

DRAFT MINUTES ARE IN ITALICS, OTHER MINUTES WERE APPROVED DURING THE NOVEMBER MEETING

**Permanent Board Meeting
November 16, 2019
Worcester Friends Meeting**

19-90: Opening Worship

Friends opened with a period of worship. Friends expressed gratitude for the hospitality of Worcester Friends Meeting and the clerk noted that we were meeting on the ancestral land of the Nipmuck people whose name means the freshwater pond place.

19-91: Roll Call

The recording clerk called the roll.

Present: Leslie Manning, Clerk; Hannah Zwirner Forsythe, Recording Clerk; Travis Belcher, Deana Chase, Darcy Drayton, Chris Gant, Rebecca Leuchak, Christopher McCandless, Jean McCandless, Carole Rein, Will Taber, Bill Walkauskas, Tom Vargo, Mary Zwirner

Ex-Officio: Noah Merrill (Secretary); Bob Murray (Finance Clerk); Bruce Neumann (Presiding Clerk); Shearman Taber (Treasurer)

Visitors: Gordon Bugbee, Clarence Burley, Susan Davies, Jeremiah Dickinson, Sophie Forsythe, Eleanor Godway, Debbie Humphries, LouAnne MacDonald, Suzanna Schell, Martha Schwope, John Wojtowicz, Kathlen Wooten

Regrets: Elizabeth Reuthe (Secretary's Supervisor); Fritz Weiss (Former Presiding Clerk); Kim Allen, Peter Bishop, Martin Zwirner Forsythe, Ben Guaraldi, Ian Harrington, Betsy Kantt, Ed Mair, Gina Nortonsmith, Anna Raddochia, John Reuthe, Sara Smith, Elizabeth Szatkowski, Rosemary Zimmermann

19-92: Minutes

The minutes from August 8 and September 28 were brought to the meeting for consideration and approval.

The treasurer raised concerns about minute 19-79 from our September meeting and how it defines the role of our Financial Handbook. Finance Committee will continue discussion about the role of the handbook and whether and how it replaces previous handbooks and minutes. Alternative language was suggested for the minute. The recording clerk will work on this minute and bring it back to Permanent Board's next meeting.

Friends approved all other minutes from August 8 and September 28.

19-93: Travel Minutes

Friends heard a travel minute for Diane Dicranian from Midcoast Meeting and approved by Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting. Friends approved endorsing Diane's travel minute.

Friends heard a travel minute for Debbie Humphries from Hartford Friends Meeting and approved by Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting. Friends approved endorsing Debbie's travel minute.

Friends heard a travel minute for Marion Athearn from Westport Monthly Meeting and approved by Sandwich Quarterly Meeting. Friends approved endorsing Marion's travel minute.

The travel minutes for Diane, Debbie, and Marion are appended.

Several Friends spoke about the need to be thoughtful and deliberate in the discernment of travel minutes. We seek to thoroughly hold the travel minutes that we endorse. We endeavor to return honest feedback when we have concerns and to be consistent in our practice of hearing and endorsing minutes. We also encourage all Friends traveling in the ministry to travel with an elder.

19-94: Presiding Clerk's Report

Bruce Neumann, Presiding Clerk, spoke to his written report which is appended and shared other updates.

Next year's Bible Half Hour speaker will be Cherice Bock of Sierra Cascades Yearly Meeting.

Bruce shared a letter from Kelly Kellum the General Secretary of Friends United Meeting (FUM) to Shearman Taber, Treasurer. This letter acknowledged the section of the Personnel Policy on Sexual Ethics with which our Yearly Meeting has been struggling for many decades, and the end of our withholding policy which was approved at Sessions 2019. We are grateful for Kelly's thoughtful letter and for our continued engagement with FUM as we discern a faithful way forward. We will ask Kelly for his permission to share this letter more widely.

Bruce shared an email from Emma Condori, La Paz, Bolivia-Holiness Yearly Meeting, about the political and social unrest in Bolivia. There is much violence in the country and poor and indigenous people are suffering the most. Emma asked Friends to spread the news of the violence in Bolivia and to hold them in prayer.

19-95: Treasurer's Report

Shearman Taber, Treasurer, spoke to his written report which is appended. We are overjoyed at the news of a budget surplus of \$11,682! Combined with a bequest this summer of \$32,072 for the Equalization Fund, we closed FY2019 with a surplus of \$43,754. Though we are thrilled by this news, we were reminded that we must continue the hard work to sustain budget surpluses.

Every year the Yearly Meeting sends two checks to Friends United Meeting (FUM): one with the budgeted amount for FUM minus the amount that monthly meetings have chosen to withhold per minute 2009-54 and a second with money from a fund intended to bridge that gap. Shearman informed the Board that this year, the check from that fund was large enough to cover the gap.

19-96: Secretary's Report

Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, spoke to his written report which is appended. He highlighted that we met and exceeded our expectations for individual giving in FY2019. We also increased monthly meeting giving by \$10,000 over last year. Friends also paid more in Sessions fees for 2019, more fully covering the cost of our week together, and expenses were lower than projected. This all contributed to our budget surplus for FY2019. This surplus is retained as working capital, substantially increasing the level of our operating reserves.

Noah shared more info about our new website which launched on October 17. Access to our minutes no longer requires a password. Work on the website is ongoing, and suggestions, questions, and comments are always welcome.

Noah brought a request from members of Puente de Amigos Committee about the use of travel funds for Cuban Friends to attend the Friends United Meeting (FUM) triennial. We currently have \$10,000 in the representative travel fund, an increased line item for the year to help send representatives to the triennial in Kenya. The Board was asked whether any remaining money from that fund could be used for Cuban Friends to travel to the triennial after the needs of New England Yearly Meeting representatives are met. Friends approved.

Noah highlighted a need for increased communication between the Yearly Meeting Board of Managers and Permanent Board (PB). Kathy Malin, Clerk of the Board of Managers will be invited to join us for our February meeting.

Racial, Social, and Economic Justice Committee is holding listening session today to hold concerns about our relationship with FUM. There are Friends who feel strongly that their concerns in relation to FUM have not been fully heard by the Yearly Meeting. We hope the results of this listening session will be brought to PB.

19-97: Faith and Practice Revision Committee

Faith and Practice Revision Committee (F&PRC) last received direction from the Permanent Board (PB) eighteen years ago and came to PB seeking further direction for their work. The revision of Faith

and Practice (F&P) is shared work for all Yearly Meeting members to engage with and the committee is concerned that there is fading interest in the revision process. This has meant that the body at Sessions is frequently unprepared to fully engage with the chapters brought to us for consideration and approval. We were asked to consider how our monthly meetings use the interim chapters of F&P and how we engage with draft chapters as they come to monthly meetings for feedback.

The committee has been wrestling with how they function as a committee and the ways that they might be both more efficient and a more accessible committee for others to join. The committee finds the time that they spend together to be vital to their work but understand that the major time commitment of nine meetings per year is a stumbling block for people who might be interested in joining. They are considering meeting in person less frequently and replacing those meetings with video conference calls. They are currently working on reaching out to more meetings in the hopes of increasing the membership of their committee.

It was proposed that PB appoint two people to help F&PRC with this work.

19-98: Budget Priorities Process

Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, presented recommendations from this year's budget priorities process. The full report is appended. Following the process of Coordinating and Advisory seasoning the priorities for Finance Committee's budget discernment, the priorities for this year were determined to be: supporting inclusive leadership (including expanding childcare, peer support and consultation, and equity and inclusion), spiritual formation and religious education, global relationships, and staff development. In addition to the discerned priorities there are a number of other specific items to be considered when developing the budget. Those items are funding for the Secretary's sabbatical, other personnel costs, Sessions plans and changes, and continued rebuilding of our reserves.

Friends had the opportunity to speak to the proposed priorities. We heard concerns about increasing support for political and social activism, the desire to help fund travel for a wider population of Friends instead of just sending the same people to the same places, increasing intervisitation with Friends in other parts of our country, reinvigorating our children's religious education, further supporting our monthly meetings, and "growing our brand" by increasing our visibility in our communities. We also heard a desire to be mindful of the toll our travel takes on our changing climate while we emphasize our relationships with Friends worldwide.

Friends approved these priorities and will be holding Finance Committee in the light as they develop the budget with these priorities in mind.

19-99: Challenging White Supremacy Working Group

Susan Davies, co-clerk of the Challenging White Supremacy Working Group (CWS), updated Friends on the work of CWS. Their report is appended. Their role has frequently been to make themselves available for conversation and consultation with Friends throughout the Yearly Meeting (YM). They see

the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group (NPOF) as a growing edge for the anti-racism work in the YM. As a working group of Permanent Board (PB), CWS sought guidance from PB about what the Board envisions for their continued work. Within this guidance they specifically want feedback about coordinating the missions of Racial, Social, and Economic Justice and NPOF with CWS. There has been tension between these groups that do similar work in the YM and there is healing work to be done to create a safe and trustworthy place for our anti-racism work to continue. CWS also requested that PB affirm its support for convening another multiple-committee gathering of YM racial justice groups and sought guidance about how to coordinate this meeting.

19-100: Reparations Working Group

Suzanna Schell presented a report and recommendations from the Reparations Working Group (RWG); the report is appended. The RWG was formed as a response to a Legacy Gift request for reparations to be made to the Wampanoag people in recognition that the Legacy Gift fund came from the sale of the Friends Home which was on ancestral Wampanoag land. The request to Legacy Gift was considered outside the purview of that committee and it was referred to Permanent Board (PB). PB formed the RWG to consider how the Yearly Meeting (YM) could more fully engage with the issue of reparations to the indigenous peoples of New England and with the YM's minute 2013-52 repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery. The RWG brought the following recommendations to PB:

- *That New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) craft and issue an apology to be widely distributed among Quakers and interfaith organizations as well as any and all tribal councils, bands and leadership in our region, (consistent with decolonizingquakers.org). Several of us would be willing to work on this apology with others.*
- *That all NEYM affiliated meetings and worship groups and other Quaker institutions be invited to create and display land acknowledgments on their premises.*
- *That a certain portion of the Legacy Gift funds be designated as a challenge or matching grant within NEYM and that these monies be used to support additional activities and ministries such as travel for Indigenous Friends, support for the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) fellowship for Native American policy, support for local initiatives under the care of the monthly meetings or Quarters for partnerships with local tribes or allied organizations.*
- *That NEYM contribute to the support of Decolonizing Quakers, and invite that emerging group to New England for a gathering or conference in the near future.*
- *That we encourage Quarters and local meetings to take up the concerns of Native People in their region; and to work as led to engage in opportunities for healing and conciliation, support for tribal sovereignty, language and cultural reclamation, mandated teaching of Native history in public school curricula; efforts to establish Indigenous Peoples Day, and the removal of Native images as mascots as advised by local tribal members.*
- *That NEYM committees, such as FCNL, Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), Racial, Social and Economic Justice and Earthcare be urged to consider making the needs of Indigenous People more widely known among Quakers in New*

England and in our communities, with an emphasis on reduction of violence against Native women, the impact of climate change on Native communities, and amplifying Native voices whenever possible.

- *That we take every opportunity to consult with Native people at our local and regional level to hear, honor and address their concerns, guided by their wisdom and our deep listening to what Love requires of us.*
- *That this working group be laid down no later than February of 2020, and that the responsibility for these recommendations continue with the Permanent Board, the Legacy Gift Committee, RSEJ and the Challenging White Supremacy Working Group, which is under the care of the Permanent Board.*
- *We also believe that it is past time for New England Yearly Meeting to take up the work of looking at reparations for descendants of African slaves, as we did with reparations to Native Americans.*

Friends had an extended discussion about the first recommendation and expressed concerns about the importance of truly being apologetic before issuing an apology. Any apology would also best be given to indigenous peoples with whom we have existing relationships--the creation and maintenance of those relationships is crucial. We were reminded that many indigenous people are most interested in educating non-indigenous people about the history of the land they live on, that indigenous people have been here for far longer than Europeans, and that they are still here. Friends approved crafting an apology letter which will come to PB for approval. PB will consider the additional recommendations from the RWG at our February meeting.

19-101: Nominating Committee

LouAnne MacDonald brought nominations to the Permanent Board for approval.

*Steve Gates (West Falmouth Preparative), co-clerk Earthcare Witness, class of 2021
Judy Goldberger (Beacon Hill), Representative to FWCC Section of the Americas, class of 2022
Neil Blanchard (Framingham) for Racial, Social and Economic Justice, class of 2022
Nur Shoop (Dover), for Racial, Social and Economic Justice, class of 2022
Richard Lindo (Framingham), for Puente, class of 2022
Gail Melix (Sandwich) for Earthcare Ministry, class of 2022
Martha Schwope (Wellesley) for Permanent Board, class of 2024
Donn Weinholtz (Hartford) for Friends Committee on National Legislation Rep., class of 2022*

Friends approved.

LouAnne reminded the Board that Nominating Committee (NC) is still in search of a new treasurer. Anyone who is interested in this role or has suggestions for a nominee should be in touch with NC, the Treasurer, or the clerk of the Finance Committee.

19-102: Nominations for Working Group on YM Support for Ministry and Spiritual Life

Leslie Manning, Clerk, updated the Board that she is working with the clerk of Ministry and Counsel, Nia Thomas, Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator, and with members of Coordinating and Advisory to identify Friends to form the Yearly Meeting committee for Supporting Ministry and Spiritual Life. They hope to have a group of committee members soon and intend to begin their work before our February meeting.

19-103: Funds for Sufferings

Leslie Manning, Clerk, updated Friends on money that has been released from the Fund for Sufferings since we last met. \$1000 was used to pay bail for several Friends who were arrested during a climate change protest at the coal power plant in Bow, NH. Carole Rein, a member of Permanent Board, was among those arrested that day. She shared that she felt grateful to Friends and well supported knowing that money was available from the Yearly Meeting to pay her bail.

Leslie also shared that we have released \$2500 from the Fund for Sufferings for a human rights crisis which must remain confidential.

19-104: Discussion on Israel/Palestine Working Group

Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, shared with the Board a recent request from the Israel/Palestine Working Group of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers) (I/PWG). A donation was received by the Yearly Meeting (YM) to support the working group, which requested that the YM administer this donation for them. Noah asked the Board to clarify its understanding of the I/PWG's affiliation with the YM. The Board understands this group to be unaffiliated with the YM. Given this clarification, and the Board's responsibility for financial oversight, the Board considered it inappropriate for the YM to administer funds for the group. Friends also expressed concern about a group that is unaffiliated with the YM using a name that suggests affiliation. Leslie Manning, Permanent Board Clerk, will respond to the I/PWG to inform them about this donation, and Leslie and Bruce Neumann, Presiding Clerk, will meet with the I/PWG to discuss the name of the working group as well as their relationship with the YM.

19-105: February Meeting

Providence Meeting will be hosting our February meeting. They invite Friends who would like to travel on Friday to join them for dinner, music, and hospitality prior to our meeting.

19-106: Closing Worship

Friends closed with a period of worship.