

St. George's Church Vestry Meeting Minutes

April 21, 2022

Present: Sean Albert, Jon Ewbank, Carol Gaige, Meg Hughes, Sandee Hughes, David Kennison, Debbie Lambeth, Lynn Paska, Paul Smigelski, Rich Unger, Jeff Wengrovius

Absent: None

Senior Warden David Kennison convened the meeting on Zoom at 6:35 p.m., beginning with a prayer. Note: Carol Gaige has been welcomed back to the Vestry after having reconsidered and rescinded a resignation she tendered earlier this month.

Lynn Paska moved to accept the March minutes; Sandee Hughes seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

Senior Warden's Report

New Cleaners

David Kennison has spoken with Debbie Rickson and her husband Fred of Helping Hands Cleaning. They specialize in cleaning churches, and Fr. Gabriel Morrow, rector of Calvary Church in Burnt Hills, gave David a very positive review of their work. David will arrange to have them come in next week to look at our buildings and meet with a few representatives of Vestry.

Parish Register Records

With Easter behind us, David intends to get the parish registers updated for baptisms, confirmations, marriages, funerals, burials. Minimal entries exist for the past five years.

Safe Church

"Safe Church," a program addressing sexual misconduct and the protection of children and vulnerable adults, is a follow-up to "Safeguarding God's Children," a course that many at St. George's took in 2011. The Episcopal Church adopted Safe Church policies in 2018 and now each diocese will adopt the policies. Policies must then be adopted on a parish-by-parish basis.

St. George's will need a formal statement by parish leaders and employees that they will adhere to these policies. Fr. Michael Gorchov, rector of St. Paul's, Troy, is willing to do on-site training for our Vestry, staff, and any others who interact with children or vulnerable adults.

Wi-Fi in the Great Hall

Parishioners and the Stockade Association alike have voiced an interest in having wi-fi installed in the first floor of the Great Hall. It can be done using existing overhead coaxial line. David has developed a rough estimate of \$850 in necessary materials. He would do the work. (Note, the Video Ministry account has \$820 remaining, which was originally earmarked for an additional camera, but isn't enough to pay for one.) Jeff Wengrovius was not in favor of the expenditure, but others reasoned that wi-fi would be helpful to have for our own meeting and livestreaming needs, as well as extending access to Dr. Taylor.

Upcoming Services and Supply Clergy

- Committal, Jack Ericson, April 23—David Kennison
- St. George's Day, May 1—Fr. Richard Lehmann, Pipe Band is scheduled
- Choral Evensong, May 15—Benefit for YWCA
- Ascension Day, May 26—Thursday (guest clergy?)
- Pentecost, June 5—Fr. Richard Lehmann
- Trinity Sunday, June 12—Fr. Richard Lehmann
- Corpus Christi, June 19—Fr. Richard Lehmann

Meeting With Realtor Regarding Great Hall Rental

On April 20, David met with Karen Zalewski-Wildzunas, a commercial real estate broker with Blake Realtors. She is a good friend of Sue Hartz, who now works with her, and is active in civic affairs.

Ms. Zalewski-Wildzunas toured the Great Hall and other church facilities. Her recommendations included:

- Rent out the classrooms. We might need to install radiator covers and three-prong electric outlets, among other modifications. The lease could bring in as much as \$30K a year.
- Keep the parish hall, kitchen, and Shaw Lounge for church functions.
- Keep the office and choir room as is.

Carol Gaige raised the issue of the insurance implications of having a tenant in the building. There are also concerns whether having a for-profit company at St. George's would impact our protected taxation status. According to Rich Unger, these questions arose when we had the home school group renting space, and it was determined that

they must carry their own insurance, and as long as any earnings on our rental property are then used in our not-for-profit endeavors, we will not need to pay any taxes on that income.

Ms. Zalewski-Wildzunas has requested a floor plan and measurements of the classrooms. Jon Ewbank stated that he is willing to draw up such a document. Rich agreed to help, perhaps Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday of the coming week.

Endowment Legacy

David has begun an effort to solicit legacy endowment contributions from parishioners, and hopes to arrange for an estate planning attorney do a presentation to the parish in October.

Junior Warden's Report

Jon Ewbank did not have a report.

Treasurer's Report

Jeff Wengrovius provided the following year-to-date statistics:

- 30 percent of 2022 behind us.
- 47 percent of anticipated pledge income for the year has been received.
- 30 percent of budgeted expenses for the year have been spent.

Pledge income is over budget due to early giving. There have been few unanticipated expenses and electricity costs are down now that the sexton's apartment is vacant. Gas costs are way over budget, and waste disposal costs are over budget due to cleanup activities.

Jeff initiated a motion to amend our 2022 gas expense budget line from \$11,000 to \$20,000. Paul Smigelski commented that a budget amendment isn't as important as just knowing where the additional money might come from. Jeff withdrew the motion but commented that he hopes all on Vestry understand that an unforeseen, steep rise in gas prices will result in a sizeable budget line overrun. David pointed out that the lack of a

rector (a situation that will likely continue for another year at least) is saving the parish money, and that the overall budgetary shortfall may not be as catastrophic as Jeff fears.

Community Liaison Report

Rich Unger noted that the Stockade Spy coming out soon will have an article about our St. George's Day activities.

Rich was asked about his plan to move the sexton's refrigerator down to the Great Hall kitchen. He has it ready to move and received offers of help from Jon and David. Perhaps that can be accomplished on the same day next week that these gentlemen undertake to draft a floor plan of the upstairs classrooms.

Garden Ministry/Book Club/Great Hall Cleaning

Meg Hughes inquired about clearing away the Yellow Submarine parade float parked adjacent to the shed. It's unsightly and taking up space that could be used for storage of mulch and/or filled lawn bags. She was informed that Rick Forshaw should be consulted about the submarine structure, and Mike Thiessen about the trailer itself.

Meg noted that Garden Ministry work sessions are underway, and Book Club is proceeding per the schedule already announced.

Great Hall Cleanup

The Great Hall still needs work, especially if we mean to clear the rooms for leasing. Meg was advised that any items that we don't want to discard can be stored in the basement of Cranmer Hall.

Hospitality Committee

Sandee Hughes sincerely thanked those church members who provided food for the Easter Vigil. She has a concern that the Hospitality budget, which totals only \$500 for 2022, will not cover any actual food costs this year, in light of the fact that coffee hour basics generally run between \$365 and \$750 per year, and Brian Taylor was unexpectedly obliged to use \$150 of that to replace broken coffee pots.

Sandee is hoping to resolve the issue before we get a new rector. It isn't sustainable to continue relying on the generosity of just a few parishioners to supply food for all events. Examples of occasions when the church should be footing the bill for meal basics

include: Annual Meeting, St. George's Day, Back to Church Sunday, and the Greening of the Church. It is true that individuals happily contribute desserts and side dishes, but it isn't fair to repeatedly ask the same individuals to arrange churchwide events without funding. Christmas Eve and Easter Eve receptions, and the recent pancake breakfast have been covered entirely by parishioners' donations.

We have a St. George's Day budget line (item 5115) of \$1,100, but that is not expected to cover even the payments to the bagpipers, police parade escort, and the St. Andrews Society. Jeff reminded Vestry that St. George's contributions will be sought. Our pledge boxes contain a special envelope for that purpose, and we hope to see generous support of this popular event.

There is also a "special events" budget line (item 5213) that was budgeted at \$1,000 in 2022. Perhaps that can be tapped as needed to support the cost of these meals.

Communications

Lynn Paska commented that pictures are up on the website for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday, the birthday celebration for Mother Lisa Schoonmaker and James Smigelski, and our Annunciation Mass with Fr. Pettigrew.

June 3 is the next deadline for the *Georgian Report*.

Archives

Sean Albert and Bob Paska have sorted through a quantity old financial records and set aside some items of possible importance. Jeff offered to help Sean review some remaining financial records one Saturday. He stated that our obligation as a church is to retain financial records for at least seven years.

Sean proposes that financial records nearing the end of their statutory retention period be stored on the ground floor, for ease of removal.

Outreach

Paul Smigelski has been working with Alice Polumbo and Brian Taylor on a few initiatives.

Brian has proposed an evening meeting (to be called "Outreach on Tap" as the agenda will include Dutch-treat refreshments at a local establishment TBA) on April 28. The goal is to solicit and develop outreach ideas from interested Georgians.

On Sunday, May 15, a Choral Evensong will be held at 5 p.m. This special event will highlight the work of the YWCA in Schenectady and half of the offering from the evening will go towards that organization.

Alice Polumbo has reached out to St Joseph's Place, a hospitality center nearby the food pantry, about St. George's donating some baked goods for their guests. The current plan is to solicit baked brownies (which should be individually wrapped) from Georgians on either Sunday, May 15, or Sunday, May 22.

Support for the SiCM food pantry is ongoing (709 pounds to date). We anticipate getting a call from SiCM sometime in May regarding St. George's participation in the annual SiCM summer lunch program. We have customarily taken a one-week assignment at Wallingford Park. This entails coaxing Georgians to fill the two volunteers/per day requirement.

Pastoral Care

Among parishioners and friends of St. George's that have been visited by Jim Wingate and Ann Duff recently are: Aileen Caruso Smith, Carole Civale, Helen Peterson, and Charlie Stamm. All received Communion and palms brought from church. They tried to visit Homer Kerr but he was not up for a visit. They hope to make contact with Stella Schultz in the next few days.

New Business

Improved Process for Memorial Donations

A troubling oversight of two donations for Easter flowers in memory of loved ones led to a call for a review of this process. We need a system that is clear and simple to follow. What we have now includes manual handoffs (from counters to office administrative assistant to person preparing the bulletin) and it failed us on Easter. A revised "In Memory" list will be distributed in church this coming Sunday. Our treasurer and senior warden agree to devise a new process for the future, and Brian Taylor has also promised to assist in any way that he can.

Diocesan Convention Delegates

This year's Diocesan Convention will be June 3-5, and our delegate slate is due May 16. David says that Bob Paska is interested in attending along with him and his wife Anne. He made a motion that this slate be approved. Carol seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Cathedral Capital Campaign

Jon Ewbank reported that St. George's and other churches in the diocese will shortly be canvassed for a one-time pledge to the Cathedral of Albany's "For All the Saints" capital campaign. Jon commented that the Cathedral has many pressing, unfunded repair needs, and he urged us to be generous as a church, and as individuals as we are able.

Personnel Subcommittee

Meg and perhaps others have inquired of David as to whether it would be helpful to him to have a subcommittee designed to address employee issues, e.g., job descriptions and annual reviews. David stated that Vestry doesn't ordinarily get involved in staff relations, although our input is greatly appreciated. He says that job descriptions exist, but they need to be reviewed and updated or finalized. We know that employees haven't received regular appraisals in many years, and all acknowledge the importance of getting that process back on track.

A general discussion about the lack of office hours at St. George's ensued. Our former office administrative assistant was reliably at her desk 20 hours a week. Our current administrative assistant is contracted to be present on campus for 10 hours a week, but we aren't certain whether he is meeting that goal, as no records are kept and a lot of his duties are handled from home. Some see this as a big problem and would like to initiate a steady schedule of hours (even if only for 10 hours a week) that can be prominently posted on a sign and on our website. It's important to hone our public-facing capabilities as we work to grow the church and attract a new rector.

Carol offered to volunteer for a few hours a week to help with office tasks and be a welcoming presence. She has some experience with this type of work, as she previously volunteered at St. Gabriel's Church office.

Old Business

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee (Jon Pearson, Ralph Polumbo, and Paul Smigelski) met April 19 and agreed to request engagement letters from three, third-party auditing entities:

1. Marvin and Company, P.C.
2. Peterson, Campoli & Associates CPAs, PLLC
3. One additional entity for which Jon is retrieving a reference.

The scope of the letters will include timeframe, cost, and the scope of services to be rendered. The anticipated cost for services is between \$5,000 and \$10,000.

The committee had reviewed five documents provided by Bob Paska, Jon Pearson, and Sean Albert. Two of the documents were prior audit findings from a 2001 audit by Marvin & Company. There were also two manuals, and a list of balance sheets, transaction records, and miscellaneous financial statements and documents likely to be reviewed by the auditors.

The audit committee requests that updated versions of the following financial documents be prepared in anticipation of the needs of the auditors:

1. St. George's 2022 budget
2. St. George's 2021 year-end financial report
3. Recent monthly financial report
4. Recent monthly transaction sheet for the checking account and credit cards

Adjournment and Next Meeting:

Sandee moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 p.m. and Paul seconded the motion. Our next meetings are as follows:

Rector Search—Thursday, May 5

Regular Vestry—Thursday, May 19

Both will be in-person meetings (barring unforeseen circumstances) at 6:30 p.m. in Cranmer Hall.

Respectfully,

Meg Hughes, Vestry Clerk