

St. Jeremiah's appeal under review

By D. Craig MacCormack / Daily News Staff

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FRAMINGHAM -- The group hoping to reopen St. Jeremiah parish has agreed to wait until July 5 for an answer on its appeal to Archbishop Sean O'Malley, who asked for more time after a 30-day response window closed.

The St. Jeremiah Appeals Committee filed its appeal May 21, meaning Monday would have been the final day for O'Malley to decide. In a Monday letter, the archbishop informed Appeals Committee co-Chairwoman Jackie Lemmerhirt of the two-week delay.

Lemmerhirt sees no harm in letting the archdiocese mull the church's fate for another two weeks, she said.

"They look like they'll be taking a hard look at what we put together," Lemmerhirt said yesterday. "I think that's a good thing because we feel like we have a very strong case.

"I think (church officials) believe we have some valid points and they better take a hard look at our arguments before making a decision. We've thought all along we'd win if people took time to look at our case," she said.

Should O'Malley deny the appeal, the Appeals Committee will "absolutely" take its case to the Vatican, Lemmerhirt said.

Appeals have saved St. Albert's in Weymouth and Infant Jesus/St. Lawrence in Brookline.

"We've been able to learn a lot from what some of the other churches have done in their appeals and would certainly use that in our appeal if we need to take that next step," said Lemmerhirt.

But that's still a couple weeks off, she said. The committee is still hoping O'Malley decides for himself that St. Jeremiah's, which closed May 13, should be allowed to open again.






"I'm very happy and optimistic right now," said Lemmerhirt. "There's no reason not to be. The worst thing that happened (with the delay) is it pushes back our appeal to Rome by two weeks, but maybe we won't need to do it at all."

In the meantime, Archdiocese of Boston officials say the church's bank accounts have been frozen and all assets that belong to the parish must remain or be replaced until all appeals have been exhausted.

"Even though we already knew that, it's nice to have it in writing now," said Lemmerhirt.

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