

Agenda
NEYM Permanent Board
March 19, 2024, 7 PM
Zoom-only

- Worship
- PB clerk's announcements and comments-
 - Request for approval of Liesa Stamm to serve as *pro tem* recording clerk
 - Request for approval to add an agenda item- *Update needed to NEYM bank resolution*
- Roll call via Zoom screen
- Request for approval of 2/10/24 PB mtg minutes
- Request for approval of Revised charge for Sessions Visioning 2025 (and nominations, if any)
- Request for approval of revised proposal and timeline for Sessions Site Search advisory group
- Request for approval of C&A recommendation to un-designate unused Nurturing Faithfulness program funds and return approximately \$27,000 to NEYM Reserves
- Request for approval of recommended workgroup charge for *Review of Stipends for Volunteer Leaders*
- Invite PB questions regarding North Fairfield Friends Meetinghouse Proposal, (conveyance to be brought for approval in May)

To: Permanent Board

From: Finance Committee; Friends Camp

RE: Need for updated bank resolution

Date: March 14, 2024

The Bank Resolution states who can open bank accounts and sign checks for NEYM and for Friends Camp. There have been several changes in personnel at NEYM and Friends Camp. Marian Dalton is the new NEYM treasurer. Robb Spivey, Marian's husband, should no longer be a signer for Friends Camp. (This removes a possible marital conflict of interest.) Noah is on leave. This updated Bank Resolution makes the following housekeeping changes:

- removes Robb Spivey as Friends Camp signer
- swaps Marian Dalton, Treasurer, in for Bob Murray, (previous Treasurer) as signer and person who can open NEYM bank accounts.
- removes Evelyn Kirby as Friends Camp signer (temporary addition during Anna Hopkin's leave).
- NiaDwynwyn Thomas and Sarah Gant are included as signers while Noah Merrill is on leave.

New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

2024 March Bank Resolution

1. That Marian L Dalton, Yearly Meeting Treasurer; and Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary, be individually authorized to open and close bank accounts in the name of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends as needed.
2. That Kate Thornburg Monahan, Friends Camp Treasurer; and Anna Hopkins, Friends Camp Director, be individually authorized to open and close bank accounts in the name of Friends Camp as needed.
3. That Noah Merrill, Yearly Meeting Secretary; Marian L Dalton, NEYM Treasurer; and Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk; NiaDwynwyn Thomas, Acting Secretary for Programs and Administration; and Sarah Gant, Acting Secretary for Pastoral Care and Governance be designated as signers, individually, of all bank accounts of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends.
4. That Anna Hopkins, Friends Camp Director; Kate Thornburg Monahan, Friends Camp Treasurer; and Natalie Bornstein, Friends Camp Committee Clerk, be authorized, individually, as signers of the Friends Camp bank accounts

**Draft Minutes
Permanent Board
Meeting on Zoom
February 10, 2024**

24-9 Welcome and Roll Call

Susan Davies (Vassalboro), Clerk of the Permanent Board, welcomed Friends to the Zoom meeting. The tech host froze the screen order and Friends introduced themselves in the order they were on the screen.

Permanent Board Members

Susan Davies (PB Clerk), Willa Taber (PB Recording Clerk), Newell Isbell Shinn, Mary Zwirner, Martha Schwope, Allison Randall, Carole Rein, Roger Jasaitis, Beth Hansen, Eleanor Warnock, Darcy Drayton, Liesa Stamm, Deana Chase, Donn Weinholtz, Diane Weinholtz, John Reuthe, Chris Gant, Martin Forsythe, Fran Lightsom, Morgan Wilson, Bob O'Connor, Kathleen Wooten, Edward Mair, Leslie Manning.

Ex-Officio Members

Carl Williams (Clerk of Ministry and Counsel), Sarah Gant (Clerk, Meeting Accompaniment Group) (Acting Secretary for Pastoral Care and Governance), Nia Thomas (Acting Secretary for Programs and Administration), Rebecca Leuchak (Presiding Clerk), Scot Drysdale (Finance Clerk), Marian Dalton (Treasurer), Elizabeth Reuthe (YM Secretary Supervisor), Jackie Stillwell (Clerk of Nominating Committee),

Other Friends

Janet Hough (Zoom Host), Elizabeth Hacala (NEYM Events Coordinator), Jennie Isbell Shinn, Phil Veatch, John Fuller, David Coletta, Kristina Keefe-Perry, Pat Moyer, Beckey Phipps, Sarah Allen, Ellen Neelands, Kim West, Sarah Smith, Melody Brazo, Tom Vargo, Bob Murray, Mey Hasbrook, Andrew Grant, Ken Stockbridge (Patapsco Friends Meeting, Baltimore Yearly Meeting), Polly Attwood, Emily Savin, Melissa Foster, Lynn Taber, Pamela Terrien, Robert Dove McClellan, Fredrick Martin (NEYM Accounts Manager), Annie Patterson, Peter Blood Patterson, Gail Charpentier, Lucy Meadows, Kathy Olson, Mary Link, Susanna Schell, Regina McCarthy, Mary Hopkins, Callid Keefe-Perry, Ginny Kristl, Maille Wooten, Fritz Weiss,

Regrets

Kimberly Allen, Thomas Brenner, Carolyne Lamar Jordan, Meg Klepack, Christopher McCandless, Anna Radocchia, Noah Merrill (YM Secretary).

24-10 Opening Comments

Susan Davies opened the meeting with these comments:

I arrived at a place of relative calm yesterday morning when I woke up to the realization that I have been expecting myself to carry out an impossible job. I have caught myself clinging to the spiritually unhealthy expectation that I owe it to the 364 years of Friends' faithful service to NEYM, to try to do it all, to hold it all together. Yesterday I was called back to remembering that over-busyness, urgency,

perfectionism, and dissonances of words, all work against the Spirit, whose Voice I can only hear when I have given up my own willing and striving. That elusive awareness is the only gift I have for you today.

But there is *that opportunity* waiting within this “impossible task”: to accept the Truth that these urgencies won’t be solved through our own will, and our own effort. We have *all* arrived here with agendas of one sort or another, but we are not asked to do everything- only to do what knits us together and heals us to better do God’s work together. Can we pray together, “Be Thou *our* will”, as one gathered people? Can we gather to seek that Kin-dom together, that only arrives once we lay down our own strivings?

Those of you with a heart for the Three Rivers community, are here with the fervent hope for Three Rivers to be welcomed into a *covenant* relationship within Salem Quarter, and New England Yearly Meeting. We have heard your frustration and pain at the caution and slowness. But can you hear what is amiss when the asking to join in a covenant relationship is clothed in a spirit of contention, urgency and entitlement?

And those of you who harbor reservations about whether the Three Rivers spiritual community can hold a member in a spirit of love and accountability- *are you willing to let them try?* Are you willing to trust in the possibility of God’s healing? To trust that this might be a community that yearns to be accountable to one another, and to the covenant relationship with the wider Body of Friends? And can you trust in the possibility that reconciliation, growth, and renewal might be accomplished through a process of circles of restorative justice?

24-11 Losses

Susan Davies reminded us that Ian Harrington, a long time Permanent Board member, died unexpectedly on December 24, 2023. She also announced that the Memorial Meeting for Sarah Spencer, a former Permanent Board member, will be held on February 17 at Northampton Meeting and on Zoom at 2:30 pm with a reception to follow. Please contact Northampton Meeting for the Zoom link.

24-12 Advance Documents

The Clerk pointed out that there are 27 advance documents, not all of which we will get to during today’s meeting. All of these reports will be attached to these minutes. Specifically, we will not be addressing the Anti-Racism Consultation Working Group Report, the Report from the Israel-Palestine Resource Group, the Interim Report from the Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group, the 23-12-09 Noticing Patterns Debrief Notes, the Report on FGC, and the North Fairfield Meetinghouse Proposal.

The Anti-Racism Consultation WG recommended that NEYM engage the services of Melvin Bray to be a consultant for the anti-racism work of the Yearly Meeting. The YM Secretaries have already been authorized to continue the negotiations to hire Melvin Bray.

The Noticing Practices Debrief for this meeting has been scheduled for Feb 19, 2024, 6:30 pm over Zoom. A link will be sent out in advance of that meeting.

24-13 Approval of Minutes

Friends approved the minutes for the Permanent Board Meeting held at Mount Toby Meeting on December 9, 2023, and the minutes for the called Permanent Board Meeting held on Zoom on January 25, 2024.

The minutes for both meetings are attached.

24-14 Report from Ministry and Counsel Clerk

Carl Williams (Plainfield), NEYM Ministry and Counsel Clerk, called our attention to his written report, here attached. He then went on to share his thoughts about the state of us, the members and the body of the Yearly Meeting.

There are those of us who want to be transformed. And there are those of us who want to hold on to certain of our traditions. And those two things aren't mutually exclusive, even when they come into conflict with each other. There are those of us who celebrate with great joy the life of the Spirit and there are those of us who are engulfed in sorrow. There are those of us who hunger to be led by Spirit and those of us who are frustrated when things aren't in right order. There are those of us who find hope in worship and in community and those of us living in tension both spoken and unspoken. There are those of us seeking new life and there are those of us who are angry.

If you will indulge me in a little as I tell a little story and I know that some of you will have to hear this and translate it in your own head. I'd like to talk just for a minute about Moses.

When Moses led the Jews out of Israel with the help of his sister Miriam and his brother Aaron, he couldn't have done it without them. He was following God's leading. And when he got to the Red Sea, God said, Moses, this is where I want you to cross. There was no Charlton Heston, standing on the dune throwing his arms wide and commanding the sea to part so they could cross. That's not my understanding of what happened. Moses said to God, "Dude, there's water here."

And God said, "This is where I want you to cross."

So Moses stepped off the shore into the water like up to his ankles and nothing happened and God said, "Come on Moses let's get going." And Moses said, "But this is an ocean." And God said, "This is where I want you to cross."

And so Moses went up to his knees and you know now he's beginning to hear Pharaoh's troops because his step-brother double-crossed him and he's getting to hear Pharaoh's troops coming up behind him and he says, "This can't work." And God said, "This is where I want you to cross."

So Moses stepped in up to his waist and nothing happened and Moses said, "This just isn't gonna work. God you got to do something different." And God said, "So let me be very clear with you Moses. This is where I want you to cross."

And so this kept happening and happening and finally Moses is up through his shoulders. And he's feeling his heavy robe being pulled into the water and he's terrified and maybe getting a little cold because you know oceans can be cold. And God said, "Cross here." And when Moses stepped in, up over his nose the sea parted.

And that, that is my understanding of faith.

The world wants us to believe faith is this kind of old grandmotherly pasteurized, homogenized cup of chamomile tea that we sip, then we just feel cuddly about. That's not the radical faith that I know. And that's not the faith I see among Friends. An act of faith is to step into deep relationship with each other, even when we see things differently. It's an act of faith to recognize our faults and move beyond them. It's an act of faith to trust each other. Is that daunting? Absolutely. Is that possible? Absolutely. And Friends have done that for 350 years. Mostly. When we've been at our best and we can do that now.

24-15 Report from Three Rivers Visiting Committee

Mary Zwirner (Beacon Hill) presented the report of the Three Rivers Visiting Committee, attached and requested that the Permanent Board accept 3 Rivers as a monthly meeting in Salem Quarter.

Susan Davies, Clerk of the Permanent Board, reminded us of the necessity of separating concerns about specific individuals from the question of whether to establish Three Rivers as a monthly meeting.

Friends expressed gratitude for the work of the visiting committee. Its start was messy but there has been deep spiritual fruit that has come from it. Other Friends reported on the spiritual nourishment they have received from Three Rivers.

Friends accepted the report of the Three Rivers Visiting Committee

Friends approved establishing Three Rivers as a monthly meeting in Salem Quarter.

Friends approved laying down the Three Rivers Visiting Committee with gratitude for their work.

Kristina Keefe-Perry (Three Rivers) expressed gratitude for the visiting committee, Fresh Pond Meeting, and the Permanent Board for their support for new growth among us. Liberal churches in general are shrinking and laying down bodies. She is grateful for this opportunity for new growth and experimentation with new forms.

24-16 Report from the Coordinating and Advisory Committee (C&A)

Rebecca Leuchak (Providence), Clerk of NEYM Sessions, presented the C&A report here attached. Last Saturday she attended the gathering of Friends called to ministry in East Sandwich. She was sitting next to the wood stove. Saw that fire tending requires steady and constant attention and action. The goal is not to build a blazing fire but to establish a deep bed of embers that will carry the fire through the night. If we just pile on logs we risk smothering the fire. All of us are fire tenders.

Can we hold an appreciation, as we hear the reports today, for how much the people doing this work give of themselves?

24-17 Financial Contributions Working Group

Rebecca Leuchak presented the proposed charge of the Financial Contributions Working Group, attached.

Friends recognize that this question raises thorny issues of our relationship with FUM. This group is not being charged with resolving these issues. The Friends on the working group are encouraged to consult with the committees handling our relationship with the larger groups as they prepare their recommendations.

Friends approved the charge to the Financial Contributions Working Group as described in the proposal.

24-18 Extension of service for the acting co-secretaries

At the called meeting of the Permanent Board on January 25, Friends approved Nia Thomas (Northampton) and Sarah Gant (Beacon Hill) to serve as Acting Secretaries during Noah Merrill's bereavement leave through February 10, 2024. The Permanent Board also charged the Coordinating and Advisory Committee to present to today's meeting a plan for how to finance those added expenses (**PB 24-6**). Rebecca Leuchak presented that report, the Request for Approval of Funding Applications to the Legacy Gift Fund and the Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund to Financially Support Acting Co-Secretary Roles, here attached.

Friends approved extending the arrangement of acting secretaries, including their added compensation through April 1, 2024.

Friends also approved applying to the Legacy Gift Fund and the Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund for amounts over \$10,000 to cover the added expenses for the compensation to the Acting Co-secretaries.

Both groups have been contacted for verification of the fit of this extraordinary need to the mission of these bodies and both have affirmed that an application for this purpose would be acceptable. There has not been any additional fundraising for this specific need because the need is immediate and there was a desire not to detract with fundraising already being planned to address the overall financial needs of the Yearly Meeting.

24-19 Conflict Response Working Group

Melody Brazo (Fresh Pond) presented the report from the Conflict Response Working Group, here attached. They have let go of their sense of urgency in order to better serve the needs of the Yearly Meeting.

Friends approved adding Alysia Parkes to the Conflict Response Working Group. Friends accepted the report and affirmed the direction of the Conflict Response group.

Friends were reminded that the work of conflict resolution is not just the work of this working group but is the work of all of us. Friends were also encouraged to read the book, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, by John Paul Lederach.

24-20 Sessions Visioning Phase 2 Working Group

Nia Thomas presented the charge for the Sessions Visioning Phase 2 Working Group, attached. They intend to bring names for this working group to our called meeting on March 19th.

Friends approved the charge of the Sessions Visioning Phase 2 Working Group.

24-21 Site Search Working Group

Elizabeth Hacala, NEYM Events Coordinator, presented the charge for the Sessions Site Search Working group here attached. Concerns were raised that the membership of the working group should include people with disabilities so that people with lived experience with disabilities be included in the site selection process.

Friends approved the charge.

24-22 Financial Summary Report for 2023

Robert Murray (Beacon Hill) presented the financial summary report for 2023, here attached. He would be glad to go over the reports in detail with anyone interested at a later time. Having reserves is important to us because we have employees that we have an obligation to pay on a regular basis. He hopes that we can start running a surplus again so that we can begin to rebuild our reserves. This is not just money lying around, it is our safety net.

Friends accepted this report with gratitude for this report and Bob's many years of service as treasurer.

24-23 2024 Budget update

Fredrick Martin (Beacon Hill), NEYM Accounts Manager, presented the informational update on the 2024 budget outcome. For the first quarter, our income is tracking in line with recent past years. Our major fundraising efforts are scheduled for the spring and summer.

24-24 2025 Budget preliminary report

Scot Drysdale (Hanover), clerk of the Finance Committee, presented the preliminary report on the 2025 budget, attached. Scot noted that there was an error in the document and the amount of reserves was understated. (This has been corrected in the version included with these minutes.) This budget does not allow for contributions to other organizations. We are not funding future sabbaticals. We are not increasing our reserves. We are trying to do more than our current income allows. We need to make significant increases in our income or we will need to make significant cuts in our programs.

Friends noted that our revenue has been flat over the past 6 years while our personnel expenses have gone up over 5%. This is not sustainable. Do we have the right structures in place to deal with these issues? Our largest expense, after personnel, is annual sessions. Are there ways to reduce the cost of sessions? Should we revive the Development Committee and hire a person devoted to development work? Are we attracting new people to the Yearly Meeting and providing something of value to them so that they will be inspired to contribute to the Yearly Meeting? As a Board, we will have to find a way to address the immediate budgetary issues and also address the larger, systemic issues.

24-25 Legacy Gift Review

Mary Link presented the first draft of the 10 year Legacy Gift Review, here attached. Based on survey responses, there appears to be support for continuing the Legacy Funds but how do we do that? The Legacy Review Committee asked, do we use some of this money for reparations since it came from the sale of stolen land? What do Friends think about their proposal for allocation of the funds? Should the clerk of this committee be a stipended position? Should they cooperate more with other funding sources in New England? How can we replenish the funds? Can we rename the fund with something that speaks of our future and not our past. Are we on the right track?

Friends noted that the Legacy Gift Fund and the Obadiah Brown Fund are starting to get to know more about each other's work so that they can work together. It might be good for this to include the Lyman Fund as well. There were conflicting ideas about using some of the funds for reparations. It was also noted that when the Legacy Gift Funds were established there was an extensive process of listening that went into the discernment about how the funds would be used and what structures would support those uses. Has that broad and searching listening process been fully deployed in this 10 year review? Would it make sense to have that level of consultation going into our proposals for the next 10 years?

24-26 Nominating Committee Report

Jackie Stillwell (Monadnock) brought the report from the NEYM Nominating Committee, attached.

Friends approved the nomination of Newt Barletta (Framinham) to serve on the Youth Ministries Committee.

24-27 Nominations for the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group

Susan Davies presented the report on the nominations for the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working group, attached.

Friends approved the nomination of Celadry Humphries (Northampton) and Christine Hansen (Burlington) to the Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group.

24-28 Minute of Exercise

The opening comments of the Clerk of the Permanent Board and the Clerk of Ministry and Counsel helped the meeting to enter into a worshipful and grounded state. The clarity and depth of the report of the Three Rivers Visiting Committee helped to relieve the confusion and dissension that had accompanied our previous discussions of acceptance of Three Rivers as a monthly meeting. The decision to accept Three Rivers as a monthly meeting was followed by expressions of joy, thankfulness and relief. This feeling was a factor in our successful completion of the rest of the items on our agenda.

However, the conflict that had been entangled with the acceptance of Three Rivers has not been resolved. Our discussion about the Legacy Gift Review revealed that we have work to do yet to find unity on the issue of making reparations to indigenous people. There are also difficult financial decisions to be made in the next several years. We will need to be mindful to not let these questions get likewise entangled.

There appears to be a spirit of division present in the Yearly Meeting. The way forward is not clear. Our shared faith reminds us that there is also a spirit of love and reconciliation that can heal our conflicts and lead us back to unity. We worship a God who can make a way out of no way. We pray that, with Divine assistance, we may be led on the path of healing.

Charge: Sessions 2025+ Vision Planning Working Group

Note regarding the revision of this document:

Below is a revised charge for the working group to begin Phase II of the Sessions Visioning and Design Process.

When the original [Sessions Visioning and Design](#) plan was brought forward last summer, care was taken to disentangle the time-sensitive decisions that would need to be made for our upcoming Annual Sessions (at the time, 2024) and the longer-term visioning work that was needed. Knowing sensitive and complex discernment takes time, our original plan set aside the better portion of a year for this consultation and visioning to unfold and named the longer-term portion of this work as “2025+”.

Due to unforeseen challenges (most notably an unexpected leave by the Yearly Meeting Secretary), there have been significant delays in beginning the visioning and consultation phase of this project. A consequence of this delay has been that the short-term planning and the longer-term visioning have been re-entangled as the summer of 2025 is now not that far off, by major event planning standards.

Because of this, we need to adjust our approach and timeline somewhat in order to allow volunteers to contribute meaningfully to this important discernment process in a way that is realistic and takes into account the other claims on people’s time.

Towards that end, below you will find a revised charge for a working group that is currently being formed. Instead of expecting this small working group to implement a far-reaching consultation process engaging Friends across our Yearly Meeting in just a few months, this revised plan asks this small group to *design* a consultation plan which, as approved, can be carried forward with as many helping hands as are needed over a longer period of time (fall 2024-spring 2025). It is my hope that by making this adjustment of breaking Phase II of our original plan into two sub-phases (consultation design and consultation), we set the stage for more Friends to participate in this process including via in-person listening and allow ourselves to listen for guidance of the Spirit without unnecessary urgency.

Reason for Establishment:

This working group will ~~conduct~~ **design** a plan for consultation and listening among Friends in New England in order to inform a more clarified vision and priorities for future Annual Sessions, consistent with Phase II of the [Sessions Visioning and Design](#) plan.

Membership: (e.g., number of members, qualities sought in members):

Three or four Friends, all with a care and appreciation for Quakers in New England. These Friends should carry a variety of personal experiences in connection with New England Yearly Meeting

and its Annual Sessions. These Friends should be carrying gifts and skill in: listening beneath the words (including when listening to youth voices), gathering and synthesizing many perspectives, writing clearly and collaboratively, understanding of group dynamics, ability to follow through and meet deadlines.

The Office Manager will convene this group and offer administrative support as needed. The Program Director will serve as a resource for the Phase II process, providing guidance on best practices related to consultation design and implementation. Other Sessions planners and staff will be available for consultation as needed.

Responsibilities:

1. With any needed support from the Program Director, design a consultative process which **will** engages a wide variety of perspectives from Friends in New England, including Friends across the life span, across the geographic region, and with varying levels of participation in Sessions.
2. ~~With administrative support from the Office Manager, facilitate and compile notes during the consultative conversations conducted according to the consultative process design.~~ The focus of this facilitated listening process is to understand and affirm why the Yearly Meeting holds Annual Sessions, to clarify what Friends hope that NEYM Sessions accomplishes, now and in the future, and to gather guidance on how to prioritize in the face of limited resources;
3. To design and make a distribution plan for a survey which ~~solicit, review, and analyze survey responses~~ gathering reflection from additional New England Friends;
4. ~~To write a report capturing a simple, usable articulation of the purpose of Sessions including how this purpose relates to and builds upon the overall purpose and priorities of NEYM. This report should also include insights and recommendations (including areas requiring further attention) regarding the key issues in the [Phase I report](#).~~
5. ~~To share a brief progress update for the May 11th Permanent Board meeting.~~
6. To share a draft **report consultation plan** to Sessions Planning Leadership and Coordinating & Advisory, ~~and Consultation Conversation participants~~ for comment by July 1.
7. To bring the ~~final report~~ **revised consultation plan** to the Permanent Board in mid-July for affirmation, ~~and further guidance to inform Phase III of this process.~~
8. To share ~~the final report~~ **about the consultation plan** at Sessions 2024 **as requested by the Presiding Clerk.**

Supervision: (e.g., whom or which body, nature of relationship)

Under the care of Permanent Board, and in consultation with the Yearly Meeting Secretary¹ and the Program Director.

¹ Or the Acting Yearly Meeting Secretaries depending on the timeline.

Measures of Success:

1. **The plan design maximizes** active listening and engagement in the consultative process used to bring together needed perspectives on Annual Sessions' purpose and its relationship to the wider Yearly Meeting.
2. The consultative process is ~~implemented~~ **designed** in such a way that it helps to “pave the way” for healthy, necessary, and Spirit-led changes; participating Friends grow in their ability to be participants in on-going discernment and experimentation regarding Sessions, listening together for how God is calling our Yearly Meeting at this time.
3. ~~A written report articulating the purpose for Annual Sessions and its relationship to the wider Yearly Meeting, to serve as guidance to the planning team for Phase III. This report may also include unresolved “big picture” questions requiring further attention.~~ **The written consultation plan is usable and realistic.**
4. ~~Report findings and reflections are clear enough to help Sessions Planners and the wider Yearly Meeting set priorities and make decisions regarding Sessions for the year 2025 and beyond.~~

Date projected to complete work: August 2, 2024

Process for laying down:

Once the shape of Sessions is defined and a location of the **consultation plan** is identified, the working group would be thanked for their work during 2024 Annual Sessions. Although the working group would lay down the bulk of their work at the conclusion of 2024 Sessions, they may be called upon to step into specific roles related to the implementation of the consultation plan such as facilitators of listening sessions and interpreters of gathered data. ~~to season the Phase III work of turning the “what Sessions is” work into the “How do we do it?” work. The working group would lay down its work at the conclusion of Phase III.~~

Nominations for the Sessions Vision Planning Working Group:

1. **Alison Levie** (Bennington, VT). Reasons: Her experience as a monthly and quarterly meeting clerk holding varied voices while listen to Spirit, her perspective as a Friend who has served not only within NEYM but also in another Yearly Meeting (Philadelphia)-having some sense of different approaches to Sessions; her abilities as a clear and thoughtful writer.
2. **Matt Southworth** (Harford, CT). *Pending final discernment by Matt.* Reasons: his warm and practical yet realistic energy; his ability to ask important questions and invite others into curiosity; his awareness of the challenges and opportunities before Friends and Friends organizations; his perspective as a recent Sessions participant and working parent; his thoughtful reflection.

Proposal, Timeline, and Working Group Charge for Sessions Site Search in 2025+

Elizabeth Hacala, Events Coordinator (events@neym.org)

March 2024

In February 2024 the original version of this timeline and proposal were approved by Permanent Board (24-21). In the weeks since, it has been clear that finding a group of Friends who can speak to the needs of a broad scope of Friends and are available during the work week (the time when potential sites are able to host site visits) is very challenging. In order to lower barriers to participation, this revised proposal includes a plan for broader consultation so more Friends can be involved while shifting some of the work of the search.

Even though we are engaging in discernment about the shape of Sessions, most of the physical needs of the gathering are unlikely to change significantly. We will still likely need dorms for people to stay in, a place for meals, large gathering spaces for group discernment, locations for youth programs, and spaces for small group gatherings.

In order to determine what spaces could host Sessions, the site search will take place in three phases:

Phase 1 January - April: Survey and data collection

Based on the work of the prior search in 2019 the Events Coordinator, Elizabeth Hacala, is actively compiling a list of the various universities and other locations that were identified as potential sites. In addition she will send a form and request for information to schools that seem less promising at first but we might have overlooked.

A group of Friends who can speak to the breadth of space and accessibility needs of potential Sessions participants will be convened by the Events Coordinator to discern what specific site needs we need to support Sessions. These needs can include accessibility needs, space needs to support gathering, or other needs yet to be identified. These meetings will be held via Zoom.

Phase 2, May – June:

The Events Coordinator compares the needs raised in the earlier conversation with Friends and prepares a report on each possible site, including photographs and video, so the group can provide feedback either via a Zoom meeting or asynchronous by watching the trip report and providing feedback via email. This builds on a system used to good effect for Living Fatih site searches.

From all that feedback the Events Coordinator will identify a list of up to 5 sites that match the needs of those Friends at Sessions.

Phase 3, July Final recommendation for 2025 site:

Determine if any sites need a second visit and collect detailed financial details for Sessions at that site. Initiate a draft contract with the top choice so we can bring a clear proposal with costs, benefits, and any drawbacks to both Permanent Board and ultimately Sessions.

Core Participants:

In order to encourage wide discernment from a variety of perspectives, the Working Group model has been transformed into a broader discernment led by the Events Coordinator. In order to have some continuity to the process, below are the names of some specific Friends whose participation in meetings will be prioritized. These Friends will be actively updated throughout the process. In addition there will be an open invitation to Friends across New England to provide input via open Zoom meetings or video updates.

The following Friends have willingness to participate with the Site Search process and are clear to provide input into the site search.

- Kristin Wilson (Framingham)- Krstin has been the housing coordinator for several years and has an extensive knowledge of the needs of Friends on campus for housing.
- Phil Veatch is the Sessions Planning Clerk and has also worked in childcare and has been a long term Sessions attendee.
- Christopher Haines - Christopher was part of the 2019 Site Search

The following Friends are members of the Permanent Board who expressed enthusiasm for this effort in January and have a deep understanding of Sessions::

- Kim West
- Ed Mair

The following Friends are still in discernment that I hope will confirm their participation.

- Johnathan McCandless - Jonathan was part of the 2019 Site Search
- Stefan Walker - Stefan is a younger Friend who is serving on the Finance Committee with strong analytical skills.

As described above, in addition to these Friends there would be open calls to Friends across New England to provide input to the process through video/powerpoint presentations and a feedback form or email.

Proposal to un-designate unused Nurturing Faithfulness funds

Request for approval: The Coordinating and Advisory Committee recommends that Permanent Board un-designate funds currently held in a board-designated account which was set up for the 2022-2023 offering of Nurturing Faithfulness, and return these funds to NEYM's reserves. The balance of this fund at the end of the 2023 fiscal year was \$27,159.89.

Background:

The third offering of the Nurturing Faithfulness program was held from September 2022 through May 2023.

The Nurturing Faithfulness program was budgeted to "break even" meaning direct costs (not counting NEYM staff time) and projected income from participant fees were designed to be equal. However, because Nurturing Faithfulness was offered on a pay-as-led basis with many fixed costs and a small cohort, it was quite uncertain in advance of the program how accurate our income projections would be.

Because of the significant financial risk associated with offering such a program (and because of the significant spiritual reward hoped for from offering such a program), in May 2021 Permanent Board approved the use of up to \$30,000 of funds from NEYM's reserves in order to offer a financial backstop in the event that participant income was significantly lower than program costs (see [PB Minute 21-40](#)). Following this approval, \$30,000 was transferred from NEYM's reserves into a "Continuing Projects" account designated for Nurturing Faithfulness, in the Revolving Funds section of NEYM's balance sheet.

To our amazement and thanks to the hard work, generous contributions, and commitment of many Friends, the direct financial loss from this offering of the Nurturing Faithfulness program was only \$2,840.11, far less than we were concerned it could have been.

At this time, Marcelle Martin, the lead designer and teacher for the Nurturing Faithfulness program, is taking time for rest and does not know in what form or at what location the next offering will take. While we hope to continue to find ways to support more Friends in New England in participating in high quality adult faith formation opportunities, at this time there is not a specific known need for use of the unused funds from the 2022-2023 offering.

With the needed portion of these funds having been used for their intended purpose and without a specific need in the short term, and with NEYM's reserves far below the recommended level, it is Coordinating and Advisory's recommendation that these funds be un-designated and returned to the reserves.

Charge: Evaluation of Volunteer Stipends Experiment Working Group

Date: March 19, 2024 Permanent Board meeting

Reason for Establishment:

Permanent Board [Minute 21-43](#) approved an [implementation plan](#) for a three year experiment with offering stipends to volunteers serving in five leadership positions in the Yearly Meeting. As part of that plan, Permanent Board committed to appointing a Working Group in 2024 to evaluate the experiment so far.

Further direction from the implementation plan states:

The working group will need to develop clear evaluation criteria, with a particular focus on increasing inclusion. Questions to ensure are considered: Did the commitment to providing these honoraria help you (with “you” meaning both people in the affected positions, and those nominating for those positions) in your service? Did these honoraria make it more possible to say yes to service in these roles? The working group’s report should include, and compare their findings with, other insights and feedback from Friends who said “no” to serving in the affected roles.

In undertaking this evaluation, Working Group members will need to engage in a series of confidential conversations with individuals who have received stipends, nominators who have been in conversations with candidates for leadership roles, and Friends who have declined service in leadership roles in order to better understand the impact of the stipends on leadership development. Additionally, working group members shall consult with relevant financial stewards and administrators of the Yearly Meeting who can speak to the financial and practical implications for NEYM.

Gathering these reflections, the working group shall share a written and verbal report to Permanent Board answering the following questions:

1. Findings:
 - a. To what degree has the stipends for volunteer leadership experiment been successful in meeting its intended goal of making it more possible for a wider pool of Friends with gifts of leadership to say “yes” to significant leadership roles within NEYM?
 - b. What factors contributed to the success (or lack of success) of this experiment?
2. Recommendations:
 - a. Based on what you heard, do you recommend this practice continue?
 - b. If so, are there any adjustments that need to be made and what are the implications of those adjustments?

- c. Are there different practices you suggest NEYM explore instead of or in addition to this practice?
- d. If so, what capacities and commitments would such practices require?

Membership:

This group shall consist of 3-4 people, made up of Friends not currently receiving honoraria. The working group will include Friends who bring insights and experience from the perspectives of finance, nominating, equity & inclusion, and pastoral care. The evaluation may involve some sensitive discussions, and so will need to be conducted with skillful empathy.

Supervision:

This working group reports to the Permanent Board. Requests for additional guidance should be sent to the Permanent Board Clerk or Yearly Meeting Secretary.

Reporting:

A written report is due eight days before the July Permanent Board meeting (proposed date July 18, 2024). At least two working group members shall be available during the July Permanent Board meeting to provide a brief presentation and to respond to questions.

Measures of success:

- Working Group members have gathered information and prayerfully considered the experiment from many angles including the short and long term as well as the individual and institutional impact.
- Conversations with individuals are held with care that allows for open and honest responses.
- Findings are presented clearly.
- Recommendations are actionable and provide informed guidance to Permanent Board regarding next steps.

Date projected to complete work:

Permanent Board's July 2024 meeting (date TBA)

Process for laying down:

Permanent Board shall lay down this group following the acceptance of their final report.



A Proposal for Revitalization & Stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House

Dr. Sonja K. Birthisel & Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick
As Representatives for Mifneh L'Kedushah

Presented to the New England Yearly Meeting Permanent Board
February 2024

Executive Summary

The purpose of this proposal is to build relationships and prompt dialogue as we continue exploring with the New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM), the exciting possibility of stewarding the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House into the future.

The historic space, established in 1784, is located in central Maine, and has largely been vacant since it was laid down in 2017.

We - Dr. Sonja Birthisel and Rabbi Ben Gorelick - are an energetic young duo of faith leaders, seeking a home for our emerging collaborative project, **Nvolution**. The mission of Nvolution is:

- To give space, place, and opportunity for the next generation of multi-faith spiritual leadership to emerge and be supported.
- Become an incubator and hub for community-led spiritual and religious projects that are welcoming to all people in central Maine and beyond.
- Approach our work with a philosophy of flexibility and emergence, sensing and responding as the spirit moves in our world today.

We are excited to continue conversations with NEYM about your hopes and dreams for future use of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House, and mutually addressing logistical and due-diligence questions that arise along the way.

How Did We Get Here?

In late August, 2023, I (Sonja) was sharing breakfast with my friend, Joey LeBlanc, when his phone rang. “Hi Joey, it’s your mother. I’m talking to Barb from The Historical Society about the old Quaker Meeting House just down the road. Here, I’ll put you on speakerphone...”

(Joey was raised less than a mile from the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House, where his family still live today, proprietors of the aptly named “Quaker Hill Disc Golf Course.”)

“Oh, hi Barb!” Joey replied. “How can I help?”

“Well, as you know, the Meeting House was laid down a few years ago, and is still looking for new owners. We thought about it for the Historical Society but it didn’t make sense. We’re afraid it’ll get sold to out-of-state real-estate developers or something horrible. Do you know any nonprofits or good community people who’d be interested in bringing an old building back to life?”

Joey looked me in the eye across the table and burst out laughing. He mouthed the words “you guys want an old Quaker Meeting House, right?” at me. Also laughing, I nodded vigorously and whispered back “Almost definitely. Let me call Ben and double check!”

He gathered himself. “I might know some people.”

And that was how Rabbi Ben and I learned about the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.

I met Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick in August 2020, in the depths of the pandemic. I had just started in my role as Director of the Wilson Center for Spiritual Exploration and Multifaith Dialogue, an Orono-based nonprofit closely affiliated with the University of Maine. Rabbi Ben was on his way out of Maine to begin congregational work in Denver, Colorado - but our paths briefly crossed.

In those few weeks, we became fast friends who delighted in deep conversation, challenging each other over questions of spirituality, religion, and ways of bringing G-d to life in this world. We enjoyed exploring what might be possible if we were willing to put in the work to continue collaborating. We stayed in touch.

Three and a half years later, that exploration has proved to be among the more consequential of our lives; Rabbi Ben moved back to Maine this fall and is spending the year as Rabbi-in-Residence at the Wilson Center, where I’m finishing a four-year tenure as Director. Together, we are: developing a multi-faith curriculum centered around transcendent practices and experiences that deepen our connection with self, community, and God; facilitating student and community creation of spiritual services and programming; providing spiritual care and guidance to our communities; and continuing to explore together and challenge each other in many beautiful ways.

For some time now, we've also dreamed about what might be possible in our collaboration with a space to truly bring our creative spiritual vision to life.

Enter stage left: The North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.

A few weeks after that fateful breakfast with Joey, Holly Weidner gave Rabbi Ben and me a tour of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House, and we fell in love. The wheels have been turning ever since, and this document is the to-this-moment culmination of that process.

Assumptions

We thought it might be helpful to start with a few assumptions we're operating under, based on conversations we've had with various parties to date. Please know that we're not attached to any of these assumptions; we understand that this is a conversation meant to follow the flow of divine will and we welcome further information, ideas, and feelings as they come.

Things we think are true:

- The North Fairfield Friends Meeting House was laid down in 2017. The following year, it was occupied briefly, but has sat empty since 2019. In the interim, the Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting has kept up the building, making sure it is winterized, that the lawn remains mowed in the summer, the building stays free of leaks and pests, etc.
- In 2020 and into 2021, the Quarterly Meeting had serious discussions with the local Historical Society about donating the building and whatever fixtures remained inside, for use by the community. However, those discussions petered out, and the Historical Society is no longer interested in taking on the building and associated property.
- In 2022, the NEYM took on responsibility for finding a new caretaker for the building, one that would steward it into the future, in a way that is aligned with the spiritual mission housed within over the past 250 years.
- NEYM's ultimate goal is to donate the building, remaining fixtures, and attached cemetery property to an organization that is mission-aligned, has a sound financial plan, and will bring a strong sense of community and purpose to the space once again.
- There are several unknowns about the building and grounds at this time, including the age and condition of the roof, the condition of the plumbing, septic, and electrical systems, and whether there is PFAS contamination in the soil and/or groundwater.
- There is mutual interest in an ownership transfer whereby we become the new stewards of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.

We further think that a timeline for decision-making about such a transfer could be as follows:

- September 2023: Register interest in the building and have a tour of the facility.

- October 2023: Send a formal letter-of-interest to representatives of the Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting and NEYM, noting our interest in exploring future stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.
- Mid-December 2023: Meet with Noah Merrill and Susan Davies for preliminary conversation about mutual hopes, dreams, and desires for the community space, early-stage vetting, and discussion of next steps.
- Late January 2024: Meet again with Noah and Susan to complete a written proposal for presentation to the Permanent Board the following month.
- February 10, 2024: Present this proposal to the New England Yearly Meeting's Permanent Board. Allow space for mutual introductions, further discussion of mutual hopes and dreams for stewardship, establish due-diligence steps/processes, and outline next steps. The goal would be to have enough of an agreement in place following this meeting that Rabbi Ben and Sonja could approach potential fundraising partners, community/program partners, building contractors, etc., to have substantive discussions with parties about the future of the space.
- End of February 2024: Have the building inspected by a licensed contractor, have the water and soil tested (especially for PFAS), and get a firm idea of deferred and normal-operating maintenance costs.
- End of February 2024: Receive from the NEYM a list of questions or other items related to desired due-diligence on behalf of the Quarterly and Yearly Meetings.
- February-April 2024: NEYM conducts necessary due-diligence with regard to the building itself, internally. For example, who are the legal signatories for the building, soliciting any Quaker community feedback necessary, etc.
- Late April 2024: We present to the NEYM a final, written proposal for ownership transfer, outlining in detail financial statements, an action plan for building community within the space, and answering any due-diligence questions raised over the past few months.
- May 11, 2024: Final presentation to the Permanent Board for final discussion and voting.
- Late May, 2024: Transfer of stewardship of the North Fairfield Meeting House.

Please note that this schedule is not meant to be binding in any way; we believe this process should move at the speed of relationship, and no faster. Our hope in outlining the timeline above is simply to check our current operating assumptions and facilitate ongoing communication about what is possible and feels aligned to all parties involved.

Who We Are

In a nutshell, we are a duo of faith leaders, following our respective calls to ministry into new and serendipitous territory. We have attached our CVs as background to this proposal, highlighting details about our individual training, skills, and accomplishments to date. We have also summarized especially pertinent information briefly in the bios below:



Dr. Sonja Birthisel is an ELCA Lutheran, who currently attends the Church of Universal Fellowship in Orono, ME. Her academic background is in Ecology and Environmental Sciences, with expertise in climate change adaptation and mitigation in agricultural systems.

While teaching at the University of Maine during the early days of COVID-19, she felt deeply called to re-focus her energy toward tending to the spiritual wellbeing of her (suddenly remote, and terrified!) students. She was contemplating seminary when she heard the news that the Wilson Center for Spiritual Exploration and Multifaith Dialogue was hiring a new Director. It was the perfect next-step.

As Director, Sonja has doubled the Wilson Center's weekly program offerings, while consistently exceeding her Board's fundraising expectations in order to close sizable budget deficits. She has achieved this organically, by building great relationships with students, Board members, alumni, and friends, and by creating a feeling of organizational momentum and a culture of community empowerment.

She is additionally an activist and community organizer, variously working on campaigns for climate justice, workers rights, and Indigenous sovereignty. She is a duly elected member of the Orono Town Council and serves on several nonprofit Boards.



Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick was raised Modern Orthodox Jewish in an intentional community in northern New Mexico. While his educational background is in engineering, his professional life has been spent in education. He spent 11 years as the President of a 4-year college, where he primarily focused on the creation and integration of human-centered liberal arts education training and assessment practices into his and other technical colleges. Today, the curriculum he developed is used in industries ranging from mountain guiding to commercial aviation to NASA.

More recently, he is the founder of Mifneh L'Kedushah, a school of transcendent exploration for Jewish youth, with programs running at ten locations across the US. He has also served as congregational Rabbi for The Sacred Tribe, a Denver-based synagogue grounded in Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism.

Today, he is the Rabbi-in-Residence at the Wilson Center for Spiritual Exploration and Multifaith Dialogue, where he is concurrently designing a curriculum for and leading a year-long coming-of-age program, aiming to create space for college students to grow as fully expressed and spiritually connected people in the space of community.

His portfolio includes designing many innovative events and experiences to explore spirituality through art and embodiment practices, leading or creating multiple seven and eight figure organizations, and expanding ideas of what is possible in education.

Our Core Philosophy

Though we understand the world through the lenses of different religious traditions, our collaborative work is motivated by a strong foundation of shared philosophical and theological principles, including a shared commitment to building connections across lines of division.

What is G-d? We believe in an expansive concept of the divine, that is present within, between, and beyond us – that is to say that the relationships we nurture with self, community, and G-d are all facets of the same holy and wondrous divine. We know G-d through the magic of photosynthesis, the rising action of yeast as we bake bread, and the connective mystery we feel unequivocally as love. We know G-d through personal and communal practice, through prayer-in-our-hearts, and at scales from the quantum to the infinite.

Your Life is Your Prayer. Judaism demands our fullest self-expression, given freely within community, as a moral imperative. Scripture tells us to pray without ceasing. How does one do this? By aligning our creation – that which we bring to life in this world - with our thoughts, our deepest feelings, and divine will.

Further, in Jewish practice there is the idea that “your prayer is incomplete if it’s offered alone.” That is, it’s not enough to retreat into oneself, to pray and seek enlightenment on one’s own; it is our purpose to be deeply in connection with one another, spiritually, emotionally, physically - wholly. Jesus’ words highlighting that the greatest commandments of all are to love G-d with our whole heart and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves likewise makes unavoidable this ethos of heart-centered engagement with the world.

The Reformation Continues. Martin Luther didn’t mean to start a revolution; he simply did the thing his “bound conscience” demanded he do when faced with the injustices and hypocrisies of his time. He came to understand, as is shared in the roots of Quaker tradition, that much of the structure and dogma of our religious traditions is culturally constructed, and does little to build our unique, unmediated individual and communal connection to the divine. We, inspired by Luther’s life and by Kabbalah, see ourselves within a timeless stream of transformation and re-creation. We seek, as the spirit moves, to practice stripping away those layers that have come to separate and divide us, that we might better return us to the heart of our scriptures and together draw closer to G-d.

A New Vision for the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House

Together, we are seeking a space to serve as home for an emerging collaborative project. The working title of this initiative is *Nvolution* - a word connoting the artistic and spiritual process through which divine inspiration flows through into manifest creation. Our mission, as best we understand it presently, is:

- To give space, place, and opportunity for the next generation of multi-faith spiritual leadership to emerge and be supported.
- Become a hub and incubator for community-led spiritual and religious projects that are welcoming to all people in central Maine and beyond.
- Approach this work with a philosophy of flexibility and emergence, sensing and responding as the spirit moves in our world today.

The North Fairfield Friends Meeting House would be the perfect home for this project: it has lived for more than two centuries as a nexus of G-d energy and teems with potential for spiritual expansion; it is centrally located to our already existing communities and families; it is close enough to Portland and Boston so as to make destination travel possible, is “just right sized” for the sort of spiritual and artistic exploration we envision.

We understand that addressing deferred maintenance and undertaking some renovation of the space would be necessary to bring the building back to life and equip it for future use, and we are prepared to fundraise for and take ownership over this transition process.

Our ask is that, if you feel inspired by our vision and potential as new stewards, you offer the as-is facility to us as a gift or for nominal cost (e.g., \$1) in order to set us up for success as we undertake the ambitious work of revitalizing the building. We further ask that any covenant created as part of an ownership transfer process grant us freedom to continue imagining and evolving what this project will become, in accordance with our mission.

Through this process and into the future, it is our hope and intent to maintain good relationships with those who have been connected to this space over its centuries-long history. We would especially hold with reverence and care the responsibility of maintaining the cemetery, and seek to include families and loved ones of the deceased in conversation and decision-making regarding its upkeep.

Logistics & Draft Budget

We are both affiliated with an existing religious nonprofit, Mifneh L’Kedushah, which would act as the formal entity to take formal ownership over the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House in event of a stewardship transfer. Mifneh is governed by a five-person multi-faith Board of Directors consisting of Dr. Sonja Birthisel (President), Ariel Peterson (VP), Jack Leopold (Secretary), Amy Bliss (Treasurer) and Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick (Spiritual Leader / Director).

For the purposes of this exploratory proposal, we have drafted a three-year budget for Nvolution, which would operate as a d.b.a. within Mifneh's existing framework. This budget is broken into major *Income* and *Expense* categories, below. To the extent possible, with our existing knowledge, we have sought to realistically account for all that is needed to adequately resource this undertaking, and considered how our time, skills, and connections might best be leveraged to make the project financially viable.

We expect most of our first year would be spent in three ways: (1) maintenance and renovation projects, (2) engaging in the interpersonal work of making connections toward future tenancy and partnerships, and (3) building out our programming portfolio and bringing that to life.

Then, in our second and third years, we anticipate launching a full lineup of programs and space-rental opportunities, such that by the end of year three we would be at full operational capacity.

Draft Budget for Nvolution FY24/25 - FY26/27 (Assuming FY Begins May 2024)

Income

	FY24/25	FY25/26	FY26/27
Angel Investment Loan	150,000		
Donations	25,000	30,000	40,000
Grants	20,000	50,000	50,000
In-Kind Donations	50,000	20,000	15,000
Rental	20,000	50,000	75,000
Fundraising	25,000	30,000	30,000
Programming	10,000	40,000	60,000
Totals	300,000	220,000	270,000

Notes on Income: We envision our first year focusing on building/grounds revitalization and capacity-building, laying the foundation for important revenue streams in years to come.

In years two-three (FY25/26 and FY 26/27) we anticipate our donor base, rental income, and programming will grow to become increasingly established and dependable sources of revenue supporting the organization in the longer-term.

At this stage, we anticipate taking a \$150,000 angel loan to cover the cost of building materials and contractor-required work, noted in the expenses byline below. We have assumed a good deal of community help in the process of revitalizing the building, listed in the “in-kind donations” line, above. Given that our friend networks include many skilled tradespeople and we have strong experience mobilizing “work parties,” we think these numbers are well within the bounds of realistic.

With regard to programming, we expect that a religious education pilot being developed from within Mifneh’s educational portfolio could rent and regularly use the building for courses, spiritual gatherings, and the like, serving as an “anchor tenant” and providing a stable ongoing source of revenue. Due to the expected timing of building maintenance work, we don’t anticipate being able to offer the school space in the first year, but do anticipate this would launch in FY25/26. This accounts for the large leap in rental income we are assuming between years one and two.

The rest of the numbers flow as you might expect, and we welcome feedback and clarifying questions on any other assumptions we have made herein.

Expense

	FY24/25	FY25/26	FY26/27
Deferred Maintenance, Repairs, & Improvements	100,000	25,000	5,000
Staff Payroll	50,000	75,000	100,000
Payroll Taxes	7,650	11,475	15,300
Workers Comp Insurance	1,000	1,550	2,100
Contract Services	5,000	8,000	8,000
In-Kind Labor	50,000	20,000	15,000
Non-Personnel Expenses	5,000	20,000	25,000
Utilities	15,000	17,500	20,000
Property & Liability Insurance	3,800	3,950	4,200
Programming	1,000	10,000	25,000
Marketing	5,000	5,000	5,000
Community Relations	1,500	1,500	1,500
Consulting	6,000	6,000	6,000
Loan Repayment		15,000	15,000
Totals	250,950	219,975	247,100

Notes on Expenses: In the coming months, with your approval, we'll ask a series of building inspectors and contractors to look at the Meeting House and give us a better idea of deferred maintenance needs / costs, and renovations we may wish to complete (e.g., upgrading the bathrooms and kitchen), which will allow us to better solidify the FY24/25 numbers.

As the building improvement projects slow down after year one, we anticipate a corresponding decrease in direct (mostly material) expenses related to the building, although we continue to anticipate in-kind contributions (skilled friends and volunteers helping with projects) to remain an important aspect of operations for some time. Most other items flow as we think you might imagine, and again, we welcome feedback and clarifying questions.

Running P&L (Savings)	49,050	49,075	71,975
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Conclusions & Thanks

We hope that this document addresses many of your initial questions about who we are, and paints a picture of the future we could create for the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House and the surrounding central Maine community that this space served for over 200 years.

We are deeply grateful for the process of discernment that has accompanied our interest in the Meeting House to date. Our conversations with NEYM representatives and with each other have helped crystalize a vision for our emerging collaborative project, Nvolution, that feels, to us, alive, powerful, and spiritually engaged.

We are excited to collaborate and explore with you, and to continue conversations on questions both spiritual and logistical. How does our vision align with your dreams for future stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House? What about this proposal is unclear or gives you pause? What do you find inspiring? What sparks your curiosity? What do you wish we'd thought to include?

We look forward with hope and gratitude toward ongoing dialogue and mutual discernment around future stewardship of the North Fairfield Friends Meeting House.

-Dr. Sonja K. Birthisel & Rabbi Benjamin Gorelick

NEYM Nominating Committee Report to Permanent Board

19 March 2024

Kathy Malin (Smithfield) resigned from Nominating Committee due to an overwhelming number of both personal and professional responsibilities. She expressed her sincere apologies. Friends are sad to lose her. There are currently 9 openings on the committee, so if you or someone you know is called to serve, please let me or Jeremiah Dickinson, Clerk of the Naming Committee know. We are eager to have more Friends join us in this exciting endeavor.

First Readings*:

Finance Committee

Description:

The Finance Committee of New England Yearly Meeting is responsible for:

- Proposing an annual budget to Sessions for adoption
- Developing financial policy to recommend to the Yearly Meeting.
- Oversight of the accounts of the Yearly Meeting

Current Situation: Finance committee currently has three vacancies and limited age diversity.

Gifts and Skills desired:

- Prior experience with accounting or financial management is useful but not necessary
- Comfortable looking at, talking about, and praying over both specific numbers as well as broader policy matters concerning the finances of NEYM
- Able to notice and ask tough questions when numbers don't seem to make sense or add up
- Relate financial matters to divine guidance and Quaker principles
- Committee membership diverse in age, gender, race, sexual orientation, class and other less privileged identities
- Knowledge of some of these areas: areas of work done by the yearly meeting, yearly meeting governance procedures, common principles of financial management.
- Skill using charts, spreadsheets and financial management software
- Ability to draft policy proposals when NEYM policies or procedures need to be changed

Finance Committee – Stefan Walker, to begin immediately, class 2027

Stefan began life in Beacon Hill Monthly Meeting then moved to western Massachusetts and grew up in Northampton and Mt. Toby Meetings. He's currently living in Worcester and has started attending worship at Worcester Meeting.

Stefan attended University of Vermont with a concentration in mathematics, and is employed as an independent contractor (software engineer) with a start-up, and is developing a game. He loves spreadsheets! And figuring out what they have to tell us, and how to communicate the information to the people who need to know in simple and compelling ways.

Meeting Accompaniment Group

Description:

This Group meets together regularly to bring sustained and prayerful accompaniment to local meetings, with particular attention to walking alongside Friends serving their meetings in leadership roles (clerks, clerks of ministry & counsel, etc.). These Friends are charged with “accompaniment and “walking with” local meetings—not “fixing” issues that may arise. This body will not fix challenges in local meetings, but pay attention to how to increase capacity of the meetings themselves to respond to the challenges they encounter. This group works in partnership with quarterly meetings, where possible and appropriate, and supports the efforts and strengthening of quarterly meetings as they in turn seek to support local meetings.

Friends serving as part of this body:

1. Regularly read and reflect on State of Society reports. Share insights to inform the writing of the annual New England Yearly Meeting State of Society report.
2. Pay attention to news shared in local meeting newsletters
3. Consider reports of Friends traveling and visiting (as well as visiting meetings themselves)
4. Participate regularly in monthly local meeting leader calls, and contribute insights to planning for these calls
5. Call or email to check in with clerks of meetings on the life of the meeting overall;
6. Meet and consult with the NEYM Presiding Clerk and Secretary (and the clerks of the relevant quarterly meetings, and others as appropriate) to support ongoing care and attention to the life of local meetings
7. As needed or requested, provide specific support and presence with meetings (and quarterly meetings) in times of crisis or need for particular accompaniment
8. Ensure appropriate integration and information-sharing within the group and with relevant partners (Secretary, Presiding Clerk, relevant staff), in ways that are consistent and timely, and that maintain appropriate confidentiality and care

Current Situation: The committee needs a member from the north eastern New England/Maine area.

Gifts and Skills desired:

- Open-hearted wonder and accompaniment, as opposed to problem-solving
- Resource experience (child safety, family support...)
- Geographical reach for five areas in the yearly meeting.

Meeting Accompaniment Group – Kristna Evans, Meeting, to begin immediately, class 2029

Former clerk of NEYM Ministry & Council. Thoughtful, considerate, excellent listener with vast knowledge of Meetings and individual Friends throughout NEYM.

Youth Ministries Committee

Description:

The Youth Ministries Committee serves to regularly engage in on-going listening across the Quaker youth ministries “landscape” in New England. Based on their listening, the Committee regularly identifies both the growing edges of quaker youth ministry in New England and current needs related to the spiritual development of Quaker children, youth, and families. In all of its offerings, NEYM strives to listen deeply and respond thoughtfully and prayerfully to how we can best foster the spiritual development of youth amid current social, cultural, and economic conditions. [Link](#) to the complete PP&C. Permanent Board added a specific charge to this work in December 2023: to undertake consistent, robust, creative, and widely consultative listening to inform youth ministry decisions and to provide more transparency, accountability, and support for our youth ministries.

Current Situation:

The revised Purposes, Procedures & Composition were approved in August 2023. At present, there are two seasoned members, one new member, and three vacancies. Discernment for a committee clerk and additional members is underway. Because the committee has been on pause for the past year, the start-up and embracing of newly redefined PP&C will require distinct gifts, skills and energy. One of our overarching goals is to encourage rising leadership in choosing a mixture of seasoned and new committee members.

Gifts and Skills Desired:

- Committee should reflect the diversity within the Yearly Meeting
- Pastoral care for children and families
- Skills and experience with youth programs and youth work, including program evaluation and planning
- Familiarity with NEYM retreat programs
- Good listening, openness, creative, responsible, spiritually grounded

Youth Ministries – Melissa Becce, Hartford Meeting, to begin immediately, class 2027

Melissa has led the children's program at Hartford Meeting for a number of years and currently clerks the Youth Religious Education committee. She is a parent of JYMers and staffs JYM. Melissa works professionally in Program Evaluation in the field of education, and has insights to share in designing consultations as well as analyzing and reporting data.

Melissa is currently in discernment about her service on Youth Ministries.

The above **First Readings** will come forward for **Second Reading** and hopefully approval at the Permanent Board meeting on **11 May**. Please contact me with affirmations, questions, or concerns immediately so follow-up can be done prior to that meeting.

Faithfully,

Jacqueline Stillwell (Monadnock)

Clerk, NEYM Nominating Committee

(603)933-2608 or jacqueline.stillwell@gmail.com

Nominating Committee members: Sara Smith (Concord), Anna Lindo (Framingham), Beth Hanson (Westerly), Chris Gant (Beacon Hill), Tim Lamm (Worcester), Martha Schwoppe (Wellesley)

* The process for approving nominations by Permanent Board during the year is to send *first readings* in this written report. Any concerns, questions or affirmations should be communicated immediately to the Nominating Committee clerk. The clerk will follow-up with a nominee to share concerns without naming who brought them forward. The focus will be on the concerns and how they may be addressed. Depending on the outcome of this exchange, the nominee will either be brought forward for second reading, or withdrawn from the nomination. Depending on the situation, there may be a brief mention of the concerns and response.