

Called Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

August 14, 2016

Attendees: Carol Balliet, Jim Spickard, Bill Sweet. Pat Sweet, Ruth Lofgren, Miriam Moore, Frederick Melvin III, Kristal Melvin, Gloria Alneyda Stemper, Laura Claghorn, Gretchen Haynes, James H Goslin, Lee Teran, Margaret Engel, Marian Carter, Robin Harvey, Leilah Powell, Janet Southwood, Ken Southwood

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This called meeting was announced seven days previously, on August 7, as required in our corporate by-laws.

The clerk announced the purpose of this called meeting, which was to ask the Meeting as a Whole to provide insights to the Property Committee regarding best ways to respond to recent incidents of vandalism, in order to provide the most appropriate means of stewardship of our buildings and grounds.

There have been instances of vandalism in the last few months, including two large broken windows and spray-painted graffiti in May, unlocked doors, homeless persons using the bathrooms, including sleeping there. The garden hose appears to have been used for washing. There is also evidence of children playing on our grounds, including a small chalk-drawn hopscotch pattern on the porch floor – but we certainly do not consider these to be signs of “vandalism.”

Concern has been expressed by members of the Property Committee, although it has not yet met this month as a committee to consider a solution to preventing further vandalism. The following consideration has been emailed among some Friends (but this does not come from the Committee as a recommendation) – Meeting could hire an individual to spend about an hour after dark each evening, to check locked doors and present a presence on the grounds. The cost could be up to \$500 per month. Some Friends do know a young man who lives nearby and might be suitable for this work. It might be possible to set up this nightly campus check for one month, then reduce the checking to fewer and fewer times a week until the vandalism disappears. (This would be an example of the “broken window” principle, in which acts of vandalism no longer occur on properties that are clearly not empty or unwatched.)

Suggestions during the called meeting included the following: (1) install security video cameras that record, but are not monitored at the time but may be reviewed later; (2) install a large metal roll- up door in front of all the bathroom doors in

the breezeway, which can be securely locked; and (3) post a large sign in a window of the Community Room, reminding visitors that “this is a safe place, please do no harm.” (A Friend suggested that such a sign might better be worded as “This is a peaceful place. Please do no harm.”) A member of the Property Committee stated that city police have also been asked to check out our property every evening, but it is not clear that this is being done – and if so, it does not seem to have stopped the problem.

Comments and questions included the following: (1) Ours is a small faith community, and our resources of time and energy are limited. (2) We seek to provide a welcoming presence in the wider community, so we should carefully balance any type of “security” with our Meeting’s overall intent of being open and welcoming to all. (3) if we were to hire a person to monitor our campus after dark, what training should that person have? (4) What would be our liability if someone were hurt in this process, and what does our liability insurance cover in this regard? (5) What message would it send to the neighboring community if we engage a security person – and is it aligned with Quaker values?

In closing, the clerk reflected the sense of the Meeting that no decision or directive be made at this time. These minutes will be shared with the Property Committee before their next committee meeting.

Carol Balliet, clerk

Gretchen Haynes, acting recording clerk