

Permanent Board  
27th day, 9th month, 2025  
Monadnock Quaker Meeting, Jaffrey NH and on Zoom

**PB 25-48** Interim Recording Clerk

Friends approved Martin Forsythe to serve as Recording Clerk for this meeting.

**PB 25-49** Roll call

The following Friends were in attendance for the conduct of this meeting for worship with a concern for discernment of the business of New England Yearly Meeting.

Members of Permanent Board

Present: Susan Davies (Vassalboro Friends Meeting, PB Clerk, Zoom); Martin Forsythe (Putney Friends Meeting/attending Mt. Toby); Mary Zwirner (Beacon Hill Friends Meeting, Zoom); Martha Schwope (Wellesley Monthly Meeting, Zoom); Elizabeth Hansen (Westerly Monthly Meeting, Zoom); Liesa Stamm (Hartford Monthly Meeting); Newell Isbell Shinn (Mount Toby Friends Meeting, Zoom); Darcy Drayton (Weare Monthly Meeting); Thomas Brenner (Worcester Friends Meeting, Zoom); Meg Klepack (Portland Friends Meeting, Zoom); Willa Taber (Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting); Travis Belcher (Monadnock Quaker Meeting); Edward Mair (Amesbury Monthly Meeting, Zoom); Palma Vaccaro (Hartford Monthly Meeting); Kathleen Wooten (Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting); Morgan Wilson (Framingham Friends Meeting); LouAnne McDonald (Hartford Friends Meeting); Frances Lightsom (West Falmouth Preparative Meeting); Connie Kincaid-Brown (Hanover Friends Meeting)

Regrets: Allison Randall (Keene Friends Meeting)

Absent: Carolyne Jordan (West Falmouth Preparative Meeting); Kimberly Allen (Durham Friends Meeting)

Ex Officio members: Sadie Forsythe (Nominating Clerk, Putney/attending Mt. Toby); Jacqueline Stillwell (Supervisor of the YM Secretary, Monadnock Quaker Meeting); Janet Hough (NEYM M&C Clerk, Cobscook Monthly Meeting); Noah Bishop Merrill (NEYM Secretary, Putney Friends Meeting); Marian Dalton (NEYM Treasurer, Brunswick Friends Meeting); Philip Veatch (NEYM Presiding Clerk, Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting); Sarah Gant (NEYM Meeting Accompaniment Group clerk); Douglas Keith (NEYM Finance Committee Clerk, Hartford Monthly Meeting); Rebecca Leuchack (Providence, past presiding clerk)

## Visitors

Betsy Cazden (Providence Friends Meeting); Sandy Harvey (Dover Friends Meeting, clerk of Dover Quarter); NiaDwynwen Thomas (NEYM Program Director, Northampton Friends Meeting); Regina McCarthy (Wellesley Friends Meeting); Lucy Meadows (Beacon Hill Friends Meeting, Nominating shepherd for Permanent Board); Carl Williams (Past M&C clerk, Plainfield Friends Meeting, Zoom); Mallie Wooten (Fresh Pond Friends Meeting, tech support); Elizabeth Hacala (NEYM Events Coordinator); Leslie Manning (Durham Friends Meeting & Three Rivers Meeting, Zoom)

### **PB 25-50** Permanent Board Clerk Report

The clerk welcomed new members of the Permanent Board and offered gratitude to those whose terms of service have concluded: Donn Wienholtz and Dianne Wienholtz. Friends also offered thanks to Carl Williams, who is stepping down from clerk of Ministry and Council and to Willa Taber, whose term as PB Recording Clerk has concluded.

### **PB 25-51** Permanent Board Minutes

Friends approved the minutes of the July 29, 2025, called Permanent Board meeting with the understanding that minor corrections could be sent to Martin Forsythe for inclusion.

### **PB 25-52** Sessions 2025 Minutes

We are grateful to the clerks table, Michelle Wright, Phil Veatch, and Sara Hubner for their attention to detail in finalizing the minutes from Sessions 2025. Once finalized, the minutes will be posted on the NEYM website at <https://neym.org/who/governance/decisions-discernment>.

### **PB 25-53** Friends Camp 2026 budget

Friends approved the operating budget for Friends Camp for fiscal year 2026.

In presenting this budget the Yearly Meeting Secretary drew Friends' attention to the faithfulness in crafting a budget that emphasizes operating a surplus as a critical component to responsible operation of a camp with significant ongoing maintenance costs for the physical plant. The budget's increase in healthcare expenditure is a response to increased need for distributing medications to campers. The Friends Camp endowment, approved by PB in May, has now been created and has received significant contributions.

### **PB 25-54** Yearly Meeting Secretary's Report

The Yearly Meeting Secretary gave a verbal report, testifying to the fact that Friends across New England are engaged in responding to the challenges of the present

moment in many ways. This has been a season where our YM Secretary has been called into wider service among the web of Friends internationally. This is an aspect of the charge of serving as the Yearly Meeting Secretary; a reminder to us that the work we do in service on behalf of New England Friends is not for us alone. We are part of a wider body, a global body. There are many ways that Friends in New England are serving that broader call. The following are a few of the examples that were shared:

Cat Chapin-Bishop (Mt. Toby) and Mike Shell (Worcester), supported by Nia Thomas and Elizabeth Hacala, have been hosting monthly check-in calls for Friends engaged in support for immigrant rights across the Yearly Meeting. Based on these calls and the contributions of several Friends actively involved in their local contexts, the YM is hosting a collection of curated resources at neym.org (<https://neym.org/resources-support-immigration-justice>).

Beacon Hill Friends Meeting is one of several meetings that, with NEYM assisting in making connections with attorneys, have developed protocols for how the meeting will respond in cases of ICE activity in or around their meetinghouses, mindful of the current injunction protecting Friends meetinghouses to some extent. Some of these have been shared with the Yearly Meeting. These documents are not being posted publicly; meetings interested in seeing these guidelines as part of their own processes of discernment should contact the Yearly Meeting Secretary at [ymsec@neym.org](mailto:ymsec@neym.org).

In early September there was an interfaith march from Lexington, Massachusetts, to the “Embrace” sculpture on Boston Common in support of democracy and the rights of immigrants. More than five Friends meetings participated, as well. The Presiding Clerk participated in the beginnings of the march, and the NEYM Secretary was asked by the MA Council of Churches to offer prayers in English and in Spanish at the conclusion of this march.

This fall the Yearly Meeting is going through two significant staff transitions. Xinef Afriam (they/them) has assumed their duties as the new Young Friends coordinator. The vision and possibility that Xinef sees for that work is encouraging. Our beloved office manager Sara Hubner has expressed an intention to retire following Sessions 2026. The work of planning for this transition and the required transfer of knowledge is underway. The Yearly Meeting approved expanding the role of Elizabeth Hacala from a part-time events coordinator role to a full-time Operations Director role. There will be shifts in administrative support as this transition comes to life.

Deep thanks were offered to Rebecca Leuchak, reflecting on her service in the role of Presiding Clerk. There are many aspects in this work; one for them is care for others who are serving in challenging roles serving the yearly meeting. She brought a spirit of artistic creativity and joy. This challenged us and bonded us. Her care for the *whole* yearly meeting stands out; Rebecca called in both Friends who have a long history of high-profile engagement with the yearly meeting as well as those who have deep roots in their local meetings but less visible connection to the broader yearly meeting. It can be tempting to forget that we are seeking to serve on behalf of all Friends living and worshipping across New England as Friends. Rebecca's service called us to reject that temptation.

The planning for Sessions 2026 is in progress and the Presiding Clerks' report (attached) provides some updates on that process. Additionally, since Sessions 2025 there have been two substantive meetings to move forward with the planning process. By the end of October or early November there will be a survey distributed that will feed next steps in the decision-making process. By late November or early December, it is hoped that there will be an announcement about the location and dates.

The Secretary also offered a brief update on development efforts and shared about the work of the Living Stream Travel Team consisting of Michael Waejda, Noah Bishop Merrill, Donn Weinholtz, Fran Lightsom, Jeremiah Dickinson, and Jacqueline Stillwell. They have begun outreach to local meetings, aiming to learn about the life of those meetings, to articulate clearly the ministries that are supported by the Yearly Meeting, and the resources that are engaged in supporting those ministries. The travel team has begun engagement with nine Friends meetings. This work is based in relationship and conversation; shared awareness of the condition of the wider yearly meeting is required to strengthen our development program. Since Sessions 2025, two fundraising appeals have been sent with additional appeals to be sent soon. This fundraising communication is also ministry and offers an opportunity to share about the Life that is present.

It is difficult to make financial projections when there is a lot in flux at the end of the Yearly Meeting's fiscal year (September 30, 2025). Acknowledging this, the Secretary offered some reflections on our financial condition. There will be a shortfall relative to the individual giving goal in the 2025 budget, but we exceeded last year's individual giving total. Despite the increased operating costs of Sessions at UMass Amherst, the direct expenses of Sessions were exceeded more than we had projected. Including the indirect expenses of Staff time preparing for Sessions, we still had a deficit on Sessions, but we did better than we thought we would do. We are reducing the gap. If we can accomplish some of the goals that we have laid out for ourselves in reconsidering the structure of Sessions, we are hopeful that Sessions can be more sustainable.

For other reasons we are still likely to have a nearly \$30,000 deficit. We received a one-time payment this year of \$53,000 in funds from the Employee Retention Tax Credit. At the end of the fiscal year, we are anticipating that our reserves will be nearly \$20,000 higher than they were at the beginning of the year. The deficit from Sessions will be covered by monies from the Future Uses fund. Our projection at this point is that at the end of this fiscal year our operating reserves will be \$58,000 and the Future Uses fund will be at about \$260,000.

We successfully got through Sessions with a lower deficit than our worst projections. We had 100 newcomers and it was the largest Sessions since the beginning of the pandemic. We doubled our operating reserves. We have increased both monthly meeting and individual giving. The monthly meeting contributions exceeded our budget. With transitions in staffing, we see a clear path to reduced reliance on the Future Uses fund.

The Secretary noted that the Yearly Meeting is eager to receive feedback on the fundraising appeal communications acknowledging that it is challenging to craft short communications that are visually interesting and impactful.

#### **PB 25-55** Travel to Cuba

Friends endorsed travel minutes for Noah Bishop Merrill and Jacqueline Stillwell to travel to Cuba Yearly Meeting.

In endorsing this travel, we heard about the depth of meaning of this invitation to be present with Cuban Friends as they celebrate the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the first Quaker missionaries in Cuba. Noah and Jackie have both traveled to Cuba multiple times. Their fluency in Spanish and the continuity of relationship that they bring to this visit will be a gift as they encourage Friends in Cuba during this extremely challenging time. We commend them to the care of Cuban Friends with love and hope that we might continue to strengthen our Puente de Amigos connections.

#### **PB 25-56** Called Meeting on Gaza

The Permanent Board approved holding a called meeting on October 18, 2025, from 3 to 6 pm via Zoom for the purpose of sharing and encouraging work that is already being done in the Yearly Meeting, and discerning how we might be called to respond to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. This meeting is being called by the Permanent Board in reflection of the need to gather many Friends together with greater time for discernment than was afforded at Sessions. We pray that by joining together as a larger stream we might expand our capacity to hold the fullness of our grief and be called by

Spirit to greater clarity in how to let our lives speak in this moment. The clerk of the Permanent Board and the Presiding Clerk are charged with planning the details of this called meeting; many members committed to attending.

**PB 25-57** Indigenous Relations Resource Group Purpose, Procedures, and Composition

The Presiding Clerk presented a recommendation from the Coordinating and Advisory committee to rename the Right Relationship Resource Group to the Indigenous Relations Resource Group (IRRG) with an updated Purpose, Procedures, and Composition (PPC) document. Friends approved; the updated PP&C is attached.

**PB 25-58** Narrowing of Charge for IRRG

In discerning the PPC for the reformulated Indigenous Relations Resource Group, it became clear that this group does not have the resources and expertise to be a resource for relationship building beyond Indigenous communities, despite the broader original charge of the Right Relationship Resource Group from Sessions minute 2024-62 to “consider BIPOC communities broadly in any discernment of financial reparations.” Friends approved the recommendation from Coordinating & Advisory (C&A) that the IRRG be released from this broader charge to focus on serving the Yearly Meeting as a resource group focused on Indigenous communities.

We are clear that the work of reparative relationship building with Black and people of color communities is vital and deserves focused ongoing attention. Friends asked C&A to bring back to the February Permanent Board meeting a proposal for how this work might be attended to most faithfully.

**PB 25-59** IRRG connection to Sessions Minute

Friends approved designating IRRG as the body responsible for carrying out the research and retrospective justice work described in the “Revised Minute on Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group,” Sessions minute 2025-49.

**PB 25-60** NABS affiliate membership

Permanent Board approved the IRRG’s request to apply, on behalf of New England Yearly Meeting, for affiliate membership in the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS). NABS is an Indigenous-led coalition of individuals and organizations working to support the healing of boarding school survivors and descendants. Membership requires no fees; as an affiliate member NEYM would be pledging solidarity with boarding school survivors and communities. We hope that this relationship with NABS will provide monthly meetings with additional opportunities for

ongoing education and action. The IRRG will be responsible for applying for and maintaining this affiliate membership status.

The IRRG's request to make a contribution to NABS will be given additional seasoning and brought back to the Permanent Board in due course.

**PB 25-61** Nominating Committee

Sadie Forsythe, clerk of NEYM nominating committee, offered gratitude for the clarity in nominating work that resulted from Jacqueline Stillwell's seven years of service in the role, during which there was substantial consolidation and reorganization of the nominating process. Nominating committee has heard from a number of committees expressions of being stuck in an uncertain, undecided state while waiting for clarifications on their Purposes, Procedures, and Composition guidance; with this context we offered thanks for today's work to clarify the work before our resource groups.

Friends **approved** the attached slate of nominations.

**PB 25-62** Quarterly meetings

The clerk of Permanent board gave a brief verbal report on the ongoing work of the PB clerk and the Presiding Clerk in attending to the condition of quarterly meetings. A visioning day will be held on April 11th, 2026, offering an opportunity to explore the historical and spiritual background of how quarterly meetings came to be and what their purposes were.

Friends closed with a period of waiting worship.