

Vestry Meeting Minutes (approved)

R.E. Lee Memorial Episcopal Church

September 21, 2015

The regular meeting of the Vestry of R.E. Lee Memorial Church was held on Monday, September 21, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall of the church.

In Attendance: George Brooke, John Burleson (Junior Warden), Susan Cross, Tom Crittenden (Rector), Doug Cumming, Carole Elmore, Jim Farrar (Senior Warden), Julia Grossman, Diana Kenney, Elizabeth Knapp, Sharon Massie (Program Director), Holt Merchant, Grigg Mullen, Frank Settle, Don Whittington, Daniel Wubah; Anna Crockett (Clerk). **Absent:** Amy Holston **Guests:** Parishioners: Jay Crawford, Susan Lawrence, Jerry and Ann Nay; BRW Architects: Bruce Wardell

Opening: Tom opened the meeting noting current prayer concerns.

Approval of August Minutes: Minutes of the August meeting were accepted as published.

BRW Architects

Dave Hansen, Chair of the Space Planning Committee, provided an introduction to the architect's report by describing the next steps: 1) seek parishioner feedback to the architect's presentation of drawings between services on September 27; 2) get clarification about how to address financing and funding with respect to the Undercroft drawings in Phase I: 3) decide how to bring the Parish House up to date five to seven years down the road while making some focused renovations in Phase I.

Bruce presented layout plans that are the most recent of three iterations based on feedback from representatives of the full spectrum of parish committees and programs. The process included asking questions, listening, and meeting to develop designs that looked at goals for Undercroft and Parish House. There was also coordination with the organ builder about space needs. BRW is beginning to facilitate research into applying for historic tax credits for the Undercroft work, and has developed a series of ways the Undercroft could be developed by incorporating new facilities and modernizing mechanical systems. Estimated renovation cost in the current plan is \$1,000,000. An elevator or dumb waiter to assist the Altar Guild in transporting items up and down the stairs to the Sacristy is not currently in the plans, but Bruce will study options. He confirmed that the restrooms and access to the Undercroft rooms will be wheelchair accessible.

In terms of the Parish House, Bruce explained recent thinking about possibly keeping the college ministry there, enlarging classrooms, and installing a full-sized

modern, fully accessible elevator. He explained the advantage of making some space changes really well now that we can live with until Phase II (likely five or six years down the road) as opposed to a thin broad plan for all space, i.e. new paint and carpeting. Furthermore, it is likely that painting and carpeting would need to be redone after the more extensive renovation in Phase II. He estimated that the scope of this work could likely be accomplished with the \$200,00 that has been conceptually allocated to the Parish Refreshment in Phase I.

Dave concluded the report by summarizing that much work is going on at multiple levels: 1) the current designs are the result multiple iterations and feedback from diverse constituencies; 2) the Space Planning Committee consensus was to make important transformative long-term improvements that will set us up for long-term success and save the cosmetics (paint and carpet) for Phase II.

Jim's response to Dave's question about the funding process was that we first needed documents that would allow us to share the story and continue to solicit input from the parish. The next step includes producing drawings and materials to conduct first a quiet, than a public phase of the campaign. He concluded that we are on track with these steps.

Tom added that since numerous community groups use our facilities, the Undercroft plan includes a Red Door Room. Having an easily accessible, easily secured room separated from rest of facilities would allow us to continue those non-parish community ministries.

Committee Reports:

Finance: Reporting from the September 8 Finance Committee meeting, Daniel noted that finances are in order, the Investment Report reflected recent volatility in the market, there were no major findings in the audit, discussion of the budget process for 2016 is continuing, and there is a potential impact on the budget of the name change issue. Don added that pledges are slightly behind schedule,. Of greater concern is that Free Will offers approximately \$10,000 below budgeted amount. Also of concern is the water leak of unknown origin that has almost doubled the water cost to \$800. John reported that the plumber has capped one of the toilets and that W&L is coming in net week to fix the outdoor leak. John will follow up on Sharon's suggestion to check the icemaker.

Property: John reported that painting, pressure washing and work on the leaded windows continues. The latter is critical to keep them from falling out. The cheap material on the outside of the elevator shaft will be protected against disintegration and the Rose window recaulked.

Stewardship: Tom reported that the Stewardship campaign will be launched this Sunday with Marcy Orr 's lay sermon and distribution of pledge packets.

Jim thanked Vestry members for checking the membership for their liaison committees to ensure committee members are in proper cycles for compliance with the bylaws.

Funding for Youth Program: Susan Lawrence spoke as a guest parishioner, asking the Vestry to keep this area in mind for the 2016 budget. She emphasized the importance of our Youth program, and concern that we are currently asking two individuals to work with our youth for \$2/hour for a total cost of \$100/month. Creating connections with our youth is a significant job that requires the right staff, and should not be a nine-month position. She believes that the parish should make staff and funding available to support a strong youth program. In response to Julia's question about who is currently working with youth, Sharon explained that at this time she is leading the high school group and Erika Brooke is helping with middle school youth. Araba Wubah is helping with the groups as she is able. We are not currently paying youth workers. Sharon added that, although there is a good community of youth, a spiritual component in the program has been missing and she is working on filling that gap. Attendance at the relatively new youth-prepared breakfast has ranged from five to eight youth, not all of whom are parish members. Furthermore, there are efforts to plan more events with a purpose, e.g. the upcoming Spaghetti luncheon for Cantastic, a fundraiser for the RARA Food Pantry. Susan asked for significant funding for a fuller leadership presence throughout the year, concluding that it is hard to get kids back when we lose them, and that having kids involved in the church was a life-saver for many, also expressed by her son.

Old Business

Church Name:

Tom opened the discussion by asking how the matter of the name change will be resolved. House meetings and forums in the Parish Hall are scheduled for October. There are several schools of thought, including the petition delivered to the Vestry at this meeting listing parishioners who support a decision by congregation vote. However, the Bishop's recent letter to the Vestry makes it clear that the decision on the name change is the Vestry's responsibility, after soliciting input from the parish.

Tom expressed his main personal concern about a possible close Vestry vote, and whether a simple majority vote reflects strong leadership. As he had expressed earlier, he is opposed to casting a deciding vote in case of a tie. Leadership should have greater consensus and work on an issue more in this case. Tom opened the floor for insights.

George described the potential for divisiveness with both parish and Vestry votes. He has heard that a certain segment of the congregation is feeling disenfranchised. Grigg observed that every parishioner will have an equal say on the issue.

Pointing out that the Bishop brings a more or less unbiased view of the situation. Frank expressed: 1)we need to take our Vestry elections seriously and accept that

we have a responsibility to fulfill our elected role; 2) it is much better that the Vestry, not the congregation, takes the heat for the decision; 3) the current movement for a parish vote reflects the national trend of distrust of elected officials.

Doug expressed his wish to have a quantifiable indicator of parish views before casting his vote, but concurred with the Bishop's guidance that feedback should not be in the form of a parish vote. In terms of the proposed Comment Card, he proposed an alternate Likert-scale survey that would include five response options: 1 – strongly support not changing name; 2 – strongly ambivalent or uncomfortably torn; 3) see both sides; 4) strongly support changing the name; 5) no view . These options would make it easier to evaluate parishioner views.

There was general support for Doug's proposed survey, while several members noted hearing considerable support for a parish vote, and even an assumption among some parishioners that they would have this opportunity.

Jim observed that while some parishioners may not think the Vestry has been transparent enough in its handling of the name change matter it is worth remembering that these are uncharted waters and we are taking it one step at a time. We must focus on what is best for the parish, and all must do his or her best to get input from the congregation to help understand their views. The survey will be an important piece of that information. By way of example, Jim recounted the story of the Washington and Lee Board of Trustees' vote on co-education in 1984, and the comment from Chris Compton, then-Justice of the Virginia Supreme Court, who after the 17-7 vote for coeducation then asked the entire board to be unanimous in support of the change. Jim concluded that the Vestry needs to have the strength to do what they have been elected to do, gain insight from the parish as best we can and move forward. We cannot change the timing of the campaign. We need to make serious decisions and move forward with the process.

Jay Crawford spoke as a guest parishioner, stating that he had learned much at the meeting, and liked much of what he had heard. He shared as well that many elder parishioners do not want to feel that they have been railroaded into a decision, without time to think the issue through, even if they disagree with the outcome. Jay expressed the risk of further alienating those who feel anguish at being rushed if the decision is made soon. He also asked if lawyers have looked at possible legal ramifications of a name change. Tom responded that organizations frequently make names changes, and that the resulting changes are resolvable.

Susan Cross expressed support for a Vestry vote, in part based on the historical precedent that it was the Vestry that voted for the name change to R.E. Lee Memorial. In addition, she has spoken with others who have been in positions of authority and studied leadership. All agree that, while it may be counterintuitive, a Vestry vote would be less divisive. Finally, she stated that the parish has a representative form of governance, with the Vestry as its elected decision-making body.

Sharon suggested Vestry members going out to speak with older members of the congregation. Tom noted that he had met with Kendal group, and felt that it was a candid and productive discussion. He mentioned hearing the argument against a name change based on Lee's role in Lexington after the war, and that lifting up why the name was change might be a viable approach to looking at the name. Moreover, the consensus of Space Planning Committee was to consider keeping Lee's name in a new name (e.g. R.E Lee Church of the Reconciliation). Further discussion included the points that many other churches founded by significant individuals are not named for them, and that funds for the church were raised by the Rector who travelled throughout the north and the south invoking Lee's name. The concluding view was the importance now of communication and transparency in terms of the parish.

Daniel observed that Vestry members are elected leaders. There are times when leaders can just make decisions and other times when they have to listen. We have to give parishioners enough time and opportunities to feel that they been heard, no matter what the outcome. Thus, we need to lay out the process and communicate it to everyone. Once the vote is taken, all Vestry members need to support it

Grigg moved to continue with parish meetings, distribute the proposed parish survey to each parishioner, and require a two-thirds vote of the Vestry on the final decision regarding the name change. Frank seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

It was further agreed that the Bishop's letter should be included with the communication to the parish about the Vestry-approved process, and that the surveys would be send out after the parish meetings, with a week allowed for return. Doug will send a draft of the survey to Vestry members for suggestions. Jim will send out a draft of the communication to the parish for suggestions to this as well.

Vestry Elections.

Tom reported that there are currently five candidates for four positions: Pete Fyfe, Woody Sadler, Tom Gosse, Susan Lawrence and Keith Gibson. The election will be held on October 11. Bios will need to be published, in compliance with the Bylaws. Tom noted that he would like to keep nominations open a few more days

Lee Portrait

This item was tabled for discussion at next month's meeting.

New Business

Gadsden Trust Support for Capital Improvement

Jim reported that Gadsden Guidelines allow for 25% of annual trust income (currently approximately \$17,000) to be allocated for parish capital improvements, providing certain conditions are met. The process requires a Vestry request first to

the Trustees and then to the Gadsden Committee. Funds can be requested in 2015 and 2016 to support the capital campaign.

175th Anniversary Observance

Tom shared that Mo Littlefield and Woody Sadler have asked about planned celebrations for the 175th anniversary of the founding of Grace Church. Tom suggested that All Saint's Day might be an appropriate time, and asked Vestry members to send him suggestions. It was agreed that Mo and Woody should be invited to participate in the planning.

Suggestion Box

Julia updated additions to the Suggestions Box that included resuming printing of the Doxology in the Bulletin, publishing the plan for name change, and setting up automatic drafts for pledges. She noted that the latter is already available

Program Director: Sharon reported that Sunday School, Children's Chapel and the 5:00 Sunday services are off to a good start.

The Senior High group has begun daily breakfasts with cooking and devotion, and the youth will hold a fundraising Spaghetti Lunch after the 10:30 service on September 27 for Cantastic! - a canned food sculpture contest at the RARA Food pantry on October 11. They participated with youth from Lexington Presbyterian, Trinity United Methodist Church and St. Patrick's Catholic Church.

Comments by the Wardens

Jim thanked Vestry members for their work, encouraging them to stay focused and support each other.

Church Security

This matter was tabled to next month's meeting.

Comments by the Rector

Tom announced that he and Christy will celebrate the end of his radiation treatments by spending the weekend at Snowshoe on October 11. David Cox will be the guest celebrant.

Closing Prayer: Diana offered the closing prayer.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Next Vestry Meeting; 19 October 2015 at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Anna Crockett, Clerk