PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE: SEPTEMBER 2026

Glory to God for all things!

As Labor Day has just passed marking the end of summer, and with school back in session and most vacations over, it's time for an update from your parish council of Saint Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church.

It's been a busy summer to say the least. Over the cold, rainy Memorial Day weekend, our Marinkovich Choir and the parish as a whole hosted the annual Serbian Singing Festival at the Forum in the Capitol Complex in Harrisburg as well as at our church and hall. We had a good turnout of choirs from far and near, and the singing was superb as was the fellowship. Special thanks to Protinica Andreja and her committee, especially Alan Radanovic who manned the kitchen throughout the weekend. However, because not as many choirs participated as in recent years, financially it was a break-even event. We did receive a very generous gift of $5,000 during the festival from an anonymous donor. Thank you!

In early June the annual parish picnic was held at the parish (and not Serb Park which the parish council decided not to open this year for financial reasons). Attendance was strong early but the evening dinner crowd never materialized. Again our thanks to Protonica Andreja for chairing the event and to all those who helped. Father Christopher has reported the financial results from these events (as well as the Tamburitzans concert in February) in his recent autumn issue of "The Messenger."

While these events have helped our financial situation, we continue to run a deficit. Individual giving has been steady and increasing but it's not enough. Treasurer Chris Radanovic, with the council's approval, had to withdraw $25,000 from our dwindling investment account in order to pay our considerable property tax bill in August. Only the church building itself is tax exempt; all other property, including Serb Park (which accounts for about 2/3 of the tax bill) is taxable. We have been upfront with our parish community for several years now: the current path is not fiscally sustainable. Other options must be explored.

Turning to the data center issue, back in January we received an unsolicited offer from the Provident Reality Group of Dallas, Texas to purchase all of our property, including the church itself, for $9.2 million. We rejected that offer at the annual congregational meeting on February 1 because it wasn't nearly enough to enable

us to purchase new property and rebuild. Parishioners, however, decided to appoint a negotiation committee to continue talks with Provident Reality. On February 3, we sent a formal letter via email to Provident Reality rejecting their offer and informing it that we had formed a negotiation committee which letter they confirmed receiving. We have not heard anything since in over seven months. Our negotiation committee ultimately decided to await a response versus responding to their initial offer. That's where things stand.

In the meantime, Provident Reality has in fact purchased the 228 acre Dauphin Highlands golf course from the Dauphin County General Authority for some $45.6 million and golfing will end on October 12. It earlier bought a 200 acre parcel behind the WITF building on Lindle Road for $50 million. So it appears that two data centers will be constructed on those properties.

The parish council decided to keep Serb Park closed this year as previously noted but it still has to be maintained. We thank Brian Swartz for continuing to mow the lawns, pick up brush, cut fallen trees and branches. But at some point we must – as a parish community – decide what to do with the park (and perhaps other parish property) as our financial condition remains unsettled.

I propose, if the parish council concurs, to hold a non-voting, informational special parish meeting on a Sunday in mid-October to begin a discussion on how to use our parish property, particularly Serb Park, to pay off our remaining debt of about $450,000 and put the parish on a firm financial footing. Whether its development, leasing or selling all options should be considered. We simply cannot wait for Provident Reality to revisit their offer which appears increasingly unlikely as each month passes.

McClure Company, which is electrical, continues to be interested in placing a solar farm on our property, mostly likely in the farmer's field adjacent to the parking lot. It continues to look for potential customers for the electricity to be generated, especially the Steelton-Highspire School District. State funding apparently will soon become available. We would lease the land to McClure which would assume all expenses in constructing and maintaining the solar field; potentially this could net the parish $100,000 yearly or more.

In other developments, Alan Radanovic has been named our new parish custodian as of September 1. We thank Elizabeth Bare for her service and the Rocknage family for filling in during the summer months.

The parish council approved restarting the Father Srbojub Jockovic memorial library project which had been put on hold because of the uncertainty over the parish property. A budget and list of items to be purchased will be forthcoming. It must be fully funded by donations.

Finally, we congratulate Father Christopher and Protonica Andreja and family on their 13th anniversary of service to our parish this past summer. We have been strengthened by their dedication, leadership and commitment in leading us closer to God and His Holy Orthodox Church. Hvala and many years!

On a personal level, I experienced an extraordinary pilgrimage this past summer to the Serbian Orthodox Church in Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia which has enlightened and inspired me immensely. We followed in the footsteps of the great Serbian and American Saint Nikolai Velimirovic who died at St. Tikhon's Seminary/Monastery and we venerated his holy relics in his native village of Lelic. He visited and served at our parish on several occasions.

Feel free to contact me anytime with concerns, suggestions, issues – text or call 717.503.6759 on my mobile phone or email me at tsarnick3@aol.com. And I ask for forgiveness if I have disappointed anyone or fallen short of this position or have offended any of you. My sincere apologies.

Yours in the Lord's service, I am,

Nicholas "Nick" Ressetar
Parish Council President