

Local News

Diocese, parish weigh latest bids on Holy Redeemer parcel

By Richard A. Kiley

Officials from the Rochester diocese and the combined parish of Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier are keeping mum about their reactions to the Landmark Society's formal bid to purchase Holy Redeemer Church for \$1.

According to Father William B. Leone, pastor of Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier Parish, officials will respond by Friday, June 17, to each organization interested in purchasing Holy Redeemer Church or the property around the city landmark.

"Their (the Landmark Society of Western New York) proposal of \$1 for the church has been received ... and we are going to be able to respond to all the parties involved by this Friday," Father Leone said.

Other organizations that have expressed in-

terest in the parcel at the corner of Hudson and Clifford avenues are the Rochester City School District, the Rochester Chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America and an unidentified religious congregation.

"Each organization's offer will receive serious review," Father Leone said.

The Landmark Society last week answered the Diocese of Rochester's request for a formal purchase offer on Holy Redeemer Church by bidding \$1 for the city landmark.

The \$1 bid was one of two purchase offers hand-delivered from the Landmark Society to the diocese on Wednesday, June 8.

The \$1 proposal would require the Landmark Society to raze the church and sell the site to the City School District if suitable tenants could not be found. Costs for demoli-

tion have been estimated at \$60,000 to \$70,000, and preliminary appraisals of the land's value have been in the range of \$25,000, according to one society official.

A second option, in which the society offers \$10,000 for the city church, was also contained in the purchase offer.

The \$10,000 bid would give the Landmark Society the right to sell the property at market rates if the organization cannot find suitable developers for the church.

Father Leone said the diocese is now negotiating with the Rochester City School District, which has expressed interest in buying the school building on the property to house a 300-pupil early childhood program. The fate of the other two buildings on the property — the rectory and boiler room — has

not been determined either.

The priest said the city school district has been told of the June 17 deadline, and that "we expect to hear from them by Friday if they want to make an offer for the school."

The Landmark Society's \$1 offer assumes that the diocese and Holy Redeemer/St. Francis Xavier Parish will enter into a separate agreement with the school district for sale of the school.

School district officials were expected to submit a proposal to buy the school by the end of this week, according to Father John M. Mulligan, director of the diocesan Division of Urban Services.

The Landmark Society had given the diocese until 5 p.m. on June 24 to respond to its latest offer.

St. Ambrose's proposal to split parish festival proceeds pays off

St. Ambrose Parish's promise to donate half of last weekend's festival proceeds to a shelter fund for homeless people has produced the most successful festival in parish history.

The Empire Boulevard parish's two-day event yielded gross proceeds of more than \$94,600. Once festival expenses have been totaled and deducted, festival chairman Dean Wojtczak estimated that the parish and the shelter fund will each receive between \$30,000 and \$32,000.

"The Lord blessed us because we did his work," Wojtczak said, referring to the beautiful weather that graced the festival, June 10 and 11. "Saturday's crowd was the largest we've ever had."

"There's a real sense of pride in the parish

family. We did something wonderful," said Father James J. Marvin, pastor. "We're too far away from the center city to (have our own shelter), so this is a way for us to help."

The shelter portion of festival proceeds will aid efforts by organizers of several parish-based emergency shelters to establish a year-round, 24-hour-a-day facility. At present, William Privett, acting director of Catholic Family Center, and a task force of shelter coordinators are preparing to submit a proposal for state funding. The "marvelous" local support illustrated by St. Ambrose's donation is "really important to the development of our proposal," Privett said.

"The state has established among its criteria that local funding be leveraged," he explained. "The extent to which we're able to do that will be a factor in whether the state funds our proposal."

Wojtczak, who volunteers at one of the

existing parish-based winter shelters, proposed splitting the parish's festival proceeds to fellow parishioners early this spring. The St. Ambrose community immediately and enthusiastically supported the idea, according to Father Marvin.

Beyond St. Ambrose's actual contribu-

tion, the parish's example is inspiring other local parishes and churches. Several neighboring parishes helped to sell raffle tickets for St. Ambrose.

The tithing and world hunger committees from St. Louis, Pittsford, have since donated a total of \$8,000 to the shelter fund.

Controversy

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with the pastor. "He and I decide who to offer the jobs to," she continued. "Then, they come back, we offer the job and negotiate salary."

Diocesan wage and benefits guidelines stipulate the salary a teacher should be offered based on a combination of education and experience. The 1988/89 recommended salary for a first-year elementary teacher with a bachelor's degree, employed at a school outside Monroe County, would be \$11,495 as opposed to a recommended \$18,620 for a teacher with the same educational background and 18 years' experience.

Sister Wintish said she does not calculate the cost of a particular teacher before she decides whether to offer him or her a job. "Salary is not a part of the decision," she reiterated. "I don't put it on paper beforehand."

Other diocesan principals, however, acknowledge that to varying degrees budgetary considerations do affect their hiring decisions.

As a former budget coordinator for St. James School, Anne Swift understands the financial limits Catholic schools face. But as a parent and volunteer, Swift is appalled by the treatment Wilson and Cleveland have received.

"Both are excellent teachers, and for people who have dedicated that much of their lives to this school, I just feel like they've been kicked out the door — especially when there were openings," she said. "I know it's money, but in my heart I can't accept that."

Swift believes that if neighboring schools cannot afford to pay the salaries of experi-

enced teachers who, like Wilson and Cleveland, are displaced, the diocese should offer a subsidy as an incentive to hire them.

In all, 10 teachers have been affected by the closing of St. James. Diocesan officials routinely assure employees displaced by closings and consolidations that they will be given assistance in locating new positions in the Catholic school system.

According to Sister Joseph Gilmory Russell, diocesan assistant superintendent for personnel, in past years "about 95 percent" of Catholic school teachers who have been left jobless by closings or consolidations, and who have asked to remain within the diocesan system, have been rehired — including those with long tenure in the system.

Despite their guarantee of assistance, however, officials in the diocesan Office of Education cannot mandate whom a local school hires; they can only disqualify candidates who do not meet diocesan requirements, Sister Russell explained.

"We never say, 'You must hire,'" she said. "That's a decision that remains at the local level. In this particular case, we are hoping there will be other opportunities (for Wilson and Cleveland). This doesn't mean they won't be hired in the system. We'll do our level best to see that they are."

Swift said she and other parents are considering a petition drive to urge diocesan officials to remedy what they view as an injustice.

Meanwhile, Cleveland and Wilson are wading through end-of-the-year paperwork with heavy hearts. "I liked (St. James). I enjoyed the atmosphere, and I thought it was what a school should be. It followed everything I believed in," Wilson said. "I never thought I'd have to look for something else."

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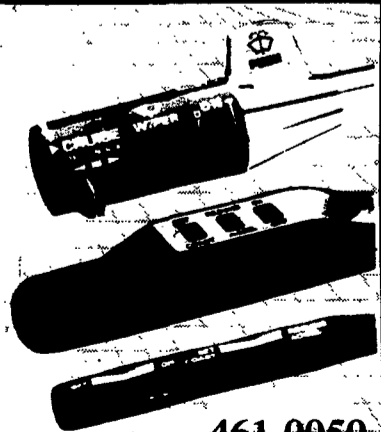
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