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# METROPOLITAN COUNCIL of the ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

MINUTES  
2021 Fall Session

Thursday, September 30, 2021  
Conducted by video conference

Monday, October 18 – Tuesday, October 19, 2021  
Sheraton Cleveland Airport Hotel, Cleveland, OH



*These draft minutes are subject to approval at a subsequent meeting of the Metropolitan Council*

**PARTICIPANTS**

**CHAIRMAN**

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon

**CHURCH OFFICERS (*EX OFFICIO*)**

Archpriest Alexander Rentel, *Chancellor*  
Andrew Smith, *Treasurer*

Priest Alessandro Margheritino, *Secretary*

**MEMBERS ELECTED BY THE ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL**

Archpriest Thomas Moore  
Archpriest Kirill Sokolov  
Archpriest David Rucker

Katherine Vitko  
Lynnell Brunswig

**DIOCESAN REPRESENTATIVES**

**Diocese of Alaska**

Archpriest David Askoak

**Albanian Archdiocese**

Archpriest Dennis Rhodes

Donna Dimitri

**Bulgarian Diocese**

Priest Gabriel Bilas

Bogdan Popescu

**Archdiocese of Canada**

Protodeacon Jesse Isaac (10/19 only)

**Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania**

Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky

Sharon Shingara (9/30 only)

**Diocese of the Midwest**

Archpriest Elijah Mueller

Robert Graban

**Diocese of New England**

Priest Theophan Whitfield

Evelyn Kreta (except 9/30)

**Diocese of New York/New Jersey**

Archimandrite Joseph (Hoffman) (except 9/30)

James P. Kornafel

**Diocese of the South**

Archpriest Joseph Ciarciaglino

Joshua Godbold (except 9/30)

**Archdiocese of Washington**

Deacon Matthew Prentice

Gregory Honshul (except 9/30)

**Diocese of the West**

David Lane, Esq.

**Diocese of Western Pennsylvania**

Priest Nikolai Breckenridge

Ray Steeb

*ABSENT (for all meetings unless otherwise indicated)*

Archimandrite Joseph (Hoffman) (*Diocese of New York/New Jersey*) 9/30  
Archpriest Michael Anderson (*Diocese of the West*)  
Protodeacon Jesse Isaac (*Archdiocese of Canada*) 9/30 & 10/18  
Dorothy Chaney (*Diocese of Alaska*)  
Gregory Honshul (*Archdiocese of Washington*) 9/30  
Evelyn Kreta (*Diocese of New England*) 9/30  
Judge E.R. Lanier (*OCA General Counsel*)  
Christopher Lewis (*Diocese of the South*) 9/30  
Mark Linnehan (*Member elected by the All-American Council*) 9/30  
Mark Petasky (*Archdiocese of Canada*)  
Sharon Shingara (*Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania*) 10-18&19

*GUESTS (for all meetings unless otherwise indicated)*

His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin - 10/19  
Igumen Arkady (Migunov) - 10/18-19  
Archpriest John Hopko (*Ad hoc Pension committee member*) - 9/30  
Archpriest Thomas Soroka (*Project Manager for the Departments*) - 9/19  
Archpriest Matthew Tate (*Pension Board Trustee*) - 9/30 only  
Priest Gleb McFatter (*Chairman, OCA Pension Board*) - 9/30  
Priest Lawrence Soper (*Chancery Staff*) - 10/18  
Matushka Mary Buletza-Breton (*Pension Board Trustee*) - 9/30  
Christopher Lewis (*former Council member*) - 10/18-19  
Alexis Liberovsky (*Recording Secretary*)  
Robert Popadic (*Ad hoc Pension committee member*) - 9/30 & 10/19  
Michael Stieglitz (*Administrator, OCA Pension Plan*) - 9/30 only

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2021

**A. Call to Order**

Metropolitan Tikhon opened the session with prayer and called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM.

**B. Agenda: Introduction & Roll Call**

Father Alexander Rentel reviewed the agenda for the meeting consisting of two items: introduction of the format and details of the upcoming expanded joint meeting of the Holy Synod and the Metropolitan Council as well as the initial presentation from the Pension Subcommittee of the Metropolitan Council. He then conducted the roll call and announced guests who would be present during this meeting (see participants list). He requested approval of Alexis Liberovsky as recording secretary for the meeting, which was accepted without objection. Fr. Alexander announced that the minutes of the Council's Spring Session and Special Session earlier this year would be presented for approval when the Council continues the Fall Session in October.

**C. Metropolitan's Remarks**

Metropolitan Tikhon presented his opening remarks. He welcomed new Council member, Deacon Matthew Prentice representing the Archdiocese of Washington as clergy delegate. He noted plans that will be discussed today for the expanded meeting in October, which will serve as preparation for the 20<sup>th</sup> All-American Council. He also underscored the complexity of pension plan issues that will be presented today and further discussed when the Fall Session continues in October. In conclusion, His Beatitude briefly highlighted recent and upcoming events of church-wide significance and his own archpastoral labors.

**D. Expanded Joint Meeting of the Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council - Introduction**

Fr. Alessandro Margheritino, OCA Secretary, presented a detailed introduction to the schedule, format and content of the upcoming Expanded Joint Meeting of the Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council, which will follow the conclusion of the Fall Session of the Metropolitan Council. Questions and discussion ensued.

**E. Pension Plan Subcommittee**

Fr. Alexander Rentel reminded the Council that at its last meeting in May, a Pension Subcommittee was formed to work under the direction of Andrew Smith, to examine the report of the Ad hoc Pension Committee and to present it to the Metropolitan Council. The Pension Subcommittee members are: Andrew Smith, Archpriest Joseph Ciarciaglino, David Lane, Donna Dimitri, and Robert Graban. Fr. Alexander indicated that the report is presented for discussion only today.

Metropolitan Tikhon thanked the Ad hoc Committee and the Subcommittee for their important work in reviewing the Pension Plan. He noted that no decisions on Pension Plan issues would be made at today's meeting.

Fr. Rentel requested a motion to move into executive session.

**E.1. MOTION SMITH/RHODES - To move into executive session. CARRIED.**

The report of the Ad hoc Pension Committee was presented and extensively discussed in executive session.

**E.2. MOTION RUCKER/BRUNSWIG – To move out of executive session. CARRIED.**

Fr. Rentel expressed special thanks to Andrew Smith for his work in coordinating examination of the Pension Plan.

#### **F. Adjournment**

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon thanked the Council for a useful discussion and adjourned the first meeting of the Fall Session of the Metropolitan Council with a closing prayer at 4:55 PM. The Fall Session will reconvene in Cleveland on October 18-19.

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2021**

#### **G. Opening Prayer**

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon celebrated a prayer service at 2:05 PM to open the meeting, convened at the Sheraton Cleveland Airport Hotel.

#### **2-A. Call to Order**

With His Beatitude's blessing, Fr. Rentel called the meeting to order. He noted that this meeting continues the Fall Session begun at the meeting on September 30.

#### **2-B. Agenda: Introduction (attached) & Roll Call**

Father Alexander Rentel reviewed the agenda for the meeting and conducted the roll call. He announced guests who would be present for the meetings to conclude the Fall Session. Fr. Alessandro Margheritino reviewed logistics for the Fall Session meetings and the Expanded Joint Meeting of the Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council.

#### **H. Approval of Minutes of Previous Sessions**

Father Rentel presented for approval the attached draft minutes of the 2021 Spring Session of the Metropolitan Council, conducted by video conference on Wednesday, February 24, 2021 and Wednesday, March 3, 2021, as well as the attached draft minutes of the Special Session of the Metropolitan Council conducted by video conference on Tuesday, May 11, 2021. The draft minutes of both sessions were approved by consensus as presented.

#### **2-C. Metropolitan's Report (attached)**

Metropolitan Tikhon presented his report. He welcomed new Council members, Deacon Matthew Prentice and Joshua Godbold. He asked for everyone's prayers for Fr. Michael Anderson, who is unable to participate in this meeting due to illness. He commented on the theme of the upcoming All-American Council and the role of the Expanded Joint Meeting of the Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council in preparation for the All-American Council. He noted the increase in his archpastoral visitations and periods of residence in Washington, DC. He spoke of presiding at recent funerals of notable clergy and of OCA participation in the recent Assembly of Bishops. He thanked chancery staff for their supportive work and noted staff changes. He also noted that relocation and pension are the major issues at this meeting and that they require good stewardship. Proposed dates for Metropolitan Council meetings next year are February 9-11 and October 12-14 and it is suggested that one meeting be in-person and the other virtual. He also announced that the main Liturgy to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of autocephaly would be served at the All-American Council next summer. Questions and discussion ensued.

Following a break at 3:35 PM, the meeting resumed at 4:07 PM.

**I. Chancellor's Report (attached)**

Fr. Rentel presented his report highlighting his own activities and the work of the Chancery staff. He provided updates on ongoing matters. He noted severe rainstorms in late August and early September that endanger the chancery building. He stated that chancery work is being conducted in a hybrid model, both remotely and in person. He praised the dedicated work of the staff and noted personnel changes. He thanked Metropolitan Tikhon and staff members for their support of his work. He then presented the attached report from Andrew Boyd as OCA Representative to the OCF Board.

**J. Legal matters**

**J.1. MOTION BRECKENRIDGE/RUCKER - To move into executive session. CARRIED.**

In executive session, David Lane, Legal Committee Chairman, presented the Joint Report of the Legal Committee and the General Counsel regarding current and pending legal matters affecting the Church. Questions and discussion ensued.

**J.2. MOTION RHODES/POPESCU – To move out of executive session. CARRIED.**

**K. Report of the Secretary (attached)**

Priest Alessandro Margheritino presented his first report since being confirmed as OCA Secretary by the Holy Synod. The report highlighted his work in the areas of his responsibilities, including Westwood property management, information technology, insurance, SMPAC (Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee) archives, Communication and Operations (meeting planning). In particular, he highlighted the four proposals for OCA Archives relocation received from Saint Vladimir's and Saint Tikhon's Seminaries, Miami University of Ohio as well as the OCA Archivist in response to the Request for Proposals issued in May. The Council is to discuss the proposals tomorrow.

The day's formal meetings were adjourned for dinner at 5:51 PM. After dinner, at 7 PM, Fr. Margheritino and David Lane conducted a retreat for Council members that included orientation for new members, information on the duties of Council members as fiduciaries and some history of the Council's role in church life since its establishment.

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2021**

The morning meeting was opened with prayer at 8:32 AM. Memory Eternal was sung for Metropolitan Theodosius, this day being the first anniversary of his repose.

**L. Technology Committee (attached)**

Archpriest Kirill Sokolov, Chairman of the Metropolitan Council Technology Committee, presented the attached report from the Committee with recommendations. In additions comments, Fr. Kirill stressed various aspects of cybersecurity. Questions and discussion followed.

**K. Report of the Secretary (continued)**

The floor was open for questions and discussion concerning the report of the Secretary delivered the previous day. The progress of building repairs to alleviate water leaks in the basement was discussed. The four proposals received for relocation of the archives were extensively deliberated.

- K.1. MOTION LINNEHAN/GRABAN – To limit consideration of proposals received to those from Miami University of Ohio and St. Vladimir’s Seminary. CARRIED with fourteen (14) votes in favor, thirteen (13) opposed votes and two (2) abstentions.**

During discussion of the motion, Matushka Evelyn Kreta made a motion to table the previous motion. Fr. Rentel indicated that a two-thirds majority would be required for her motion to pass. However, her motion was not seconded and could not proceed.

Following a break at 10:02 AM, the meeting resumed at 10:32 AM.

#### **L. Property Committee (attached)**

Gregory Honshul and Ray Steeb, Committee co-chairpersons, delivered the Committee’s attached report. The report and various considerations in the possible sale of Westwood were extensively discussed. The work of the Landing Committee that serves under the Property Committee to facilitate various aspects of relocation was also reported and discussed by the Council.

- L.1. MOTION LINNEHAN/BILAS – To engage a tax firm to appeal the overassessment on the Westwood property.**

After further discussion of the possible high cost of engaging a tax firm, a motion was made to amend the proposed motion

- L.2. MOTION LANE/BILAS – To amend the previous resolution to include a maximum cost not to exceed \$30,000 (thirty thousand dollars). CARRIED**

The amended motion was adopted as follows.

- L.3. MOTION LANE/BILAS – To engage a tax firm to explore feasibility to appeal overassessment of Westwood and to implement an appeal at a total cost not to exceed \$30,000 (thirty thousand dollars). CARRIED with two (2) opposed.**

#### **M. Resolutions**

Fr. Kirill Sokolov proposed the following resolutions addressing matters raised earlier in the Chancellor’s report

- M.1. MOTION SOKOLOV/HOJNICKI – To commend the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) and to note the importance of ministry to and with college students for the building up of the Church of Christ. The Metropolitan Council expresses its gratitude to Archpriest Alexander Cadman, outgoing chairman of the Board, for his leadership. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

- M.2. MOTION SOKOLOV/BRECKENRIDGE – To commend the Synaxis Program organized by the Office of Pastoral Life and thank the Office for creating this innovative effort during the stressful times of the pandemic. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Another resolution proposing audio and video recording of Metropolitan Council deliberations concerning the Pension Plan for the sake of openness and transparency. As all Metropolitan Council meetings, except those in executive session, are routinely audio recorded the resolution was ruled superfluous and out of order by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon.

Following a break for lunch at 12:08 PM, the meeting resumed at 1:03 PM.

**N. Treasurer's Report (attached)**

Andrew Smith, OCA Treasurer, presented his report including financial statements for 2019 and 2020 together with an external auditors' report, preliminary statements for the first three quarters of 2021 and the proposed budget for 2022. He noted a modest revenue increase based on current year receipts of diocesan contributions and a 6.2% proposed cost-of-living increase for all salaried employees as there has not been a cost-of-living increase in several years and in light of the 2022 cost-of-living-adjustment set by the Internal Revenue Service.

- N.1. MOTION DIMITRI/MOORE - To approve the proposed 2022 budget as presented. CARRIED with one (1) abstention.**

Following a break at 1:52 PM, the meeting resumed at 2:00 PM.

**O. Pension Plan**

Andrew Smith outlined the work of the Pension Subcommittee of the Metropolitan Council and the Ad hoc Pension Committee working in collaboration with the Pension Board. He introduced Ad hoc Committee member, Robert Popadic, who then participated in discussions with the Council. The other Ad hoc Committee member, Archpriest John Hopko, was unable to be present for this meeting. Extensive deliberations concerning the Pension Plan took place. It was noted that Milliman Protection Strategy had lost \$3.35 million dollars for the OCA Pension Plan while charging a fee of \$250,000. It was generally acknowledged that a thorough external review of the OCA Pension Plan is needed at this time. Archpriest Joseph Ciarcigliano proposed Cheiron Inc. to conduct the review, likely at a cost of \$20,000.

Following a break at 3:30 PM, the meeting resumed at 4:06 PM.

After extensive further discussion concerning review of the Pension Plan, the following resolution was proposed.

- O.1. MOTION POPESCU/RHODES – To empower the Pension Subcommittee to issue a request for proposal to at least three companies for a review of the Orthodox Church in America Pension Plan by October 30, with responses to be completed in a reasonable time. The responses are to be considered by the Pension Subcommittee, which should make a report and a recommendation to the Metropolitan Council by November 30. CARRIED with two (2) opposed.**

In light of this resolution, the Diocese of the South and the Bulgarian Diocese pledged respectively \$10,000 and \$5,000 toward the Pension Plan Review expense.

**L. Property Committee (continued)**

Discussion of the Property Committee report and related matters continued. It was proposed that a zoning attorney be engaged at a cost of five to ten thousand dollars.



- L.4. MOTION STEEB/DIMITRI – To engage a zoning attorney to advise on local zoning restrictions and possibilities for non-profit zoning opportunities at a cost not to exceed \$10,000. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.
- L.5. MOTION STEEB/PRENTICE - To finalize the move of His Beatitude to his diocese by December 31, 2022.

A vote on this motion did not take place as after discussion, the following substitute motion was proposed.

- L.6. MOTION LINNEHAN/HOFFMAN - To table the previous motion pending discussion by the Metropolitan Council of new information on moving forward. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.
- L.7. MOTION LINNEHAN/HONSHUL - To renew the Metropolitan Council's commitment and resolve to relocate the Metropolitan's residence to the Washington, DC area, to find suitable quarters for the Chancery and Archives and to proceed with the possible disposition of Westwood. CARRIED with two (2) opposed.

Metropolitan Tikhon announced that due to the split vote on Motion K.1. regarding proposals received for relocation of the OCA Archives, this matter is being deferred to the consideration of the Holy Synod for a final decision.

#### **F. Adjournment**

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon declared the Fall Session of the Metropolitan Council adjourned and closed the meeting with prayer at 5:57 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexis Liberovsky,  
Recording Secretary