

## Property Summit Notes 5.31.2014

### We agreed to form the following two groups to work on two things:

1. A subgroup to define principles for a vendors list to share information with each other about contractors used to do work on our properties, manage our assets, etc. This group will be composed of Lars Farmer, Connie Eash, Tonya Taylor, and Joanie Hadik.
2. A group to serve as an exploratory committee on defining a set of needs and recommendations for our Quarterly Meeting along the lines of the many questions raised in these notes. This group will be composed of Jane Brosius, Mary Sproat, Tonya Taylor, and Richard Bernard.

### Property Summit Introduction Session

- Hockessin: issue of Tenant House circa 1910
  - The condition of the property would require \$50 K to improve
  - Does Hockessin actually want to own this property?
  - There is a financial drain to keep maintaining it.
  - Tearing it down for green space or expansion of the cemetery would cost at least \$30 to \$40 K
  - These discussions have caused tension around the tenant who is a member and needs a job and housing
  - The property probably has little historical import, but it is a classic building
  - Threshing session as part of decisions
  - Trustees are responsible, but can't make major decisions without the consent of the meeting
  - Sometimes "process" takes more time than needed or appropriate.
- Centre Meeting and London Grove Meetings have tenant houses occupied by caretakers; they are allowed to stay rent free if they agree to upkeep the tenant house in addition to caretaker role
- What is the relationship between the authority of trustees of meetings and the larger meeting community?
- We have aging membership
  - People not "climbing ladders"; the need to pay for services due to the decline in volunteer services
  - There is a declining membership to support increased costs.
  - There is a squeeze on annual budgets.
- Can we join together for shared services or at least share vendor names?
- Newark Meeting uses London Britain; should they assume some of the financial responsibilities?
- There are debates over "modernization" of historic properties.
- Centre Meeting made the decision to remove "modern" electricity but kept bathrooms; they have woodstoves. They took off shingle roof & put split oak.
- Marlborough Meeting added amenities (a bathroom and mini-kitchen).
- Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's interest is in (should be?) in the worshipping community; there are restricted funds available to enhance participation in Meetings, not preservation of historic property.

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- Old Kennett Meeting is used three times per year, and it has no amenities. How does one invite new families without amenities? Properties and community do have a relationship. Property is an asset for spiritual growth (Kennett MM turned down for Longwood grant because not used enough). But how do we get it to be used more if we can't add the necessary amenities.
- Our interest in properties should be in maximum potential use.
- Old Kennett has historical value in a way that other old Monthly Meetings do not: the difference between historically significant and merely "classic".
- Arch Street Meetinghouse: PYM owns it, but a trust was set up to get new funds and diversify investments. Arch Street has unique historical significance, but PYM currently subsidizes Arch Street to the tune of \$300K annually.
- Kennett Meeting spent two years on revising building use guidelines; events require a member of the meeting to sponsor it, and there is a "fee schedule." Tax issues? Hockessin Meeting copied Kennett's. This is an example of the kind of good sharing and avoiding recreating the wheel.
- Need to be careful about tax implications. Rent counts as unrelated business expense, which is taxable income despite 501c3 status.
- Issues can be very heated, as it were, regarding the attachment to old building and benches.

### Western Quarterly Meeting (WQM) Property Committees Session

- What is our plan for when/if smaller meetings need to be laid down? Do we need a plan?
- Should Monthly and Quarterly Meetings make a liquidation plan in the same way that they make strategic plans?
- Chester County archives, Swarthmore, Haverford, WQM Inc bylaws, Friends Fiduciary Corporation, and the minutes of laid-down meetings may have the titles to deeds of different properties. Do we need to hire someone to go through these archives to find the titles to deeds and other pertinent data?
- Western Quarterly Meeting has the responsibility to receive the assets being laid down? The Quarterly Meeting may not have a choice in taking on laid-down properties/assets. We should check this with Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. The Yearly Meeting has no claim on Monthly Meeting Quarterly Meeting properties?
- London Britain, Parkersville, Pensgrove are supported partly through Friends Fiduciary Corporation dividends that are sent to Western Quarterly Meeting, and then WQM sends them along to the Property Committees to use in their management of these properties.
- Does Western Quarterly Meeting insure these properties?
- How do we continue to maintain laid-down properties with dwindling FFC dividends and people power?
- Do we need to consolidate our property committees into one super-committee? Some other strategy for more easily managing our dwindling people power? Do we need to create some kind of databank or clearing house for maintaining resources for managing properties? Would this super-committee be a trust? A resource to address emergencies? What are the different roles and responsibilities and where does authority lie as we think about ways to manage our assets sustainably?

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- The Quarterly Meeting could appoint trustees who make the actual decisions.
- What is our responsibility or duty to closed Monthly Meeting properties—those that are used two to three times per year?
- Whatever we do, we hope there would just be awareness, good stewardship, and support to those who care for and are devoted to the care of particular properties/assets. In creating some kind of trust, we wouldn't necessarily need to lay down the committees and thus the people who are already devoted to the care of properties/assets.
- Do we need to draw out our burial grounds as beasts of their own, as it were? They are unique in the operational burdens with which they saddle Meetings.
- About thirty years ago, WQM “divested itself” of closed properties (mostly Orthodox).
- Do we need a group of people to work on answering the above questions? Would good stewards open that kettle of fish, as it were? The longer we wait to address the complicated nature of these questions, the more convoluted the spider web becomes. We need an exploratory committee!
- We ought also to be thinking about sustainability over the next 30 to 100 years.
- We need to create a centralized database containing bylaws, deeds, guidelines, vendors, etc.
- We could put maps of burial grounds on the Western Quarterly Meeting website.