

St. George's Church Vestry Meeting Minutes

May 19, 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

Guest: Jon Pearson

Senior Warden David Kennison convened the meeting at 6:33 p.m. in the Shaw Lounge, beginning with a prayer, after which he entreated all present to maintain a high level of courtesy for their fellow Vestry.

Carol Gaige moved to accept the April minutes; Deborah Lambeth seconded the motion; all voted in favor.

Audit Subcommittee Report

Jon Pearson appeared as a Vestry guest to give an update on the activities of the Audit Subcommittee. Along with Ralph Polumbo and Paul Smigelski, Jon has considered four local accounting firms. Based on telephone interviews, the team quickly narrowed the field down to two:

- Marvin & Company Certified Public Accountants and Consultants
- Cusack & Company CPAs, LLC

After learning more about the types of audits available, the committee then resolved to arrange for an "Agreed Upon Procedures" type audit. This will allow them to work with the chosen CPA to direct areas of focus. It will also cost less than a full audit.

The committee would like the chosen auditor to look at our checking account and credit card system controls. On the income side, there are pledge payment processes to be examined. Other areas of interest would include the payroll process, pension payments, and our church's bookkeeping practices used day-to-day. They would also like to have a review of endowment fund procedures and general computer security.

Based on their research, the Audit Committee recommends Jason Marra of Cusack & Company CPAs, LLC. They are a well-established, good-sized firm that has had experience auditing other churches. Their fee estimate is \$2,500 - \$5,000.

Paul made a motion that we engage Cusack & Company for the audit. Lynn Paska seconded the motion. Ten Vestry members voted aye. Jeff Wengrovius, treasurer, abstained from voting.

The scheduling of the audit is not yet known, but could commence as early as June. Jon says it can be expected to take about four days of having the auditor in-house, and Jeff and Bob McCloskey should arrange to be present. Jeff stated that June was perhaps too soon, as he wants to assure that he and Bob know what to expect so they can be fully prepared. With summer vacations to be considered as well, it may be awhile until the timing is settled. Paul will keep Vestry apprised.

Senior Warden's Report

New Cleaners

On April 25, David and four others from Vestry (Santee Hughes, Carol Gaige, Rich Unger, and Jeff Wengrovius) interviewed Debbie Rickson and Fred Ledger of Helping Hands Cleaning and reviewed with them the cleaning needs for our church, Great Hall, and Cranmer building. The husband and wife team quoted \$20 an hour (the same hourly rate we had been paying Liz Catala). They estimate needing 15 hours a week to complete the agreed-upon tasks. Not every chore needs to be done each week. David will break the work down into weekly/semi-weekly/monthly tasks, and proceed with contracting with Helping Hands.

Supply Clergy

Our supply priest Fr. Richard Lehmann has been quite ill since Sunday, May 8. He is going to need surgery and cannot be expected to return to the altar before mid-August at the earliest.

Mtr. Lisa Schoonmaker celebrated the Mass on May 8. Unfortunately, she is not licensed in the Albany Diocese so she won't be able to replace Fr. Lehmann as our usual supply priest. David has been in touch with Diocesan Transition Minister Mtr. Elizabeth Papazoglakis about the situation. Even if Mtr. Lisa were to become licensed in the diocese, Mtr. Elizabeth warned, we should not count on having her as a steady supply priest. Because of a general shortage of supply clergy, the Standing Committee of the

diocese wants to break up long-term relationships such as we have had with Fr. Lehmann. No ruling has been instituted yet, but if the Standing Committee succeeds, we might have to limit any single supply priest to serving twice monthly, with the remaining Sundays to be handled by a different supply priest or featuring Morning Prayer.

In lieu of relying on supply clergy, we have options such as installing an interim rector or hiring Fr. Lehmann as an associate priest. David reviewed the pros and cons of each scenario in an executive session. Vestry understands the difficulties David is facing in booking celebrants for Sunday worship. Currently, our tentative schedule for the next several weeks is as follows:

- May 22—Morning Prayer
- May 26, Ascension Day—Fr. Thomas Pettigrew (including baptism of Tucker Devis Ceci)
- May 29—Morning Prayer
- June 5, Pentecost—Morning Prayer
- June 12, Trinity Sunday—Unknown
- June 19, Corpus Christi—Unknown

Diocese News

Diocesan Convention will take place June 3-5. David and Anne Kennison and Bob Paska will attend.

David announced that Dr. Brian Taylor, our music director, has been nominated by Dean Leander Harding to sit on the Cathedral's Great Chapter. David will second his nomination at the Convention.

Rental of Great Hall Space

Rich Unger, in response to a suggestion that we lease rooms in the Great Hall to local businesses, used a tape measure to determine that the building has nearly 3,000 sq ft of rentable space on the second floor (not including stairwells, bathrooms, hallways, and the chapel). David will get this information to Karen Zalewski-Wildzunas, a commercial realtor, to gauge her client's interest.

Refrigerator Status

Rich and David have been studying the matter of whether to move the residential-type refrigerator from the vacant sexton's apartment to the Great Hall kitchen for use. The

thinking was that it would be cheaper to run than the large commercial unit in the kitchen. The conclusion of their investigation was that we could theoretically save between \$9 and \$10 a month, but that there would be intervals where we would still need to run the large commercial refrigerator in any case. Vestry agreed that it wasn't worth moving the smaller refrigerator. Rich noted that one other strategy to support optimum use of the large fridge would be to store bottled water or other commonly used staples in there. The unit is designed to work most efficiently when three-fourths full.

Junior Warden's Report

Jon Ewbank's report consisted of a lengthy list of pending repairs and maintenance projects. He has more free time now that tax season is over, and will endeavor to get started on some of the work.

Treasurer's Report

Jeff Wengrovius offered his usual overview and remains cautiously optimistic about keeping the budget balanced. However, he strongly recommends that we reinstitute the practice of passing the collection plate. On St. George's Day this was successful in garnering contributions from visitors.

In response to concerns over the adequacy of the Hospitality budget, Jeff and Bob McCloskey completed a review of hospitality income and expenses for the five years prior to the Covid lockdown. They found that coffee hour expenses (no food, just coffee and creamer, etc.) were \$160 a year, which was offset by about \$100 a year in donations.

For Hospitality (luncheons, dinners, etc.) expenditures were \$253 a year, and there was no income related to that budget line. Jeff acknowledged that inflation has changed the picture somewhat, but asserted that the 2022 hospitality budget of \$500 was a good faith effort to keep expenditures in line with past history. Clearly, church-sponsored meals for the past several years have been heavily supplemented by personal donations of food.

Jeff also alerted Vestry to some improvements that have been made in the financial spreadsheet:

- Credit card log added. All credit card charges are linked to the budget expense line items via the comment box.
- Ministry net budget section added. Shows current budget status for gardens, hospitality, and altar guild inclusive of contributed income.
- New section being prepared to show monthly reconciliation of expenses, income versus our TrustCo bank balance.

Community Liaison Report

Rich Unger's report listed three Stockade Neighborhood Association on the books between now and autumn:

- Stockade Neighborhood Sidewalk Sale – June 4
- Annual Stockade Art Show – September 10
- Semi-annual Stockade Walkabout (selected home open houses) – September 24

Garden Ministry/Book Club

Meg Hughes thanked all involved in the demolition and removal of the Yellow Submarine parade float, including David Kennison, Paul Smigelski, Sean Albert, Bob Paska, Jon Pearson, Rich and Suzy Unger, Lisa Schoonmaker, and Bob McCloskey.

Rosemary Pannone is paying the church \$400 for the underlying trailer and will retrieve it this coming Saturday. Garden Ministry will be ordering a truckload of mulch that will be delivered to the newly cleared space.

Book Club

The church book club met May 15 to discuss "Harlem Shuffle" by Colson Whitehead. Our next selection is "The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times" by respected British anthropologist Jane Goodall. Joyce Cockerham selected the title and will lead the discussion on July 17.

Hospitality Committee

Sandee Hughes noted that the brunch menu for St. George's Day was donated by parishioners. She thanked Barb Wengrovius and Meg Hughes for preparing a spiral ham, egg bake casseroles, and homemade biscuits. She also appreciated Kevin Decker's

Coronation Chicken, and vigorous cleanup efforts led by Mother Lisa, as well as Barb and Jeff Wengrovius and many other helping hands.

The next hospitality event will be on June 5, when parishioners will be invited to a coffee hour forum on the rector search. It will also be Pentecost. Sandee and Meg recommend that we serve egg bakes (there are two casseroles leftover from St. George's Day in the freezer) along with homemade shortcake biscuits topped with strawberries and whipped cream. Sandee is also willing to contribute a coffee cake. The only church outlay would be for strawberries and cream for whipping.

Communications

Lynn Paska commented that pictures are up on the website for Easter, St. George's Day, and the May 14 work party to tear down the Yellow Submarine parade float.

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

Archives

Sean Albert had a brief work session with Bob Paska, Debbie Lambeth on May 14 to tidy the Archives Room. They have had trouble opening the windows in the archives room so are looking for a different workspace for summer meetings. The architectural plans still need a permanent home and digitization.

Outreach

Brownies for St. Joseph's Place

Paul Smigelski and Alice Polumbo have been cooperating on an outreach project to furnish St. Joseph's Place with 13 dozen brownies baked by church members. Brownies are due to the Great Hall kitchen on May 22.

YWCA

Alice is also in touch with the YWCA, which would appreciate receiving gently-used bedding and any type of baby supplies. We should consider creating a space in the back of the church to accept such items.

SiCM

Support for the SiCM food pantry is ongoing (880 pounds year to date). Next collection is June 5. We anticipate getting a call from SiCM soon regarding their summer lunch program.

Events on Hold

Brian Taylor's "Outreach on Tap" continues to be on hold and the Choral Evensong scheduled for Sunday, May 15 was cancelled due to Covid exposures. Half of the offering from this service was to go to the YWCA for its continued ministry. We are looking to reschedule the YWCA benefit for the Thanksgiving Evensong.

Next Donation Focus

In addition to the YWCA initiative mentioned above, perhaps the church can repeat a school supply drive with the Boys and Girls Club.

Pastoral Care

Jim Wingate and Ann Duff recently brought communion to Helen Parker, Homer Kerr, Aileen Smith-Caruso, and Charlie Stamm. Jim also planned to get cards out to some parishioners recently diagnosed with Covid, and possibly to visit Fr. Lehmann at Ellis Hospital.

New Business

Hospitality Budget Process

Paul led a discussion regarding an informal review he conducted of unresolved hospitality budget questions. Paul's inquiries and findings were meant to clear up uncertainty by Sandee and other ministry leaders and to help build a framework for future ministry budgeting. All are eager to have a clearcut process that not only serves the current Vestry, but will easily be handed off to those who succeed us in our roles.

There was no vote taken nor any recriminations for anything that has occurred. Paul noted that one possibility for restoring spent revenue to the Hospitality line would be to "back out" the \$86.46 reimbursement to Brian Taylor for coffee pot replacements and apply that expense to a different line item, such as equipment replacement. It is agreed that, going forward, if such reimbursements are requested, any impacted ministry leaders should be consulted before the money is extracted from their line item. We appreciate that, per Jeff's report, going forward we will clearly be able to see where targeted donations (such as when Nancy Angus sponsored the Paschal candle) are

noted, along with the resulting change in net funds available, in the appropriate ministry budget line.

As Rich noted, a line item overrun is not ideal, but if a given line item is inadequate to support the program it is designed to fund, that information is important to have at budget time at the end of the year.

Old Business

All Saints' Capital Campaign

Jon Ewbank gave a brief presentation on the Cathedral of All Saints' capital campaign, "For All the Saints." The campaign is going well but it is vitally important to show support from all corners. St. George's is asked to register a meaningful contribution. Vestry appeared open to the request but we did not finalize a dollar amount.

Future Meetings

This was our second time meeting in person and David asked Vestry to speak their minds about their preference: Are in-person meetings better than Zoom? Nobody spoke against in-person meetings and most comments were favorable. It feels more natural to be in one another's presence instead of looking at faces in boxes on a small screen. It was generally agreed that we can get more done this way, and possibly get along more civilly and with less stress. We agreed that Zoom can be suspended for now, but reinstated if circumstances such as bad weather make it a better alternative.

Upcoming meeting dates:

Rector Search—6:30 p.m., Thursday, June 2

Regular Vestry—6:30 p.m., Thursday, June 16

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at about 8:40 p.m. by unanimous acclamation and with a benediction by our Senior Warden.

Respectfully,

Meg Hughes, Vestry Clerk