elpi Arhontoulis– VP Administration
Constantine Apostolakis – VP Operations
Michael Sirimis – Treasurer
Maria Kaouris Christodoulatos - Secretary
George Athanasopoulos
George Zalokostas
Basil Fottis
Peter Combates
Stefanie Sgourakis
Demetris Arhontoulis
George Psyllos
George Demos

Late - John Blazakis

Absent - Konstantine Petrakis

Estimated number of community members present: **41**

3. MINUTES OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY – MARCH 28th, 2021

MOTION – Charlie Theokas to approve minutes of March 28th, 2021.

Seconded by Manny Manioudakis

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

4. PRIEST’S REPORT – Father Nektarios Cottros

- His Holiness, Archbishop Bartholomew, is in hospital in Washington D.C. Father will leave today to catch earlier train to go to hospital.
- To date this year, we have had 14 baptisms, 6 weddings, 18 funerals – all better than last year.
- We are returning to some sort of normality, but it will take some time. For all of us who believe, there is nothing to fear.
- We are taking steps to ensure everyone’s safety.

- As we move forward, we are looking to increase participation in the life of the church. A challenge for each of us is to bring into the community five individuals, or even better, families.
- Communicate with Father freely.

5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT – John Lyssikatos

- Pleasure to work with the Board
- Slow attendance in church and return to normalcy
- Dance cancelled
- Successes:
 - Holy week went very well
 - Challenges worked through
 - Festival was successful
 - Reopening of Greek and Sunday Schools
 - Rutgers Parking – had best year ever thanks to the wonderful work of many and especially Constantine Apostolakis, Peter Combates and _____ Hirshman.
 - Achieving financial stability
 - Stewardship remains a challenge – addressed in later segment

6. VICE PRESIDENT – ADMINISTRATION – Elpi Arhontoulis

- Cleaning crew – working on securing cleaning company for three days, in addition to having Jerry Moschonas.
- Office – two part-time positions – Eleni and Stavro; office hours reduced and are now 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Two Greek teachers were hired
- Questions/input from community members relating to cleaning position and cleaning of church:
 - Whether position assumed by Jerry Moschonas when Kostas Aopostolakis left will be advertised – answer is that it will.
 - Need to sanitize classrooms

7. VICE PRESIDENT – OPERATIONS- Constantine Apostolakis

- There are six properties we rent out
- Some of the properties have had issues with rent, a few receiving governmental subsidies

8. TREASURER'S REPORT – Michael Sirimis

- **Results reflect financials through August 31, 2021.**
 - Variance in General Fund (Operations) \$56,062 – positive
 - Variance in Capital Fund \$52,026 - positive
 - Net variance \$108,088 better than projected
 - Results this year compared to last \$151,715 better

○ Total Cash Balance – August 2021	\$460, 120
○ Restricted Funds Balance	\$142,332
○ Total Liabilities	\$395,914
○ Adjusted Total Liabilities	\$316,746

- Shoutout to Mike from Jim Solomos for his handling of the financials during this difficult time – this instills faith in the Board and what it has been doing.
- Question about whether there is any intent to sell existing stocks. Mike Sirimis responded that stocks have been up and down, and we are continuing to monitor; need to establish a committee that can evaluate path forward.

9. Questions about money earmarked for payment to the Metropolis, and how restricted funds can be accessed. Mike responded that payment back to Metropolis represents amount owed from 2020, which we will be paying back. Restricted funds can be accessed for whatever may need to be done based on organization’s decision to remove restriction if warranted.

10. OLD BUSINESS - John Lyssikatos

PARKING LOT:

- Board working with the Township which is doing work on Riverview – we are coordinating on matters affecting us.
- We are looking at piping the ditch and have received approval from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) for doing that. Will be looking for engineering firm to prepare a design. This is an important and very positive development.

57 RIVERVIEW AVENUE - Costas Apostolakis

- Extends his thanks to Nick Kambitsis for his work contributing to the approval of the ditch piping.
- All utilities have been brought to the 57 Riverview property (gas, water, sewer).
- Will need to clean up lot and currently thinking about subdivision to four lots.
- John Lyssikatos added that it is up to us to figure out what our vision is for this property.
- John Blazakis pointed out that this property is ours because of George Gussis.

11. NEW BUSINESS: John Lyssikatos

ELECTIONS- NOMINATIONS

Selection of Election Committee:

Following nominations were made for the Committee:

- Demetris Arhontoulis – nominates Charlie Theokas to head Committee - accepts
- John Blazakis – nominates John Kalogridis - accepts
- George Athanasopoulos – nominates Evelyn Tsiadis - accepts
- John Blazakis – nominates Manny Manioudakis - accepts
- George Zalokostas and Costas Apostolakis designated as Board liaisons with Election Committee.

Charlie Theokas moves to open nominations:

- Manny Manioudakis – nominates Vassilis Keramidas- accepts
 - Bill Fottis – nominates Stefanie Sgourakis – accepts
 - George Zalokostas – nominates Eleni Parlapanides – accepts
 - Costas Apostolakis – nominates George Athanasopoulos – accepts
 - Elpi Arhontoulis – nominates John Blazakis – accepts
 - Peter Comabtes – nominates George Demos – accepts
 - George Athanasopoulos nominates Dean Solomos – accepts
 - George Psyllos nominates Mike Sirimis – accepts
 - John Lyssikatos nominates Lambros Bourodimos – accepts
 - Irene Drakopoulos nominates Jimmy Solomos – accepts
 - Evelyn Tsiadis nominates John Lyssikatos – accepts
 - Maggie Stavrianides nominates Elpi Arhontoulis – declines
 - Maggie Stavrianides nominates Mike Sirimis – previously nominated and accepted
 - Costas Apostolakis nominates George Petrantonakis – declines
 - Irene Drakopoulos nominates Virginia Theokas – declines
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- George Psyllos moves to close nominations.

NO OTHER NEW BUSINESS

12. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE – John Lyssikatos/Mike Sirimis

- Report reflects data through September 30, 2021:
- Average pledge in 2021 is \$513, higher than average pledge of \$445 in 2020
- Number of pledges 402, showing a continued downward trend
- Action Plan for 2021 and Beyond:
 - Engage community through active outreach, social media, census/survey (final stages)
 - Target personalized mailings and networking meetings – meet and greet events
 - Bring in young people and get them engaged. Examples include reaching out to newlyweds and new parents that did not continue being stewards after their respective sacrament.
 - Reach out to the over 1,000 people on our mailing list that are not active members/stewards
 - Continue communications through St. George Voice, Weekly bulletins, social media, etc.
 - Raise community awareness of the overall financial situation of our church – potentially utilize Voice of Saint George to communicate

➤ Education surrounding Stewardship vs Dues

GREEK SCHOOL – Maggie Stavrianides – Chairperson of Greek School

- Thanks Father and Dr. Keramidas for all their past work which has been outstanding.
- Have hired two new teachers
- Creating succession plan
- We have 119 total students representing 73 families; school operates 5 days a week and is staffed by 5 teachers.
- Classes are in person except for sixth grade conversational class taught by Mrs. Kourti-Gavala which is held virtually due to the teacher's schedule.
- Greek School Committee meets bi-monthly and is open to teachers/PTO members and parents to attend and bring forward any issues for discussion.
- Ellinopoula Program – introduced by the Niarchos Foundation, is an online program voted as best learning platform for kids. The Board of Trustees has subsidized the cost of the program at \$25/person. Training will be provided to Greek School teachers on utilization of the program and ultimately program will be made available to the parents of the children.
- Archdiocese program will include background checks and training for anyone that is involved with children.
- Question about why the Regents class is not currently being offered. The class was taught by Kiria Sophia who has retired and has not been re-assigned. Maggie Stavrianides indicated that this needs to be looked into.
- Irene Drakopoulos commented that the Greek School Committee is excellent; she asked that the Committee continue to educate/train teachers and reinforce appropriate teacher behavior.

SUNDAY SCHOOL REPORT - Elpi Arhontoulis on behalf of Paul Stevens

- Beginning in September 2021, Sunday School children returned to the classroom. Have been practicing social distancing and masks. Following all government requirements and directions of Father and Board.
- Teachers to be commended for the tremendous job they are doing.
- Continuing with the ecclesiastical education of the children and instilling in them Orthodox values.
- Saint George Music Program – intent is to provide age-appropriate lessons in hymnology.
- Support of several charities, e.g., Habitat for Humanity, currently raising funds to participate in a build project.
- Other special projects, etc.
- One of the concerns is attendance, about 200 children are registered but only about half attend at any given time.
- We have need for teachers, if interested may contact Paul, Maggie or Lemonia.

PTO – Irene Drakopoulos

- In person for 2021/2022 school year
 - Purpose of organization is to perpetuate faith
 - Father is advisor
 - Excited to bring in new families
 - Gingerbread kits December 2020 - purchased and delivered to each PTO member registered for the year to go to every home.
 - In person sale for lambades in March and April 2021.
 - Sunday and Greek School year-end receptions
 - Happy that organization has a lot more volunteers; if anyone is interested, they are welcome.
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- Continue to manage Greek costumes – all clean and ready to go. Some of these costumes are owned by the Greek School.
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- Question raised about frequency of PTO meetings. Irene Drakopoulos indicated that communications regarding meetings go to the PTO members. People vote at the June meeting.

GOYA REPORT – Eleni Apostolakis

- There are nine advisers, 60 members
- Remain active as best as possible in view of COV-ID considerations
- Some activities virtual; no sports during COV-ID but now coming back
- Last weekend retreat in the Poconos; other events include Boston trip, gyro sale today
- Request that kids attend Sunday School
- Overall, things going very well, meeting monthly, kids looking for activities

Question on whether Boston trip is being reconsidered in view of the increased costs this year. Eleni indicated that Kostas Petrakis is looking into the cost of transportation, and they will be evaluating.

FESTIVAL: George Athanasopoulos

- Grossed \$105K from virtual festival; netted \$68K.
- Very successful overall; had some complications but were able to overcome them.
- Next month will be starting to talk about next year' festival.

PHILOPTOCHOS – Despina Starakis Fottis

- New Chairperson of Philoptochos
- Humbled and honored to have position and filling very large shoes
- With help of Virginia Theokas and Board, hope to move organization forward in a very successful way.

- Annual baklava sale on November 20th and 21st
- Christmas card most important fundraiser
- Thanks to Eleni and Stavro who have helped in allowing Despina to get started in this position.
- Reach out to Despina or any member of the Philoptochos Board with any questions.

RUTGERS PARKING – Costas Apostolakis

- Took this over from Peter Combates 4 years ago
- Expect between \$150K -\$160K; could be biggest fundraiser for church
- Total capacity 556 vehicles
- Next game November 6th
- James Karamanos complimented John Lyssikatos and the team working on this for doing a great job.

CHOIR – Kay Kehayias

- Encourages people to join the choir, no age limit
- John Lyssikatos proposed that we put in the bulletins the request for new choir members.
- John Blazakis thanked and commended Kay for her 50 years of service and said that we are honored to have such an honest and distinguished person providing the services she has been providing over the years.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE – Manny Manioudakis

- We will have a “Veterans Memorial Wall” in the Memorial Room to honor those members of our community who served and those who lost their lives in the World Wars.

**MOTION by George Zalokostas to close the meeting, seconded by Eleni Parlapanides
PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

13. ADJOURN WITH PRAYER – 3:00 p.m.