

## Framingham parish proposes combining with Sudbury church

By D. Craig MacCormack / Daily News Staff

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**FRAMINGHAM** -- Parishioners at St. Jeremiah Church told members of the archdiocese reconfiguration committee this week they hoped to save at least one of the two churches slated for closing near the Framingham-Sudbury border.

A five-person committee hoping to spare St. Jeremiah offered a possible alternative, saying St. Anselm's Church in Sudbury would be a better fit than the much-discussed combination of both churches with St. George in Framingham.

The St. Jeremiah Appeals Committee advocated to keep its church open, but said a move to St. Anselm's would be much better in terms of traffic, parking, handicapped access and driving distance for people on Framingham's Northside.

"Obviously we want to keep our own parish, but if we have to combine three into one or even three into two, St. Anselm's can accommodate us much better than St. George's," said Mary Beth Carmody, co-chairwoman of the committee.

St. Anselm's in Sudbury closed in October and remains in daily vigil with an appeal pending in the Vatican. St. Jeremiah is slated to close by May 15 as part of the next wave of closings and reshuffling in the archdiocese.

Peter Meade, chairman of the Meade-Eisner Reconfiguration Review Committee, an eight-person panel appointed by Archbishop Sean O'Malley to examine closing decisions, said the group will likely make its recommendation soon.

He would not say whether the reconfiguration committee would recommend to reopen St. Anselm's or keep St. Jeremiah open, but said the idea was presented by the appeals committee and is worth talking to his colleagues about too.

"Just because there's a town line, it doesn't mean people don't cross it," said Meade. "What was being said is there's a natural flow (between the two churches)."

He expects the reconfiguration committee to meet again within the next 10 days and talk about how to handle St. Jeremiah's closing. The group will make a recommendation to O'Malley, who ultimately will decide the church's fate.

"Obviously there's a compelling reason to get back to them sooner rather than later," said Meade.

Jackie Lemmerhirt, co-chairwoman of the St. Jeremiah Appeal Committee, said the meeting with Meade and colleague Mary Lou Batt on Wednesday was fruitful.

"There were no conclusions, no promises and no known outcome," she said. "But at least somebody came to talk to us. That's what we wanted in the first place.

"I think they now understand we'd be very agreeable to working with St. Anselm's," she said.

Cynthia Deysher, chairwoman of the St. Anselm's Parish Council, said the group has had no talks with St. Jeremiah parishioners or the archdiocese about a possible partnership between the churches, but it's an interesting idea.

"Our community would welcome (St. Jeremiah parishioners), although I'm sure their preference would be to stay open," she said.

With communion service every Sunday and prayer services on weekdays since the church closed, Deysher said she sees no impetus to ask St. Anselm's flock to relocate to St. Jeremiah to save that parish.

"We've been in vigil for six months to keep our church open," she said. "This is a marathon, and we've got a lot of good runners."

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