



DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA
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Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate

November 1, 1995

The Reverend Father Sahag Kaishian, Pastor
St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Church
110 Main Street
Haverhill, MA 01830

Dear Father Sahag:

Enclosed please find a copy of the minutes of the Special Parish Assembly of October 15, 1995, duly signed by the Very Reverend Father Krikor Maksoudian, Acting Vicar General, the Honorable Judge Gurahian, Diocesan Council Chairman and Mrs. Barbara Sarkisian-Arthur, Assistant Secretary.

The above mentioned minutes have been reviewed and accepted by the Diocesan Council at their last meeting on October 27, 1995.

With prayers,

Abp. K. Barsamian

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian
Primate

Encl.

**ST. GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH
SPECIAL PARISH ASSEMBLY MINUTES
October 15, 1995**

The meeting was called to order at 1:10p.m. with an opening prayer by Acting Vicar General of the Diocese, Very Reverend Father Krikor Maksoudian, who presided over the meeting. The Diocesan Council Chairman, Honorable Judge Vincent Gurahian, chaired the meeting as designated by the Primate and the Diocesan Council.

Fr. Maksoudian stated in his opening remarks that he was disappointed with the division at St. Gregory's and that he had fond feelings for parishioners on both sides. He stressed the importance of religious solidarity and urged us to move forward as a united parish.

Edgar Mosessian stated that he was in attendance under protest, but that he was not speaking for the other four Parish Council members who did not attend. He felt that this meeting was invalid because the petition calling for the meeting had not been presented to Parish Council prior to being sent to the Diocese and that the Bylaws of the Armenian Church of America were not followed with respect to procedure, establishing an agenda and notification. (Absentee PC members were Zarty Chilingirian, Virginia Chobanian, Edward Der Bogosian, and Edward Basmajian.) Judge Gurahian said that the petition set forth the agenda, and it requested to have a representative from the Diocesan Council preside over the meeting. He said that the Diocesan Council is charged with the authority and duty and it is their obligation to act in the best interest of the church, according to the Bylaws, #65. He did declare the meeting valid. He also invited Edgar to take minutes of the meeting in his capacity of Parish Council Secretary. Edgar declined to do so and left the assembly before any agenda items were discussed.

Meeting agenda:

Findings of the Title Search regarding the property located at Lake Attitash, Merrimac
Reports of the findings from Attorneys Cohen and Hovey were made available. Our parish attorney was not available to explain the reports. The reports were given to Judge Gurahian for his review. His preliminary interpretation was that the property belongs to the Trust, which is in the names of James Derderian, Charles Tashjian, and Abe Kezerian. There was a lengthy discussion about the history of the property, acquired in 1968, and who has legal title to it. James Derderian stated that he had misgivings about giving his one third portion to Holy Cross (Lawrence) and that he would hold off at this point but that Charles Tashjian was in the room and he could speak for himself. As a gesture of demonstrating appreciation to Jim, a motion was made by Steve Arthur and seconded to: **Accept with gratitude the original offer made by the trustees to give two thirds of the Attitash Acres to St. Gregory's provided the trustees are prepared to make the offer.** During the discussion, the issue of taxes was raised. Both Haverhill and Lawrence churches have been paying taxes on the property. It was felt that since the property does not belong to the church(es), taxes should be paid by the owners. Future payments for taxes depend on whether the trustees decide to offer the property to the churches. The motion was carried by a majority with 4 opposed.

Status of the proposed merger between the Lawrence and Haverhill churches

There was concern about whether or not the Diocese would force the churches to merge. Judge Gurahian said that the Diocesan Council is not taking a stand on whether or not the churches should merge. The Primate thinks that we should explore the possibility. Parishioners were concerned about the original intent of the merger committee, which was dissolved by the Parish Council in July. It was stated that the "mission" of the committee was purely fact-finding. They were engaged in an on-going dialogue with the Lawrence church, looking to the future, as to some options that may be available to both churches. This committee would report findings to the Parish Council and parishioners, as they have done in the past. A motion was made by Harry Kasparian and seconded to: **Direct Parish Council to reinstate the former merger committee between the Haverhill and Lawrence churches and report the findings to the Parish.** The discussion was about the original purpose of the committee and how members were selected. Der Sahag stated that he and the Parish Council had been directed by the Primate to explore the idea with the Lawrence church and he and the Parish Council Chairman asked numerous parishioners to be on the committee. The following members agreed: Harry Kasparian, Kim Dandurant, Paul Tavitian, Steve Arthur, Edgar Mosessian and Jim Derderian, Chairman. The motion was carried by the majority with 3 opposed.

The Judge was asked about the Parish Council's obligation to uphold these motions. He stated that the Parish Council has to act accordingly to motions made at this Special Parish Assembly.

Status of the refurbishment of the front doors of the church

Al Movsesian explained the history of the front doors, which were made by Merrimack Valley Wood Products and installed in 1966. The cost for the doors was \$1,837.10. Al committed to make a donation of \$1,000 in the memory of Moses Movsessian. Vasken Gostarian insisted that the cost was \$7,000, but when pressed for any documentation supporting that claim, he said he didn't have an invoice. Jim Derderian had the original invoice which indicated the cost to be \$1,837.10. Al outlined the chronology of events leading up to and including his request to have the church establish the Moses and Koharig Movsesian memorial fund, from the in-lieu of flowers donations, as stated in the Lawrence Eagle Tribune, February 8, 1990. (Refer to previous correspondence pertaining to this issue.) Jim Derderian explained that the Parish Council authorized him to remove the front doors to refurbish them, after they made a motion to establish the Moses and Koharig Movsesian memorial fund. In essence this money would come from the general operating budget because the amount was never set aside as requested. The amount was to be \$2,250. Jim had spoken to Al about paying for the refurbishing of the front doors. In other words, once the fund was established, Al would maintain the doors and agreed to pay for the work in progress on the doors. He also requested new hardware. After Jim removed one door and started working on it, he received a call from Zarty Chilingirian, Parish Council Chairwoman, a few days later asking him to stop working on it because they wanted to revisit the issue at a special parish council meeting. Jim felt that she had not followed the proper procedure and refused to follow her request. Barbara Arthur explained that at a subsequent Parish Council meeting, they rescinded the original motion to establish the fund. She said that she couldn't understand their logic and refusal to uphold a similar motion that was approved by the previous Parish Council in 1993, but never acted upon. She also explained that the Parish Council had met on October 11, and after reviewing Al Movsesian's letter of October 9, reiterating his request to establish the memorial fund, the Council would not set aside the \$2,250. Therefore a motion was accepted to pay Merrimack Valley Wood Products \$2,311.89 from the general operating budget/savings account.

There was a lengthy discussion about donations for in-lieu of flowers and how the church usually would equally divide the money if another organization, such as Union of Marash, was to be a recipient. The Judge stated that donors should indicate on their checks if the donation is for a specific fund. Barbara Arthur stated that the Parish Council discussed this at the Oct. 11th meeting because we do not have a written policy addressing this issue and that it will be discussed at the next meeting.

A motion was made by Harry Kasparian to: **Establish the Movses and Koharig Movsesian memorial fund in the amount of \$1,750 from in-lieu of flowers funds to which the Movsesian family will contribute additional funds for the maintenance of the main doors.** Al reduced the original request from \$2,250 in the spirit of compromise. Motion was carried with 1 opposed.

Parish Council: Communication, Decision Making, and Working Relationship with Der Hayr

Lou Nicolosi stated repeatedly that this Parish needs guidance from the Diocesan Council to help us resolve our problems. Judge Gurahian said that the Diocese has devoted quite a bit of time to matters concerning our parish and is aware of the rift that exists. Another request was for assistance in getting both "sides to come to the table and talk".

Barbara Arthur asked the Judge if he had seen the October 12th letter addressed to the Primate from the five parish council members who were protesting this meeting because they felt it was invalid. He said he had not and that today was the first time he saw it. He stated that this meeting was "legitimate" because the petition was reviewed by the Diocesan Council and Primate and that proper notification was given to the parishioners. He said that the minutes of this meeting have to be submitted to the Primate and Diocesan Council for their approval.

Financial status of St. Gregory's and the Parish Council's plan to address:

Due to the absence of the treasurer and ass't. treasurer, a financial report was not available. It was stated that we are running a deficit each month and that monies are being withdrawn from the savings account. When asked if the Parish Council had a plan to address the financial issues Barbara Arthur stated they did not.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00p.m. with a prayer by the Acting Vicar General.

Respectfully submitted,



Very Rev. Fr. Krikor Maksoudjian
Acting Vicar General
Special Parish Assembly President



Judge Vincent Gurahian
Diocesan Council and
Special Parish Assembly Chairman

Barbara Sarkisian-Arthur
Assistant Secretary