

## Friends Camp Governance Review: An Update

May 3, 2024

Dear Friends,

This report is an update on the governance review for Friends Camp and the implementation of recommendations from [Phase II Visioning process](#) (Minute PB 23-21, Spring 2023). As a reminder, this governance review was begun in 2022 as stipulated in the governance document for Friends Camp. I have been on parental and sabbatical leave this past fall and winter, and I am returning to these recommendations with eagerness this spring. Please read this report as a reminder of the recommendations and an update on their progress; implementation of these recommendations will be a group effort for Friends Camp staff, New England Yearly Meeting staff, Friends Camp Committee, and Friends of NEYM more widely. [A number of important questions](#) still remain about the most appropriate organizational structure for Friends Camp as a part of New England Yearly Meeting; when and how to resolve these questions should be considered by NEYM as time and space allows in the coming years.

We are looking forward to another summer full of energy, connection, community, and learning at Friends Camp. Thank you, as always, for your support of Friends Camp as a vital youth ministry of NEYM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Anna Hopkins (Friends Camp Director)

***Recommendation 1: Empower Friends Camp to sustain itself financially and invest in its long-term physical property and buildings. In alignment with the overall financial stewardship of NEYM, find ways to support Friends Camp in benefiting from fundraising opportunities. Identify practical ways that Friends Camp and NEYM can act in a coordinated fashion as both embark on new development efforts.***

Recommendation 1 Progress and Priorities:

- The Friends Camp Committee has discussed and is strongly in favor of creating an endowment for Friends Camp to fund camperships going forward. Friends Camp Director is working with NEYM Secretary on how to bring this forward to the wider NEYM.
- The Friends Camp Finance Committee continues to explore the cost of maintaining buildings and property over time, aiming to budget at least a \$15k surplus annually to cover the cost of aging buildings, property improvements, furniture, and equipment.
- In Fiscal Year 2023, Friends Camp was able to meet the operating budget goals as well as the goal of building reserves. Reserves are available in order to support the camp through all seasons of the fiscal year and in case of major operational disruptions or surprises.

**Recommendation 2: *In light of Camp's current size, complexity, organizational ability, and liability exposure, seek counsel on the most appropriate relationship between Friends Camp and NEYM in regards to legal status, liability, and operations.***

Recommendation 2 Progress and Priorities:

- The Friends Camp Committee had a lively discussion about this important topic at our April 2024 meeting and the possible creation of a working group or advisory committee to address the question of legal organizational structure.
- Friends Camp Director is in conversation with NEYM Secretary, Program Director, and members of Coordinating & Advisory about ways that this work could move forward. Due to the importance and complexity of these questions, NEYM as a whole will need space to prioritize this work in order to fully take it on.

**Recommendation 3: *Prioritize tending to the on-going spiritual and programmatic relationship between Friends Camp and the wider Yearly Meeting in order to ensure consistent, integrated, age appropriate, and invitational programming in spiritual development and Quaker practice. Saying that Friends Camp is a ministry of our Yearly Meeting is not enough to make it so. Commit to regularly bringing together camp leadership and Yearly Meeting leadership, especially those serving in youth ministry contexts in both the Yearly Meeting and local meetings in New England, to tend the spiritual fire at camp.***

Recommendation 3 Progress and Priorities:

- Friends Camp Director offered an intergenerational play workshop at Living Faith in April.
- Teen & Outreach Ministries Coordinator Collee Williams will visit Friends Camp this summer to spend time with our Rising Leaders. We are excited to welcome Collee!

**Recommendation 4: *Ensure that Friends Camp can be a potential entry point or stepping stone for those called to the Quaker path. Offer more navigational assistance that meets these individuals and families where they are in their spiritual journey. For those interested in exploring Quakerism further, build bridges between Friends Camp and wider participation among Friends. These bridges can only be built from "both sides" beginning both at Camp and also in our Yearly Meeting programs and local meetings where we hope to effectively and intentionally receive and nurture Quaker-curious seekers of all ages and backgrounds. These efforts will, by necessity, be experimental and emergent and will require on-going commitment, communication, and attention. Another component of ensuring that Camp can serve as an entry point into the Quaker faith, is maintaining the presence of Friends at Camp, thus making it possible for those at Camp to build personal connections and worship with Quakers. Continue to prioritize the presence of those***

*grounded in Quaker faith and practice at Camp. While campers and staff of any or no faith background bring richness and spiritual wisdom to Camp, exposure to Quakers and Quakerism is an essential part of both the Camp experience and the potential role Camp can play for Quaker-curious seekers. In regards to composition of the camp population, it is currently true that all Quaker campers whose families have identified that they want to go to camp by the fall are able to enroll in camp. This past summer, about 17% of campers were members or attenders at Quaker Meetings. 15% of staff grew up Quaker, and an additional 13% identify as “Quaker-ish” (exploring the Quaker path). Beyond Quaker campers and counselors, seek ways to include individuals with a depth of understanding of Quaker faith and the spiritual development of children and youth, as well as gifts of teaching and spiritual nurture. Seek ways for New England Friends with a call to youth ministry to participate in the spiritual life at camp including outside of the typical role of counselor.*

Recommendation 4 Progress and Priorities:

- We are trying out a new position of “chaplain” for 4 weeks at camp this summer, held by Maggie Fiori (former Young Friends Coordinator of NEYM). After the summer, we will evaluate the impact of this position on spiritual development and Quaker practices at camp and explore ways to continue it and extend the invitation to be a chaplain more widely.
- Again this summer, our entire camp staff will share Worship and lunch with Friends at Vassalboro Meeting during our orientation, at Vassalboro Friends Meeting. Groups of teen campers also share worship at Vassalboro 3 times throughout the summer.
- We are collaborating with the NEYM Archives Committee to preserve and share important records and memories about the founding of Friends Camp in the summer of 2024. It is our hope to share these at NEYM Sessions in August (and at other times) as a way for Friends more widely to connect with Friends Camp as a longstanding and rich ministry of Quakers in New England. We hope this will create the opportunity to foster connections with Friends who have not otherwise been acquainted with Friends Camp.
- Friends Camp Director is collaborating with the NEYM Israel / Palestine working group to prepare for difficult conversations that may arise at camp this summer. We agree that camp is the place for campers and young adults to learn skills of difficult conversations.

