

Bellingham Friends Meeting  
July 12, 2015  
Meeting for Business

**Present:** Allen Stockbridge, Aurora Fox, Dorothy DeFemery, Betty McMahon, Wendy Goldstein, Don Goldstein, Mary Ann Percy, Carole Teshima, Lorina Hall, Karen Steen, Joanne Cowan, Leanne Troung, Susan Richardson, Dusty Andersen, Larry Thompson, Rob Dillard, Dorrie Jordan (Clerk), Judy Hopkinson (recording clerk). Coming in late (after participating in Pride parade): Mimi Freshley, Virginia Herrick.

**2015.07.01** Minutes for last month were approved with provision that the amendment drafted by Virginia Herrick regarding the proposal for a \$200 contribution to Port Townsend Meeting be added.

**2015.07.02** Susan Richardson read a letter from Lopez Island Preparative Meeting indicating their intention to become a Monthly Meeting and asking our approval. Susan offered to share the full application and the Lopez Meeting's brochure for new attenders with any who would like to see them. **Approval of the application for Monthly Meeting status for Lopez Island Preparative Meeting accepted for seasoning.**

**2015.07.03 Finance Committee** - Joanne C. reviewed the Financial Activity report (attached). Larry Thompson reviewed the Finance Committee Report (attached). The committee recommended that , should the meeting agree to make a \$200 donation to Port Townsend Meeting to help them build a kitchen, the money be taken from general funds.

In response to a question from a Friend, Larry T. explained that the Finance Committee is examining various financial scenarios that would be involved in the purchase of the Bell Towers Studios, and establishing ongoing communications with the meeting house scouts.

**2015.07.04 Ministry and Counsel** report (attached) was read by Mary Ann Percy. Two action items were presented.

**2015.07.04.1** The meeting agreed to cancel the MfWfB normally scheduled for the 2nd Sun in Sept and to hold Aug 30 as a potential date for a called business meeting if needed.

**2015.07.04.2** Jessica Bee's application for membership was accepted for seasoning.

**2015.07.05 Nominating Committee:** Wendy Goldstein's nomination for membership in the Outreach and Welcoming Group was accepted for seasoning.

**2015.07.06 Library:** Carole Teshima reported on plans for managing the library and culling the collection. She will write up an article for the E-News including a link to the the Moscow Meeting library policy which could be used as a basis for a B'ham Quaker library policy. In the meantime the Carole stated that there is no more room for donations and asked that Friends stop bringing books until further notice.

**Discussion:** A Friend suggested posting books under consideration for donation online so that Friends could weigh in. Several Friends discussed various options for disposing of excess books and purchasing others.

**2015.07.07 Consideration of the proposal to purchase the Bell Towers Studios as a meeting house for Bellingham Friends.** The building is located at the intersection of Champion St., Ellis St., and N. Garden St. Allen Stockbridge presented an overview of the building and layout, potential income, and likely expenses including installation of an elevator. He indicated that much more research will be needed to evaluate the suitability and feasibility of the purchase as well as the types of building alterations that might be needed.

**Discussion:**

Friends raised questions about

- contingency offers
- reason the owner was selling
- durability of dance floor
- potential for resident friend doing property management for free or reduced rent
- whether or not current owners would be willing to move right away if we asked him to do so. (Ans: yes, he could move - his offer to stay was in order to make it easier for us to buy it.)

Allen said the Whatcom Peace and Justice Center would be very interested in renting from us.

Larry T reminded us that we would be looking at financial issues without assuming that all offices currently rented would continue to be rented.

Larry T. commented that we would probably pay B&O taxes for any business rentals that are not part of our religious commitments. Federal income tax is paid on profit - but B&O tax is paid on revenue.

Dorothy D. provided a long list of items to be explored including:

- costs for inspections
- electrical wiring - there are 3 types of wiring currently and any work would require all of it coming up to code
- lack of insulation in roof
- inability to open most of the windows
- handicap accessibility conversion in washrooms
- safety of wall mounted heaters in some rooms
- Unknown sound level in "worship room" when the AC and forced air are on.
- Whether the reported capacity for 100 in the main room is consistent with fire department assessment.
- Need for clarification of Bellingham parking code requirements

Dorothy had more items to explore and will share her list with the ad hoc meeting house committee being set up today (see below).

In response to a Friend's question, Allen S. reported that no offers have been made on the building yet. However, a couple of buyers have shown interest, and the owner has told them he would let them know if an offer comes in. We could put a contingent offer on the board with a fully refundable deposit of earnest money (~\$25,000), to and insure that the building would not be sold until we had time to research it further if we choose to do so.

Larry T. suggested that the meeting needs to decide

- 1) whether the building is suitable for us
- 2) whether the finances could work and
- 3) whether we are ready to take on going in to the rental business.

Then we might put in a contingency offer and study it further

Mimi F. noted that, as clerk of nominating committee, she needs to remind us that we need to think long term about our own human resources for management of this project. It is already extremely difficult to fill the committees we have. Each of us needs to consider how much more we would be willing to take on to cover the needs for building management. Even if we hire someone to manage the property, we would still need an oversight committee.

Karen S. expressed concerns about purchasing this property in what might be a reflat real estate bubble. She also commented that allowing more time for Meeting clarity would still allow Meeting to place a back-up offer for the property if the seller accepted an outside offer sooner, and a back-up offer can be a strong position for property as the Bell Tower Studios.

After a period of silent worship, individual Friends:

- Shared a vision for a “Quaker Center” in Bellingham.
- Asked whether taking on a meeting house will feed our spiritual growth.
- Noted that if we take on the responsibility of being landlord, we would also need to take on the responsibility of finding tenants that are part of our vision as a spiritual community.
- Shared concerns about the property not being ideal for children - largely because of the lack of outdoor space.
- Asked how much money we would pay for inspections. (Allen responded that estimates for work would be free, but we might pay \$1000 for the inspections.)
- Shared a heartfelt desire for an opportunity for us to leave a legacy for the Quaker community - whether or not we make any money on the building.
- Allen S. shared that, in addition to Whatcom Peace and Justice Center, a non-profit Montessori school that would serve low income students has expressed interest in renting space from us should we purchase the building.

**2015.07.07.1 The following minute was approved:**

**Meeting agreed to form an ad hoc committee to draw up and make a contingent offer for the Bell Towers Studios including the following terms:**

- 1) Offering price will be no more than \$595,000**
  - 2) Earnest money offered will be no more than \$25,000**
  - 3) Asks for 120 day contingency (note: we would expect a minimum of 90 days)**
- to affirm that:**

- **Inspection report meet our needs.**
- **Financial feasibility is determined**
- **A Sense of the Meeting to move forward with the purchase of the property is reached.**

**After preparing and negotiating this contingent contract, this committee will continue work on evaluating details of a possible purchase and make a recommendation to meeting regarding purchase.**

**2015.07.07.2 The meeting agreed that Allen Stockbridge is authorized to act as our real estate agent in this matter.**

Allen stated that he would donate any fees he is able to negotiate from the seller to the meeting to reduce our effective purchase price. The meeting expressed thanks to him for this kind offer.

**2015.07.07.3 Initial members of the committee will be: Larry Thompson, Joanne Cowan, Allen Stockbridge, and Dorothy DeFemery . Larry Thompson will be convener.**

Dorrie will ask Susan Richardson if she will join the committee.

**2015.07.08 The Meeting approved making a \$200 donation to Port Townsend Friends Meeting for the purpose of building a kitchen.**

Meeting adjourned following a period of silent worship.