

Bethesda Episcopal Church  
Saratoga Springs NY

Minutes: Vestry Meeting  
Wednesday, June 24, 2015

Vestry

Mark Claverie  
Darren Miller (excused)  
Paul Ruzicka (excused)  
Mary Withington (excused)  
Geoff Delbridge  
Gordon Boyd  
Catherine Berheide  
Mark Griffin  
Jane Agee (excused)  
Geneva Henderson  
Sara Manny

Clergy

Dean Marshall J. Vang, Interim Rector  
Peter Sweeney, Deacon

Treasurer

Anne Van Acker

Also present: Eileen Wiebicke - Auditor

Call to order: Dean Vang called to order the regular meeting of the Bethesda Episcopal Church Vestry at 7:00 PM on June 24, 2015 at the Parish House on Washington Street.

Devotions: Mr. Claverie began the meeting with devotions.

Previous meeting minutes: Mr. Griffin moved that minutes from the previous meeting be accepted, seconded by Ms. Manny, unanimously approved.

Building Report: Mr. Boyd distributed building committee minutes and reported that we are making progress on many fronts. Our building application has gone to city hall and the City Planner has been very proactive with questions about the project, which have been helpful in preparing for the hearing. Obtaining environmental impact approval may be slightly complicated because we're building adjoining a historic site. Mr. Boyd expects that we will be asked about our plan for parking and traffic, even though the City is technically supposed to provide parking. Mr. Boyd met with Katrina Trask nursery school and suggested a little bus for students to avoid parents needing to park for pick-up/drop-off. Head start has more particular requirements for this sort of arrangement (a yellow bus with seatbelts). Hiring a bus can be arranged on contract basis if the planning board requires it. There's going to be a solar array on the roof of the NPH. We have a sign from the New York Landmarks Conservancy: Sacred Sites Program to put up. Saratoga Restaurant Supply will be coming to next BC meeting to give input on kitchen/catering layout in the NPH.

Capital Campaign: Mr. Boyd reported that we are about to start the feasibility study portion of the capital campaign. He has drafted a case statement which ECF is reviewing. The next step will be on site interviews of potential substantial donors conducted by ECF's consultant.

(Mr. Boyd left after delivering his reports to attend the Planning Board meeting at the City Center)

*Auditor's Report:* Ms. Wiebicke distributed drafts of her report and reminded us that an auditor's responsibility is to give an opinion concerning the church's financial statements based on a sample of transactions rather than through a review of every single document. Her opinion is qualified because the rector's discretionary fund isn't using proper petty cash procedures and three of the investment accounts lack original documentation concerning the donation or trust (which may never be found) so it is impossible to tell if they're being managed properly. We have looked for these documents and had our financial institutions look but to no avail. Since last year, assets have gone up by 2.1 million because of the building sales. Payroll taxes have gone down because payroll has gone down. Donations went up last year both in building fund and pledge and plate. Dividends went up last year, also because of proceeds from the sale of the two buildings. The value of our perpetual trusts went down because of market fluctuations. There have been significant savings in payroll because of the loss of 2 staff members. Ms. Wiebicke has explained proper petty cash procedures to Lynn so hopefully this will be better next year. Ms. Van Acker asked if it's appropriate for us to give the total of our restricted trusts when reporting financial information to diocese, since we can't touch the principal of these trusts. Ms. Wiebicke didn't think they should be included but suggested that someone talk to the diocese and ask if we should be reporting perpetual trusts. Ms. Van Acker thinks including total market value of trusts in our assets is incorrect and will talk to Elaine about submitting a revision to our parochial report. The audit does not show anything about real estate taxes since Ms. Wiebicke found no record of bills or payments. Ms. Van Acker hasn't seen a bill. Ms. Wiebicke will change the report to reflect that \$450,000 from the sale of the rectory is designated for the purchase of a new rectory. Her report also includes suggestions for improvement. Some restricted donations have been recorded in Quickbooks as unrestricted, but Ms. Wiebicke has talked to the bookkeeper about this, so this should improve. The Daniel Jones Griffith Music and Endowment funds need to be reconciled with the same bookkeeping standards as the other funds and reported to bookkeeper regularly. Certain investment account activities which haven't been should be recorded in Quickbooks either monthly or quarterly. Bank reconciliations should be reviewed by a member of the vestry. However, we have made a lot of progress over the last couple of years and our financial management practices are much better than they were.

*Ensley property:* Dean Vang reported that the present contract to sell the Ensley property has fallen through. However, John Witt is considering buying the property with no contingencies so, if he decides to make an offer, we could close much more quickly.

*Treasurers Report:* Ms. Van Acker reports that pledge and plate is still a problem and is down 20% as compared to last year (almost 23,000). This is THE money issue that we have right now. (Dean Vang announced that one major donor just sent in half of their annual gift, which arrived this week, which should help.) According to Ms. Van Acker's report, everything else is fine. The expense line in the previous year comparison report should read \$157,564 instead of \$353,000 (after taking out building, endowment etc). Our net YTD is -\$55,000.00. In comparing budget vs. actual, income is about 50,000 behind budget. We're doing a very good job of keeping our expenses in line with what we budgeted (\$189,000), but we are behind budget by \$18,749, which is all pledge and plate. Building fund invites

are being addressed this weekend. We really rely on the income (about 20% of our budget for the year) from this party so the vestry needs to work on reminding everybody to attend.

Administrative assistant – Dean Vang is seeking to hire a person who will work 17.5 hr/wk, 875 hrs/yr at \$16 per hour (a \$14,400 total cost) with 2 weeks paid vacation and no benefits. This can only happen because Lynne has agreed to do all the liturgical work, but this can only be a very temporary arrangement. He also proposed increasing Farrell's salary by \$1,000 (per year), effective retroactively to June 1<sup>st</sup> this year, as Farrell has been taking on a large portion of the regular administrative duties in the office. Ms. Henderson moved to increase Farrell's salary by the stated \$1000/year. Mr. Claverie seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Quarterly reports – Mr. Delbridge hasn't had time to get the reports for the first quarter out. Statements are done but letters are not. He will put something in the newsletter explaining the delay. Ms. Berheide volunteered to help with the letters.

Interim Rector's Report: Dean Vang reported that Bishop Love is taking a sabbatical immediately following the general convention, leaving Bishop Herzog in charge. This General Convention has the potential to be very explosive as it will address same sex marriage and the election of new presiding bishop. Regarding the endowment committee, Merrill Lynch wants to know where we should put \$450,000 of rectory funds. The vestry informally agreed that we are not ready to buy a new rectory as there is too much else going on and it would make sense to let the next rector have input in her living situation. For now it would be better to invest the money so as to keep up with inflation. Mr. Delbridge moved to authorize the endowment committee to move funds to an intermediate level of investment for higher income. Ms. Berheide seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Dean Vang recently met with Toby Milday who says that the Adelphi likely won't reopen until Sept 2016. The rectory was supposed to be their next project, followed by the parish house. There is a possibility that we might be able to extend our lease, which would make the schedule for construction/fundraising more comfortable. Dean Vang has invited Carolyn Von Vrangle, a former priest who speaks on behalf of Food for the Poor, to speak at Bethesda and to do an outreach project on Sept 20. He is starting to reach out to parents of first and second graders regarding first communion. Dean Vang will write a letter of communication to AME Church in Charleston offering support and prayer

Deacon's Report: The youth group worked at Pine Grove camp, which was a lot of fun and they got to meet people while helping clean up track family facilities. Confirmation classes are going well, and are currently on break for the summer. The class has really bonded over the last month or so. The mission trip to Harrisburg will be the last week in July. About 4 kids are going at the moment plus 3 chaperones. \$800-\$900 cost total for trip which can be paid for out of youth ministry account (includes visit to Hershey Park).

Communications: Ms. Henderson reported that the Facebook page is doing well and the newsletter needs articles.

Christian Education: Ms. Henderson reported that Vacation Bible School would begin the following week but that her schedule would make it impossible for her to attend. Ms. Manny's children will be attending so she will report back. Dean Vang recommended that the Christian Education committee meet soon in order to start planning for the fall.

Warden's report: Mr. Claverie delivered 2 scholarship checks for the Fr. Rouillard scholarship (\$50 each) to the high school. This is a scholarship for students (one male, one female) who demonstrate "good character and sportsmanship". Alan Oppenheim sold the property where we've been parking so we will no longer be able to use that space after the end of the month. Mr. Claverie has sent a letter thanking Mr. Oppenheim for his gracious gift of parking. Parking may be a little tight in the fall. We have finally bought a lawn mower, though the lawn next to the church is still hard to mow because of the holes and debris. The air conditioning is being very temperamental and the church is often too hot or too cold.

Expenses: Mr. Claverie moved that Dean Vang's expenses for the month be approved. Mr. Delbridge seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.

Closing: Mr. Griffin moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Manny seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

NOTE: On July 3, 2015, Mr. Claverie moved via email that the Vestry accept John Witt's offer of \$600,000.00 for the purchase of the Ensley property with no contingencies. Mr. Miller seconded the motion which passed unanimously