

Church hopeful after O'Malley meeting

By D. Craig MacCormack / Daily News Staff

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FRAMINGHAM -- Both sides seemed satisfied following a meeting between Archbishop Sean O'Malley and members of the St. Jeremiah Appeals Committee on Tuesday night at the chancery in Brighton.

The sit-down, which lasted about an hour, gave committee members their first chance to show O'Malley why they believe he should reopen their church, which closed May 13 after almost 47 years.

Parishioners have remained in an around-the-clock vigil since May 6, which was two days before the last scheduled Mass there. They hope O'Malley will say this week the church can reopen or they will file an appeal to the Vatican.

"I think we have legitimate concerns and (O'Malley) wanted to sit down and talk about them," said Jackie Lemmerhirt, co-chairwoman of the St. Jeremiah Appeals Committee. "That was what we wanted from the beginning."

O'Malley, who is expected to rule by Thursday whether to reopen St. Jeremiah's, also seemed pleased with the meeting, which also included Mary Beth Carmody and John Olszewski from the Appeals Committee.

"He saw it as a cordial, helpful discussion," said Archbishop spokesman Terry Donilon yesterday. "He continues to consult with his advisers on the best plan for the Catholic community (at St. Jeremiah's)."

O'Malley, who also met with representatives from St. Anselm's Church in Sudbury, is expected to celebrate Mass at Proud 2 B Catholic at Marist House at 6 p.m. and visit with St. George's Church officials and parishioners Sunday.

The archbishop is keenly aware of what's going on at St. Jeremiah's and the other churches in vigil across the archdiocese.

"He's engaged in this process, even more so now," said Donilon.

Lemmerhirt didn't glean much from the powwow with O'Malley, she said, but she's happy the group went to Brighton.

"I don't know how much he knew about the situation," she said. "He doesn't give you a lot of feedback, but we definitely made our points and he heard our concerns."

St. Jeremiah vigil attendees have been beating the heat with a new central air conditioning system paid for by the Archdiocese after the church's old system was taken out in May without any warning, said Lemmerhirt.

She saw that as a positive sign about the church's fate, but wasn't ready to abandon the idea that an appeal to Rome could be needed. Lemmerhirt isn't sure if O'Malley will send a formal letter to let vigil-goers know what's up.

The vigil continues strong in the meantime, said Lemmerhirt.

"There are a lot of new people walking in the door," she said. "I've never seen the sign-up sheet so full."

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Archbishop Sean O'Malley

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