

# Parish Council Committees and Task Forces

## Purpose:

Committees and task forces exist to further the work of the parish council by researching issues and preparing well developed proposals for consideration and further action by the parish council. Committees attend to ongoing duties, whereas task forces are time limited and generally concerned with a specific project. All committees and task forces should have a clearly written description of their sphere of action and responsibility. Committees and task forces are necessary for the division of responsibilities of the parish council

## Standing and Seasonal:

Committees sometimes exist by statute as mandated in the by-laws of the parish. Examples of standing committees would be finance, nominations, stewardship, strategic planning, governance, audit, endowment and facilities. Progressive parishes might have a technology committee with responsibilities for social media, website and general communications. Or a parish might have an evangelization committee responsible for the care and feeding of new members and visitors. There may be other committees reflecting the composition and priorities of the parish. Some of these committees may exist for a season, such as the audit committee or the nominations committee, though the function of the nominations committee might be incorporated into a governance committee and so exist throughout the year.

In consultation with the priest, committees are appointed by the parish council chair and approved by the parish council. The priest may have very important information helpful to the process. The parish council chair and the priest work together to ensure that committees and task forces are performing well.

## Task Forces:

Generally, task forces exist to address a specific project or undertaking of the parish – a capital campaign, major renovations or construction, a strategic planning process, property search, etc. They usually have a parish council member who sits as chair with various members whose skills, education and training may be helpful to the project at hand.

## Composition:

Both committees and task forces may include members of the parish council and non members of the parish council, though it would be unusual to find non Orthodox on these committees and task forces inasmuch as they are involved in providing direction and policy formulation by the parish council. However, it is equally common to find non-voting invitees

on such groups because they have very much needed expertise – a consultant for a capital campaign, for example.

Task forces may report directly to the parish council or to the priest, depending upon their purpose. An outreach and evangelization committee might be chaired by the priest because it bears directly upon his ministry. A wise priest would bring regular reports to the parish council – especially if the committee or task force was receiving funding approved by the parish council.

### Reporting:

Committees and task force reports should be in writing. It is *highly preferable* that reports are circulated with the agenda prior to the meeting. Failure to send out reports early guarantees that every aspect of the work of the committee or the task force will be reviewed and discussed, thereby duplicating the work of the committee or task force, resulting in yet another marathon parish council session. The purpose of the committee or task force is then defeated. Their task was precisely to elevate the discussion of the parish council to policy formulation (a critical function of governance) and to avoid falling into endless discussion of operational or managerial issues. Parish council members who fail to read reports to prepare for the meeting are derelict in their duty. The parish council should respond to written committee or task force reports by:

1. Providing feedback or asking questions about material not dealt with by the committee or task force or requesting further information that is not included in the report;
2. Refraining from repeating the discussions already held in the committee or task force;
3. If issues are not sufficiently worked out, then the parish council should refer the matter back to the committee or task force for further research and discussion;
4. Discussing and moving the question on any specific motions that the committee or task force wishes to bring before the parish council

### Committee chairs:

Chairs are responsible for managing the committee's work. They should plan meetings, ensure tasks are completed in a timely manner, monitor progress, communicate with the parish council chair, priest or parish staff, as needed, provide written reports well in advance of parish council meetings so that they can be included with the mailed agenda and arrange for the committee or task force to evaluate their work at the end of the year.