

OLP protestors take fight right to archdiocese's doorstep

By Erin Smith/ Staff Writer
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One smiling grandmother leaned on her horn in support, raising her fist high above her head as she drove past protesters crowding the sidewalk outside the Boston Archdiocese's chancery.

"There's no damn reason they should take it away from us. We're offering fair-market value," shouted state Sen. Steve Tolman.

"Tell it!" "Yeah!," cheered the applauding assembly in answer to Tolman's sermon-like speech to supporters protesting the archdiocese's closure of Our Lady of the Presentation School.

OLP supporters, refusing to take no for an answer, took their fight to the archdiocese's doorstep last week. Neighbors became angered last month when the archdiocese rejected a bid to sell the school to the community at market value.

The residents wanted to turn the building into an elementary school, preschool and community center. Archdiocesan officials have instead decided to keep the building as offices for the church's tribunal.

Parents, children, neighbors and community activists, bundled in heavy winter coats on a frigid Saturday afternoon, stood close together near a banner reading, "Thou shalt not close vibrant schools."

"The Council of Parishes is proud to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you in your fight," said Cynthia Deysher, council cochairwoman.

Deysher's church, St. Anselm of Sudbury, has been keeping a protest vigil since Sept. 12 in an effort to keep its own church open. The Council of Parishes is a group protesting all church closings.

Olive branch

District City Councilor Jerry P. McDermott extended the olive branch to nearby Boston College and appealed to the university to act as good neighbors.

"We need BC to use their leverage to save this school," said McDermott.

McDermott recently accused BC and the archdiocese of conspiring to close OLP. The archdiocese decided to relocate its tribunal to OLP after BC purchased the building last year.

BC also recently purchased 43 acres of land on the archdiocese's Brighton Campus and is expected to buy the entire campus in a matter of years. McDermott rescinded his accusation after BC and the archdiocese both denied the claim during a city council hearing last week.

Local politicians, including state Rep. Kevin Honan and At-Large City Councilor Maura A. Hennigan, took turns speaking in support of OLP from a parked flatbed truck decorated with blue and yellow balloons.

OLP parent Tom O'Brien, who has been leading the fight to keep the school open, thanked supporters for their continued support on behalf of his own family and the Presentation School Foundation at the third organized rally to protest the closing.

Neighbors have been engaged in an aggressive letter-writing campaign in an effort to convince the archdiocese to preserve OLP.



"We need to save our school," O'Brien told the crowd.

Photo Gallery





Giovanna Rosapane-Ebos of Brighton, right, was one of dozens of protesters rallying Saturday against the archdiocese's decision to close Our Lady of Presentation School this summer. (Photo by David Gordon)

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