

LIAISON SET TO RETIRE

Casey Lopata, one of two planning-group liaisons for the Diocese of Rochester, will be retiring on July 9. Lopata has served in this position since 2000.

As part of the pastoral-planning process, the parishes and faith communities in the diocese are divided into 36 planning groups. Lopata serves as an advocate for 17 of the planning groups, working with them and providing a link between them and the diocese.

William Pickett, director of pastoral planning for the diocese, began advertising Lopata's position in May and hopes to have a replacement in place by July 1. In the event that a replacement hasn't been hired by the time Lopata leaves, Pickett said that he would step in and work with the groups that Lopata is responsible for until a replacement is found.

For more information or to view the job posting, visit the Diocese of Rochester's pastoral-planning Web site at www.dor.org/planning.

— Jennifer Burke

Second diocesan audit proposed

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The U.S. bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse and the National Review Board have agreed on proposals for conducting a second diocesan audit of child sex-abuse prevention policies and on doing a study of the causes and context of the crisis.

The proposals will be discussed by the U.S. bishops during their June 14-19 meeting in Denver, said Mercy Sister Mary Ann Walsh, spokeswoman for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington.

Sister Walsh said that the ad hoc committee and the review board are also working on a joint list of people to replace four board members who have announced that they will be retiring at the end of June.

Justice Anne M. Burke, interim chairwoman of the review board confirmed to Catholic News Service May 18 that the proposals had been agreed upon.

"I'm pleased because the charter is being followed," she said.

The Chicago meeting was the first between the board and the ad hoc committee and was conducted in a spirit of cooperation, she said.

Burke, an appellate court justice in Illinois, is one of the four members planning to resign at the end of June.

Board members are appointed by the USCCB president with no time limits.

Burke added that she and the other three board members planning to resign have decided to stay on the board until their replacements are named. Naming new members might be discussed at the June bishops' meeting, she said.

The agreement comes after strong criticism by Burke that the bishops were trying to delay a decision on doing the audits until November, when it would be too late to conduct the 2004 audits to see if dioceses are complying with the prevention policies contained in the bishops' 2002 "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People."

Burke had also complained that some bishops were having second thoughts about independent monitoring by the review board on compliance with the sex-abuse policies.

In a May 13 interview with CNS, Burke said that her sharply worded March 29 letter complaining about the delay to the president of the USCCB, Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville, Ill., prompted the U.S. bishops to consider discussing the audit issue at the June meeting rather than holding off until Novem-

ber.

The 2002 charter required each diocese to develop comprehensive programs for responding to clergy sexual-abuse allegations, reaching out to victims and creating a safe environment for children and young people in all church institutions, organizations and activities.

The charter also promised an annual public report of the progress made by each diocese in implementing the charter. Although the charter does not specify audits as the way to do the report, Burke has complained that without the information provided by audits it is difficult to prepare an annual compliance report.

The study on the causes and context of the clergy sex-abuse of minors is mandated by the charter. The bishops have to approve the funding.

The study would build on two reports by the review board released Feb. 27. One provided statistical data on child sex abuse collected from almost all of the U.S. dioceses. The other — based on extensive interviews — examined some of the reasons behind the crisis.

Burke said May 18 that the new study would be an intensive research piece that would analyze the causes of the sex-abuse crisis.

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