

Bellingham Friends Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business 12 January 2020

Present: Nancy Barisic, Jessica Bee, Jean Brechan, Janine Bruton, Joanne Cowan, Dorothy DeFremery, Aurora Fox, Don Goldstein, Wendy Goldstein, Lorina Hall, Mary Hansen, John Hatten (clerking), Virginia Herrick, Dorrie Jordan, Lynne Lohr, Edana Christine Meyer, Mary Ann Percy (recording), Allan Richardson, Susan Richardson, Terry Scott, Allen Stockbridge, Larry Thompson, Rachel Van Boven

1. **Opening Worship** at 11:45 am
2. **Clerk's Statement**--on clerking – Meeting for worship with a concern for business is the crown jewel of Quakerism. But trying to get Quakers to keep to a schedule has been compared to herding cats.

Whenever we remember that we are in the presence of God, transformation is possible. Every task, no matter how mundane, becomes an act of worship, a word of praise offered to God. This is the basis for Quaker business practice. We call it “meeting for worship with attention to business” because it is grounded in an awareness of God’s presence.

We are called to be guided by Spirit which doesn’t necessarily happen in the expected time allotted. So how can we best manage our time?

See each item as if it were a question for worship sharing. Approach the business in hand in this way that is radically different from ordinary discussion:

- i. Allow silence before and after each person speaks.
- ii. Listen attentively and respectfully.
- iii. Do not react to or critique what others have said, but express your own concerns and insights as deeply and honestly as you can.
- iv. Speak as much as possible from your own experience.
- v. Expect to speak only once during consideration of a given item.

Given the number of items on our agenda, we have a choice to give the first items the priority at the expense of the later items. I propose an alternative. Give each item 10 minutes and then refer back to committee for further work. (excerpted from FGC Quaker Business Basics)

3. The Clerk **reviewed the agenda**

4. Review of last month's minutes: Minutes were approved

5. Member concerns:

Mary Hansen: Shared a letter to Bellingham Friends expressing her appreciation, gratitude for and commitment to our community--the Spirit is always with us. She acknowledged her shortcomings and how Friends love her.

6. Items for worship and action:

A. Pastoral Care: Listening groups-- The groups will follow a format slightly different from Worship Sharing: A Friend will initially provide information about the active listening process--which is the one we will be following. There are enough Friends now signed up for a daytime group and nearly enough Friends now signed up for an evening group. Friends will be informed of logistical details of their group via email shortly.

B. Children's Program: New Child Abuse Prevention policy, Volunteer Teacher Guidelines, and Youth Supervisor Guidelines

Friends agreed to season these documents during this month and consider them for approval at February MFWFB.

A Friend asked that the fact that these documents are being seasoned and will be considered for approval at February MFWFB be included in the enews in the coming weeks.

A Friend asked if these reports and documents along with those from the Safe Quaker Community could be posted on our website with a link to them in the enews. Yes.

A Friend requested that we include details of how the process of background checks will take place. The Clerk of the committee will add this to the documents and email it out.

A Friend spoke to the length and complexity of these documents with appreciation for the hard work of the Children's Program Committee in creating them. She doesn't want to see them rubber stamped as they deserve a more thorough engagement.

The Clerk clarified that his request is that we take the time to carefully review these documents prior to reviewing them.

A member of Children's Program Committee clarified that the documents provided to Meeting for Worship for Business this month are updated versions of guidelines which have long been in place.

C. Social and Environmental Concerns: Land acknowledgement

The land acknowledgement provided last month has continued seasoning.

The Committee would like it to be posted on our website and request more time to consider how else it will be used.

A Friend read the acknowledgement aloud.

Friends approved this Land Acknowledgement:

We respectfully acknowledge that this Meeting gathers in the traditional, sovereign territory of Indigenous Coast Salish peoples including the Lummi and Nooksack who have cared for these lands and waters since time immemorial and continue to do so today. Their presence is imbued in these mountains, valleys, waterways, and shorelines. May we honor the original stewards of this place and participate in the care and protection of our shared home.

The Committee was asked to bring recommendations for its use to Meeting for Worship for Business in February

D. Safe Quaker Community: (hereafter called SQC)

Bellingham Friends Meeting Guidelines for Participation by people accused, charged, or convicted of sex offenses document (hereafter called *Guidelines*)

A spokesperson from the SQC Committee reviewed the *Guidelines*--the first two pages are queries for Worship & Ministry to consider, the last pages are an agreement form between Bellingham Friends Meeting, as represented by Worship and Ministry committee and a person accused/charged/convicted of a sex offense who wishes to attend Bellingham Friends Meeting.

A Friend expressed appreciation for the hard work of discernment by SQC Committee and the queries they have shared. She is concerned the language of a prior document which triggered offense before it was even brought to or approved by MFWFB triggered some Friends to leave Meeting. She asks that we choose our words carefully, mindful of the impact they may have.

Another Friend spoke to the fact that other Friends have also been triggered by circumstances in Meeting and have stopped attending. We're not yet ready to move forward.

A spokesperson from the SQC Committee asked if we are able to approve the first two pages of *Guidelines* and continue to season the second section, which is the actual agreement.

A Friend spoke to her concern that this document is heavily weighted "toward the side of the offender" -- it is in essence a contract which will allow an offender to return to Meeting. This is traumatizing to this Friend and likely others in our community.

It appears that the most recent version of the *Guidelines* was not distributed. SQC will be sure that version is distributed in advance of MFWFB in February.

A spokesperson from the SQC Committee asked for suggestions that SQC may consider prior to bringing back a revised document.

A Friend spoke to the fact that just reading this document triggers her, having experienced sexual abuse as a child, and stating that if a convicted Level 2 or 3 sex offender is permitted to attend Bellingham Friends Meeting, it is unlikely she will be able to attend--it will no longer be a safe place for her and she hopes to never be put in that position.

A spokesperson from the SQC Committee points out that the Listening Groups are designed to provide opportunities for Friends to share and listen deeply with one another, and perhaps find healing.

A Friend requests that “or” be placed between “accused,” “charged,” “convicted” in the document.

A Friend asks that we include our understanding that everyone is a child of God.

A Friend spoke movingly of the Light she sees in the Guidelines document, and referenced Restorative Justice principles, asking the ad hoc committee to consider if they might be included in the document to demonstrate how Meeting will be supporting those who have been impacted by any sexual trauma.

A Friend asked how we would know if an accused, or charged, or convicted sex offender is attending our Meeting.

E. Finance: The Clerk presented the Statement of Financial Position 2019 and Statement of Financial Activity 2019.

Our Scott Trade account was created to receive donated stocks but/and Friends Fiduciary affords the same option. Friends approved closing the Scott Trade account and transferring the funds to our Friends Fiduciary account.

Making regular donations to BFM is easy to do with a WECU account and only slightly more complicated with another account. The Treasurer will provide a tutorial for anyone interested, whether or not they have a WECU account.

A Friend asked for clarity about whether our funds at Friends Fiduciary are in their Green Fund; they are.

F. Meetinghouse

The Committee Co-Clerk spoke to the many ways The Majestic meets our needs as we defined in our Rental Checklist some years ago, far beyond Explorations Academy. There *are* electrical outlets in the area where our weekly coffee/tea service would be set up.

There is new information, a response from the owner's representative, related to our rent proposal: We proposed starting at \$800 and moving to \$1,000 sometime in the first year. His counterproposal is starting at \$1,000 and moving to \$1,200 sometime in the first year. The Committee Clerk shared details about this from her report.

a. The first year would begin in June, if we were to give notice to Explorations this month that we'd be leaving after May (paying rent for four more months.) So, for the calendar year 2020, our increased rent would be somewhere between \$1,400 additional (our proposal) and up to \$2,800 (his counterproposal). There would also be some expenses associated with building shelves, etc., in the new space. We guesstimate those at about \$500-\$600. Total to raise for this year: \$1,900 and \$3,400. (If there are 30 regular attenders at Meeting, the larger figure would amount to an average increase of about \$100 per person for the year this year; some could likely afford to give more, others less.)

b. For 2021, if we went from \$1,000 to \$1,200 that year (again changing in June), we'd need to plan on raising an additional \$6,200 over what we now spend.

4. Would we be willing to risk some portion of our Temporarily Reserved Meetinghouse Fund to cover shortfalls?

5. Would we be willing to reduce our donations out?

The Committee Co-Clerk pointed out that it's rare to find a place that has room for 40-50 people, room for a children's program, storage for all our things, a desirable location, including the opportunity for weeklong visibility, and all the other strengths this location affords.

What resources are available in our community? She asks if we want to run a one-month capital campaign to seek:

a. Increased monthly donation commitments?

b. One-time lump-sum outright donations?

c. Conditional lump-sum donations, as a "stopgap" against insufficient monthly donations?

d. Calculate likely income from other fundraising sources? Community auction/sale; bake sales; passing the hat after worship; car washes, child care, etc.

A Friend asked if the owner is ok with our suggested plans for storage: Yes-- we were offered exclusive use of two locking closets

A Friend shared a story of scarcity and abundance. She affirmed her belief that we will figure out how to make The Majestic work, adding “we cannot stay in this dungeon any longer!”

The other congregation would use the downstairs space 8am-10am and be finished cleaning up at /close to 1030a. Our Meeting for Worship would then start at 1030am or 11am.

Since the other congregation will not make a decision for six months, so right now, the owner’s preference is likely a one-year lease or less.

A Friend asked what rent amount is actually going to happen, Our liaison with the Majestic replied that it would be \$1000 ideally rising to \$1200 by the end of the first year, and more if we grow and are able to pay more. Right now, conditions are fluid, given our lack of clarity, as well as the unknowns for the owner related to the other congregation.

The owner wants to accommodate us as best he can. And we have been as transparent with him as possible.

A Friend asked how we feel about holding our 2020 donations with the exception of Whatcom Peace & Justice until the end of the year, and then make contributions commensurate with our receipts. Currently the Treasurer states that she pays one quarter of our donations each quarter.

The Co-Clerk asked that we stop and consider our process--he observed that there are many moving parts. One is the finance issue--how much would our rent be and how do we afford it? Do we feel good and strongly enough about The Majestic that we want to pay more money for rent? (\$1200 would mean doubling our rent.) We first need to make a decision about whether we feel strongly enough about moving to the Majestic to consider financial possibilities.

A Friend raised a concern about having only a one-year lease--which gives the owner the opportunity to make a large rent increase, leaving us with having to find another location and moving twice in one year.

A Friend spoke to his concern about the uncertainty of the financial situation related to The Majestic. He is heartened by some of the suggestions about

how we might raise the necessary funds. He would like more than a one-year lease.

How do we get from here (noting that no one has spoken against moving to the Majestic) to there? He proposed that a small group be charged with developing a definitive financial plan which will protect us from not having a lease, extending ourselves beyond our means, needing to move precipitously.

Friends approve moving forward with consideration of The Majestic and ask that a small group be tasked with putting together a proposal (see below) and begin implementation as long as it's consistent with what Meetinghouse Committee has proposed in their report today (see italicized copy above).

The following people will make up the ad hoc committee-- Virginia, Joanne, Larry, Allan S., Susan, J. Lee, and Allen S. (via phone).

They are tasked with:

- Developing a comprehensive plan for how to close the financial gap in order to make renting the Majestic financially feasible internally within our community.
- Exploring what agreement we can reach with the owner related to the terms of agreement (longer term [than 1 year] lease, lower initial rent and smaller increase/s), ie \$900 vs \$1000/month to start, 3-year lease rather than 1, and being clear with the owner's rep that we are open to increasing our rent if our financial position improves. Desired start of lease is 6/1/20.

Friends approved.

The Treasurer points out that it is possible to access some portion of our Temporarily Reserved Meetinghouse Fund to cover shortfalls. We ask that the Treasurer hold off on allocating the distribution of Unrestricted Assets for 2019 until after MFWFB in February.

It will be possible to hold a called Meeting prior to Feb Meeting for Worship for Business to approve moving if we are satisfied with the outcome of the work of this ad hoc committee, which will enable us to give notice to Explorations and start the "4-month advance notice prior to moving" clock going.

A Friend asks that the ad hoc committee prioritize using some portion of our Temporarily Reserved Meetinghouse Fund to cover shortfalls over reducing our donations/outreach budget.

G. Nominating

Meetinghouse Committee Member/Meetinghouse Scout: Allan Richardson. Allan Richardson is willing to complete the current term of Maddie Solenberger, (who resigned when she moved to Olympia), and to stay on the committee for an additional year. [If accepted for seasoning this month and approved next month, his service would begin next month after MfWfB and continue through the spring of 2022. We ask Friends to accept this nomination for seasoning.

Accepted

H. Inviting Sharon and Don back:

The Clerk articulated his sense that we are not in unity on this matter. A Friend stated that she believes we first need to hold our Deep Listening Groups. The Clerk expressed heaviness in his heart in our not yet having unity.

I. Worship and Ministry:

Excelsior Group Camp east of Glacier is reserved for a camping retreat Aug 22-23, 2020. Mark your calendars.

Snow policy--

1. The decision to cancel or not will be made by the person signed up to be the Key and Meeting Setup person for that day or, if s/he is unable to get to Explorations Academy, by another Key Holder recruited by him or her. The decision should be made not later than 9:00 am, based on weather and driving conditions in downtown Bellingham and the weather forecast for the rest of the day.

2. The person who makes a decision to cancel meeting is responsible for posting signs regarding the cancellation on all three doors that we use for entering the building, and also for advising the E-News Editor and Website Manager as quickly as possible, but not later than 9:15 am.

3. The same person is also responsible for phoning all Friends in our directory who either have no email account or who have advised the Lead Key Holder that they have no email access on Sunday morning.

4. The E-News Editor will send out a “special edition” of the BFM E-News concerning the cancellation to everyone on the E-News distribution list as quickly as possible, but not later than 9:30 am.

5. Friends who normally receive the E-News should check their email (or the BFM website, see 6 below) between 9:30 and 9:45 am for possible news of a cancellation if there is snow falling or on the ground or in the immediate weather forecast, or if there is some other severe condition such as hail, very high winds, etc. Any Friends who don't currently receive the E-News are urged to add themselves to the distribution list. To do so, phone Don Goldstein at 360-671-1395.

6. The Website Manager will post a notice of the cancellation on the main landing page of our website (bellinghamfriends.org) as soon as possible but not later than 9:30 am, and will remove the notice not later than Monday morning.

Meeting closed with worship at 230pm

Respectfully submitted:

Mary Ann Percy, Recording Clerk