

Parish Administration – Parish Finance Council Guidelines

According to canon 537:

Each parish is to have a finance council which is regulated by universal law as well as by norms issued by the diocesan bishop; in this council the Christian faithful, selected according to the same norms, aid the pastor in the administration of parish goods with due regard for the prescription of Canon 532.

The parish finance council is therefore a **mandated** body, with an advisory and consultative role to the pastor.

Finance Council Mission

The parish finance council forms a critical, albeit advisory function. Its decisions/recommendations are valid only when ratified by the pastor/administrator. Responsibilities of the parish finance council in the Diocese of Fall River include:

1. Reviewing and recommending approval of annual budgets (as practical, the council should assist staff with creating the annual budget);
2. Reviewing and making recommendations to the pastor/administrator related to the annual parish report;
3. Reviewing quarterly financial reports during the fiscal year (the Diocese recommends that parish finance councils develop quarterly reports that show how actual results for the quarter compared to budget);
4. Assisting the pastor/administrator with parish grand annual campaigns or capital campaigns (upon approval of the Bishop);
5. Advising the pastor/administrator on hiring of a business manager and/or any staff involved in business services for the parish;
6. Advising the pastor/administrator on all acts of extraordinary administration, including:
 - a. Any commitment of parish resources that exceeds **\$10,000**; this includes any purchase of property, equipment, or long-term leases;
 - b. Any sale of property; this includes real and personal property;
 - c. Any construction or repair work expected to cost more than \$10,000.
7. Advising the pastor on ad hoc financial matters, including but not limited to:
 - a. Reviewing parish investments and bank accounts, including any trusts to which the parish is a beneficiary;
 - b. Assisting the pastor with developing plans for re-payment of parish debt;
 - c. Assisting the pastor with taking appropriate measures to safeguard the assets of the parish.
8. Assisting the pastor with submission of an annual report* to the Bishop, including:
 - a. A copy of the annual report issued to parishioners (including the date the report was issued);
 - b. The names and professional titles of all finance council members;

- c. The dates on which the finance council met during the fiscal year for which the report was created, along with any meetings held since the end of the fiscal year;
- d. A statement signed by the pastor/administrator and the finance council chair, attesting that the annual report was developed in consultation with the council.

*The requirement to submit an annual report to the Bishop is effective for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021. The report should be submitted to the Bishop no later than the end of September in the following fiscal year (for FY22 this will be September 30, 2022). All reports should be e-mailed to the Chancery Finance Office at Chanfinoff@dioc-fr.org.

Membership

Finance council members are chosen by and serve at the discretion of the pastor. Guidelines for membership of parish finance councils in the Diocese of Fall River include:

1. Each council should have at least 5 members;
2. Parishes which are part of a collaborative may have a smaller number from each parish and may have a joint meeting of representatives of all parishes in the Collaborative.
3. Members should be selected for their expertise in the area of finance.
4. The pastor/administrator should select a chairperson that will preside in a parliamentary manner (preparing the agenda, introducing agenda items, selecting someone to keep minutes and setting meeting dates). Each member must provide a contact point (e-mail, phone number) to the chairperson.
5. Council members should not be related to the pastor/administrator or any member of the parish staff involved in business services for the parish (for example: the business manager).
6. Members should disclose (in writing) each year if they have a financial interest in the parish.
7. Parish staff:
 - a. Can not be members of the finance council;
 - b. Are encouraged to attend (at the discretion of the pastor/administrator), and to act as staff to the council (keeping minutes, providing information as necessary).
8. Members should be listed in the annual parish report.
9. Finance council membership is separate from parish council membership, but it is recommended that a member of the finance council be asked to be a part of the parish council to facilitate communication between the two councils.
10. Terms:
 - a. Members are appointed for fixed terms. The number of years for each term are to be set by the pastor/administrator. The Diocese recommends terms of no more than 3 years.
 - b. It may be helpful to stagger terms so that not all member terms end at the same time.
 - c. Members may be appointed for additional terms at the discretion of the pastor/administrator.
 - d. If a new pastor or administrator is assigned to a parish, he may choose to commute the terms of existing council members or may ask each member to continue through the end of his/her term.


Meetings

1. Finance councils should meet at least quarterly. Ad hoc meetings may also be scheduled as needed. If possible, meeting times should be regular and predictable (for example, quarterly meeting on the 2nd Tuesday after each quarter end).
2. It is a requirement in the Diocese of Fall River that minutes be kept from parish finance council meetings (each meeting should start with a review and approval of the previous meeting's minutes). The minutes should be kept on file at the parish. Note that a review of parish finance council minutes will be a standard part of the rolling financial reviews to be conducted at parishes and schools within the Diocese of Fall River. Also, the minutes should be made available to the dean when he visits the parish to review parish records.
3. Agendas should be distributed by the chairperson prior to each meeting.

Effective Date

These statutes become effective for every parish in the Diocese of Fall River on January 1, 2022. On that date the statutes of already existing Finance Councils in the parishes of the Diocese of Fall River are abrogated. By June 30, 2022, every parish must have a Finance Council governed by these statutes.

Promulgated on this 13th day of December in the year 2021.



Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.
Bishop of Fall River