

ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

The rules governing election of parish trustees come from Wisconsin State Statute 187.19 which stipulates that trustees are to be elected “from and by the congregation.” Directives regarding election of trustees are contained in the Parish Corporate Bylaws (see Appendix A).

Parishes must follow these stipulations in order to comply with civil requirements.

CANDIDATE REQUIREMENTS:

Parishioners who are considering accepting nomination for the position of trustee must be

- Catholic
- A registered, practicing parish member
- At least 25 years old.

They must be educated about the position. Trustee nominees should also receive the same orientation as pastoral council members. In addition, they need to be familiar with the information in this book, *the Parish Councils Manual*, *the Parish Financial Management Manual* and *the Parish Commission and Committee Manual*.

WHEN ARE ELECTIONS HELD?

Since the term of service is a two-year term, trustees must be elected every two years.

Both trustees' terms can run simultaneously or they can be staggered, selecting one trustee each year. Each parish determines its preference in this matter. Staggering the terms provides for the continuity of a selection of a trustee each year, as well as attempting to avoid having two new trustees in the same year. However, simultaneous terms allow the parish to choose trustees every other year. The parish leadership should discuss the pros and cons of each situation and then formulate a policy regarding the pattern for election of trustees in their parish.

Each parish determines when it is best to hold trustee elections. This election may occur at the same time as the annual pastoral council selection process, which would allow the trustee candidates to participate in the orientation with the council candidates. However, the difference between the positions held by the trustees, and pastoral council members needs to be clear, both in understanding of the responsibilities and the selection process.

Since many parishes use a discernment process to select parish council members, it may be wise to separate the trustee election from this process.

On the other hand, the easiest way to comply with the state statute is through a parish election of trustees. After reviewing the following directives, other options will emerge.

PARISH TRUSTEE ELECTION TIMELINE

(Six weeks before the election)

NOTICE

Pastor gives notice of the upcoming trustee election. At this time the pastor may identify a nominee for the position. Reminders of the coming election are made for four successive weeks prior to the election.

ELECTION COMMITTEE

The pastor appoints an election committee to receive nominations, supervise and carry out the election.

NOMINATIONS OPEN

Nominations:

Candidates must be Catholic, registered, practicing parish members and at least 25 years old.

The pastor can nominate one candidate per opening.

Additional candidates must be nominated in writing by 10 or more registered parish members. (Use “Trustee Candidate Nomination Form” on page 53.)

Note that all trustees nominated for (re)election must be informed that they will be required to present a recent credit report to the pastor for review. It is highly recommended that the pastor review the credit report prior to nominating or accepting the nomination of a potential trustee. This will allow the pastor time to determine if there are any areas of concern that would not allow the potential trustee from fulfilling his/her fiduciary duties.

(Two weeks before the election)

NOMINATIONS CLOSE

Nominations must be completed.

If there is only one nominee for each position, nominations are closed and the nominee declared elected to the position.

ANNOUNCEMENT

If there is more than one nominee per position, the candidates’ names are announced at the weekend masses two weeks prior to the election.

ELECTION SUNDAY

The election must be held every two years by written ballot at any parish-wide meeting or before/after a designated weekend’s masses. Parish members, 18 years and older, are eligible to vote for the trustees.

ELECTION

Nominees who receive the highest number of votes become the trustees subject to the approval of the archbishop.

APPROVAL

After any trustee is elected or re-elected, the name is sent to the chancery for the archbishop's affirmation. (Use "Trustee Election Approval Form" on page 54.) The archbishop, president of the Board of Directors, has the right to approve or disapprove any lay trustee elected by the parish or appointed by the pastor to fill a temporary vacancy of an unexpired term. After the approval is given, a letter of confirmation is sent to the parish to be filed in their corporate record books.

ACCEPTANCE

Trustees indicate acceptance by signing and returning their "Acceptance of Responsibilities as a Parish Trustee." (See form on page 55.)

ELECTION OF TRUSTEES	
Weeks prior to election	Activity
6	Announce process of trustee election and date. Appoint election committee. Open nominations. Review credit reports.
5-4-3	Remind parishioners that nominations are open.
2	Nominations close. Candidates names are announced. Credit Report has been reviewed.
1	Candidates names are announced.
Election Sunday	Parishioners age 18 and older vote. Committee tabulates vote, reports results to pastor. Pastor sends request for approval to chancery.
Following week/s	Chancery forwards request to archbishop. Archbishop approves. Chancery sends approval notice to pastor. Trustees indicate acceptance by signing and returning their Statement of Understanding form. Pastor announces new trustee to parish.

TERM OF OFFICE

According to the Corporate Bylaws the trustee's term is renewable with no limitations as to consecutive terms. However, experience and common sense dictate that a person in a position of parish trustee for more than six years should consider moving on. Some pastors follow the two-term limit or 6-year total for pastoral council members and apply it to trustees. Exceptions are always possible as long as the attitude is one of service and not power, of openness and not control.

RESIGNATIONS AND VACANCIES

A trustee may resign by filing a written letter of resignation with the pastor. Vacancies can occur through death, resignation, long absence or inability to perform duties. In such cases the pastor has the right to appoint a substitute or successor, who is subject to the approval of the archbishop.

As part of the process of declaring a vacancy (a trustee's neglect of duties, failure to attend meetings, etc.) the remaining directors (archbishop, vicar general, pastor, trustee) must issue the declaration and appoint a substitute or successor (See Article IX, Section 2, Bylaws).

LEGAL MATTERS



1. Lawsuits

Parish trustees are not to initiate or respond to any lawsuit or legal settlement in the name of the parish without the written permission of the archbishop.

2. Acts of Administration Requiring Unanimous Consent of the Directors

Certain administrative matters dealt with by the parish corporation require that all five directors give their approval before the action is valid and legal.

Since two of the directors of the parish corporation, the archbishop and vicar general, are not ordinarily a part of the local parish scene, and since all five directors need to vote unanimously on the acts of administration listed below, the pastor and two trustees contact the archbishop and the vicar general for their vote by proxy.

