

TO : Parishioners of Saints Simon & Jude

FROM: Reverend William A. Metzger, Pastor

5 January 2018

In mid-summer, I was contacted by the Kokosing Construction Company through the Diocese of Columbus Buildings Superintendent about the availability/ possibility of using our the eastern field/parcel of our property for a staging area as part of their bid for the reconstruction of Interstate 70. I was puzzled as to why I, as the pastor of Sts. Simon & Jude, was being contacted. All previous management of the unused land of our parish site (all of which is owned by the Diocese of Columbus) has been managed by the Diocesan Buildings and Finance Offices including leasing of the land for farming. The Buildings Superintendent, Mr. Bruce Boylan, told me that since this was a two to three year lease and it would involve a more dramatic use than farming that the parish should benefit from the inconveniences. I agreed with him, especially when I was told by Kokosing that they would use five to six acres of land and would pay \$500.00 per acre per month for the duration of the agreement. With the reality of the remaining \$400,000.00 debt on the present church and a million dollar plus cost for our proposed Parish Life Center, the possibility of an additional \$36,000.00 a year to service our debt is very attractive.

We have a very beautiful campus and there are some who work/volunteer very hard to maintain the beauty of our "church in the fields." I was/am concerned that the integrity and beauty of the land be preserved. I spoke at length with the Kokosing engineers assigned to the project about the effects on and remediation of the land to be used. They gave me a detailed description of what they will do in the use and restoration of our land. They abide by the guidelines issued by the various government agencies controlling such matters, in particular, the Environmental Protection Agency that monitors them. What Kokosing and Olen Corporation propose for the hauling, storing, pulverizing of the used concrete and its removal from our property is all safely within those parameters. They have done this before all over our state and have a proven record of compliance. The State of Ohio would not have awarded them the contract for this project if they were derelict. Since announcing this to the parish the weekend of December 29-30, I have had several positive comments from people who have dealt with Kokosing Construction about the quality of their work and their integrity as a company/business.

I received a letter in late November dated and postmarked November 20. It was a notice from the Madison County Zoning Board stating there would be a public hearing on December 3 regarding the proposal from Kokosing for the two sites in Madison County for the I-70 project. Our property was the first item/site on the agenda. There were three people there for our site and about twenty-five or so for the other site/second agenda item. Shortly after the meeting was called "to order" nothing that ensued resembled any order or facts. The focus of the meeting was more concerned about Robert's Rules of Order than the facts of the proposals. Our site/item time slot was totally dominated by the "detractors" who had come to oppose site/item #2. The naysaying and arguments—no facts or substantiated data—ranged from the ridiculous to the absurd! It was a classic example of "The Chicken Little Syndrome," i.e., *"fear mongering, whether justified or not, that elicits a societal response inferring catastrophic conclusions possibly resulting in paralysis."* One of the attendees at the meeting said that "if they (the zoning board) approved the proposal, they would be signing his death warrant!" Both items/proposals were rejected/voted down by the board. In order to proceed, modified proposal was created. The Kokosing representatives did listen, as did I, to a valid point made by Mr. Robert Fry regarding the traffic pattern on High Free Pike and have incorporated a change in their revised proposal that would move the exit to High Free Pike farther west.

Mr. Fry and his wife Sandy are opposed to the project and they own several properties on the opposite side of High Free Pike. Mrs. Fry (Sandy) appeared at the church on Christmas Eve morning with a letter for the parish—the same letter that appeared on a neighborhood web site. She initially spoke to Michael Korson and Bill Weeks who were putting the figures in the outdoor stable. I saw her and greeted her and she gave me the letter and wanted me to share it with the congregation. I said that I would but not on Christmas. I mentioned the matter at all the Masses on December 29-30 and told the parish that I would give a more detailed description in writing the following weekend January 5-6. I have reproduced the letter here for your information. However, what is in the letter/memo is not accurate and is another example of "The Chicken Little Syndrome." I have highlighted phrases that I find, to use a popular phrase, "fake news." The letter I received follows:

Members of the Congregation Dated – 12/21/2018

We felt it was important for all to know of a project that is being proposed right beside the church. Koksing[sic] Construction Comp. & Olen Corp. of Westerville have applied for a “temporary conditional permit” to stockpile and pulverize concrete pavement that would be gathered from I-70 repair. The concrete pavement would be hauled to the site by large dump trucks (entering & exiting onto High Free Pike) with plans that the project to last approximately 6 years. After stockpiling concrete pavement, it would be pulverized creating a great deal of dust and thus blowing towards the Catholic Church and the homes in Darby Estates. We are concerned that residue would be in the air for people to breathe - thus causing respiratory problems. The plan is to waterdown[sic] the dust but it cannot be contained 100%. Also, toxic waste would travel into the groundwater and get into the Big Darby Creek which is registered as a Scenic River. The meeting is being held in Madison County but sits on the far east side of Madison - - not quite into Franklin County but will affect Franklin County residents as well. We feel this type of business should be moved elsewhere away from so many people. We prefer they find a different location so we are not taking chances with the lives of our children or anyone else’s well-being.

Please plan to attend the meeting on Monday, January 7 at 7:00 pm at the Conference Room of the Madison County Engineer’s Office at 825 U.S. Rt. 42 NE London, OH 43140 and voice your opinion. This project can be defeated if enough people don’t want it in their backyard. The assigned # for this meeting is “19-04” that you need to attend the correct meeting.

Thank you.

Your Neighbor

We; Your Neighbor: Who is this? Why no name(s)? I called Sandy Fry, at Fry Dry Wall on Thursday, January 3 at 1:20 pm to discuss the "letter" that appeared on a local neighborhood website and that she handed to me Christmas Eve. I asked her who letter was from she said from "the neighbors". I asked who wrote the letter she told me that her sister-in-law did. [I later found out that her sister-in-law lives several miles from here] I can certainly understand a "ghost writer" to help write a letter. I then asked her who "Your Neighbor" is. She replied: "all the neighbors." I asked: "who are they, what are their names?" She answered (a bit agitated): "I am not going to fight with you!" and she hung up. I would categorize this letter as "anonymous". In my forty plus years as a priest I have come to equate anonymous letters, phone messages etc. that I receive as hand grenades thrown over a wall by a terrorist. Why? A terrorist wants to make a statement by their actions, but do not want accept the responsibility for their actions/words by exposing them to the reality or questioning of the facts of their position in the situation. I have also found in my experience that a complaint can be a source of information. But owning the complaint, i.e., with your signature or personal contact, the author gives more credibility to it.

The concrete pavement would be hauled to the site by large (entering & exiting onto High Free Pike) This statement is FALSE and misleading. Kokosing would make a cut/road directly from I-70 into the north end of our property where their trucks with the broken concrete would enter and dump the concrete behind a dirt mound where it will be later pulverized. Crushing/pulverizing would be done at intervals not continuously.

To last approximately 6 years FALSE. The terms of the agreement are for 2 to 3 years. Some have compared the staging here of this project to the high piles of stacked concrete on Fisher Road. That is an aggregate company's yard site for their business operations. Ours is a leased site for a temporary project for which Kokosing & Ohlen will be paying. The 2 to 3 year figure was given as the extreme time limit in case of unseen circumstances. Most contractors get a bonus incentive if the project is not only finished on time if not sooner. The longer life of a lease affects profits, so there is motivation to get the project finished sooner.

Thus blowing [dust] towards the Catholic Church and the homes in Darby Estates This, too, is FALSE and misleading. The wind pattern at the church comes from comes from the west/southwest and blows north/northeast. The Church is west of the crushing. Darby Estates is over a mile away. The

dust created by pulverizing that is not contained by spraying it with water will not be a mushroom cloud hanging over our property or moving towards Darby Estates.

Toxic waste would travel into the Big Darby Creek FALSE and misleading. Why

There will be no toxic waste...unlike farming which uses spray chemicals, fertilizers, Round-UP that are either disseminated in the air when sprayed or placed on the ground to disseminate into the ground. The only elements used in the concrete pulverizing are inert, namely water and concrete which will turn into gravel. Whatever dust that will result will be minimal. There are more toxins put into the air around us by the fumes of the diesel and gasoline burning vehicles that travel I-70 24/7 365 days a year and the Noise pollution, which is not mentioned, generated by I-70 which is constant and annoying.

Will affect Franklin County residents as well How, given the falsity of the above statements?

so many people How many? The Madison County Zoning Commission sent out 34 letters/notices to affected residents, i.e., those whose property lines are within 500 feet of the church. At the December 3, there were three actually two property owners/representatives, the Fry's and myself. The absence of the remaining property owners who were notified would be interpreted of either their consent or lack of interest. When the Fry's asked for a zoning change a year ago for their property, the church was notified. I discussed the issue with several members of the Buildings and Grounds committee and they had no problem with it so we did not attend and the Fry's were granted their variance. The church has always tried to be a *good_neighbor* as well as a *responsible* neighbor. While the Kokosing proposal would be an inconvenience, most of all for us the parish because it is in our backyard. By permitting the project to take place on our property we are not in violation of any moral or ethical code.

