

Parish Council “Good Practices” Check List

The following is a potential list of items for Parish Councils to consider when reviewing their effectiveness.

Ye s?	Practice
	1. Spiritual AND Material – Priest and the Council see the scope of the council’s efforts and responsibilities to include the material AND spiritual wellbeing of the parish.
	2. Priest is Head - Parish Council understands the priest is the head of the parish and as such is head of the parish council.
	3. Orientation Session - Parish Council holds an “Orientation session” at beginning of each new year.
	4. Council Responsibilities – Council understands its responsibilities as: 1) Oversight & stewardship of resources; 2) discernment & articulation of a forward vision; 3) stimulation & coordination of action.
	5. Council Behaviors & Expectations - Council maintains a clear definition of expected behaviors and expectations.
	6. Policy Manual - Council maintains a manual/handbook of adopted “policies”
	7. Restricted Donations - Council has a written policy for accepting restricted donations
	8. Conflict of Interest - Council has a written conflict of interest policy
	9. Compensation Policy - Council has a written policy for clergy compensation
	10. Verifies Misconduct Policy Compliance - Parish has a sexual misconduct manual and compliance to the policy is verified annually by the Parish Council.
	11. Mission/Vision - There is a written parish Mission/vision that is occasionally reviewed and <i>actively used</i> .
	12. Annual Priorities - Council has clear priorities/objectives for coming year that fit the mission.
	13. Tracks Emerging Issues - Council maintains a listing of emerging issues; key challenges/concerns and opportunities facing the parish.
	14. Discussion Forums - Council conducts occasional parish forums to discuss future direction.
	15. Vision & Annual Budget - Council has a 3 yr. vision budget, in addition to an approved annual budget.
	16. Meeting Practices - Council uses a variety of efficient meeting practices.
	17. Annual Meeting Calendar - Council has established particular rotating topics to be discussed/on agenda during the year.

	18. Council grades its paper -- Assesses performance annually. How are <u>we</u> doing? Did we say what we'll do ... did we do what we said? What mistakes were made? Did we learn from them? Were some decisions made too quickly? Slowly?
	19. Meeting Effectiveness - Council occasionally reviews meeting effectiveness – identify areas for improvement; simplification; spend too much time? Not enough time?
	20. Leader Development - Council has an active method of developing leaders and recruiting good people for parish council.
	21. Obeys Laws – The Parish council obeys the (civil) law and works to assure that all parish practices are lawful.
	22. Policies Not Precedents - Council is careful about setting precedents. Instead works to establish <i>policies</i> .
	23. Communicates – Parish Council regularly communicates efforts to parish. Seeks input.
	24. Planning Retreat - Council holds an Annual (or semi-annual) planning retreat designed to rise above day to day; big picture discussions etc.
	25. Health Inventory - Encouraged by the Council a Parish Health Inventory is conducted every 2-3 years.
	26. Ministry oversight - Each major ministry area is reviewed semi-annually. (What are goals? How can we improve this? How can council help?)
	27. By-Laws Ownership - Parish By laws are reviewed for needed changes at least semi-annually.
	28. Ministry by Members - Each PC member is actively engaged in a Council committee or job or a parish ministry.
	29. Consensus - Whenever possible the council seeks to achieve consensus in its decisions.
	30. Size - Council has no more than 12 members. ¹
	31. Attendance - Council averages >85% meeting attendance by Council members.
	32. Replacement Reserve – Council maintains (or require of “building ministry”) an up to date written replacement reserve analysis to project future building maintenance /improvement costs.
	33. Annual meeting - Parish Council takes ownership of having an effective annual meeting. Not too long. Not too short. Working to make it better each year.
	34. Connection to larger Church - Parish Council assures an active connection to the Diocese and OCA. Council sees the parish as being a constitutive element of the larger church. Participates in Assemblies & workshops. Offers constructive input.

¹ ‘For a council to act as a council should – that is to envision the future, engage in strategic thought and hold its own members accountable for organizational performance & stewardship the ideal size is 6-8; max 12.’ (Paraphrased from “Governance and Ministry: Rethinking Board Leadership” Dan Hotchkiss)

