

Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Specially Called Executive Committee Meeting 24 Eleventh Month 2024

MINUTES

Interim Business Meeting clerk, Bil Carlie, welcomed Friends and opened the meeting from the silence with the following quote:

For Friends the most important consideration is not the right action, but a right inward state out of which right action will arise. Given the right inward state, right action is inevitable. Inward state and outward action are parts of a single whole.

Howard Brinton 1943

The only item on the agenda tonight is from the *ad hoc* Quaker Call Committee for approval of a contract with SEYM for a start up coordinator.

Bill summarized the actions to date. At the Fall Interim Business Meeting, we approved providing an accounting fund to accept donations for and an SEYM donation of seed money to a proposal from Fort Myers Monthly Meeting and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Fort Myers to establish an independent Friends school in Fort Myers (Watershed Friends School).

We are now requested by the *ad-hoc* Quaker Call Committee to approve a contract with Benjamin Collins, a start up coordinator, to study the feasibility of the school and create organizational structures to support it. The contract and other documents were circulated. Questions were asked about the scope of the contract and the reasoning for SEYM being the contracting entity.

Dan Vaughen explained that the funds that were approved at FIBM would be used for this consultant. Friends had other questions about the relationship between SEYM and the school project, as well questions about scope of work of the consultant.

Friends raised questions about process. SEYM at Fall Interim Business Meeting did not agree to enter into the covenant for the project. The yearly meeting clerk did send materials to all monthly meeting clerks for discussion in monthly meetings but only two weeks ago. It was clear from FIBM that there is a lot of interest in the idea of a Friends School. The question remained over what role SEYM should adopt in such a project.

The proposed consulting contract would put no further obligation on SEYM. The *ad hoc* Quaker Call Committee is not a legal entity. Fort Myers Monthly Meeting (FMMM) could legally sign the contract and SEYM can simply transfer the funds to FMMM. Joel Cook, treasurer, said that we can sign the contract as the financial supporter, but we are not the entity with which the consultant should contract.

We are still in discernment. We are still gathering information. Tonight, we are determining a path forward that doesn't outrun our process.

Over an hour into the meeting, a Friend reported that the dream of the Watershed Friends School in Fort Myers seems to have run into some stops and that it is not moving forward at this time. It was reported that

the space for the proposed school on the Fort Myers UU campus has been leased to another school. However, some Friends still a desire to research the possibility of Friends education in Florida. The clerk of the *ad hoc* Quaker Call Committee reports that the covenant between Fort Myers Monthly Meeting and the UU Congregation of Fort Myers is still in place.

After further discussion, the clerk suggested that we lay this matter aside for this evening in that the actions taken at FIBM were in support of a specific proposed project that will not proceed at this time. Further, the called EC meeting was premised on the need for immediate action to move forward with this specific project that apparently will no longer proceed. Given this understanding, there is no reason that this matter cannot return to the normal order of business at this time. This return to normal order will allow time for a more fulsome discernment and presentation of matters at Yearly Business Meeting. The *ad hoc* Quaker Call Committee can bring forward a request for a budget to fund consultation, or other business, to Winter Interim Business Meeting. Under the normal order of business, matters related to the budget are prepared at Winter Interim Business Meeting for inclusion in the Documents in Advance for Yearly Business Meeting where all matters of the budget are discerned. Friends agreed to lay this matter aside.

Friends closed with silent worship and in gratitude.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Dykes,
Recording Clerk

Participants:

Clearwater Friends

Eileen Zingaro

Deland Friends

Ed Chew

Cheryl Demers-Holton

Carl Hersh

Dan Vaughen

Beverly Ward

Fort Lauderdale Meeting

Brian Humphrey

Fort Myers Meeting

Suzanne Frechette

Jacksonville Worship Group

Dan McLoughlin

Gainesville Meeting

Liz Dykes

Jean Larson

Miami Monthly Meeting

Brian Olson

Brad Stocker

Orlando Monthly Meeting

Rachel Dellinger

Ed Lesnick

Others in attendance:

Marcia Carlson

Benjamin Collins

(Consultant)

Bill Petrarca (UU Church of Fort Myers)

Palm Beach Monthly Meeting

John Palozzi

Saint Augustine WG

Hope Ascher

Saint Petersburg Quakers

Bill Carlie

Susan Wade

Sarasota Monthly Meeting

Eva Hersh

Tallahassee Monthly Meeting

Neil Andersen

Phoebe Andersen

Tampa Monthly Meeting

Jan Dahm

Lisa Erazmus

Treasure Coast WG

Joel Cook (Palm Beach MM)

Amy Richards