

**St. Francis Episcopal Church
Potomac Parish
February 21, 2023 Vestry Meeting**

The Vestry convened online via Zoom on Tuesday, February 21, 2023, at 7:30 p.m., Fr. Mark presiding. Members attending: Ms. Tendall, senior warden, Ms. Bahar, junior warden, Mr. Feagles, Mr. Jannotta, Mr. Maroulis, Ms. Olson, Mr. Ruf, Dr. Schneider, and Mr. Whitlock. Also attending: Mr. Smith.

Invocation

Fr. Mark led the invocation.

Bible Study

Ms. Bahar led the Bible Study. She read Joel 2: 12 - 13 and reflected on the 40 days in Lent as a time to draw closer to God in our lives and reflected on times in our lives when we feel disconnected. She discussed a number of resources for Lenten devotions, including the app “Pray as You Go,” the Episcopal Church’s “Life Transformed,” Philippians 4:4, the “Word Book,” and the “Interfaith Group in which she participates.

Welcome to New Vestry Members and the Covenant of the Vestry

Fr. Mark welcomed the new Vestry Members –Ms. Olsen, Mr. Ruf, and Dr. Schneider, and Ms. Tendall, new Senior Warden.

Ms. Tendall asked the Vestry to review their duties, as listed in the Covenant and asked all to sign and return it if they had not previously done so. She also said that she is planning the Vestry Orientation for new members on February 28, 2023.

Consent Agenda *(previously circulated electronically)*

Reports in the Consent Agenda

Minutes of January Meeting

The Vestry deferred approval of the January Minutes until the March Vestry meeting.

Rector’s Report (attached)

Parochial Report

Fr. Mark said that the draft of the Parochial Report had been distributed to the Vestry. There were no questions or comments on the draft.

Organ Renovation

Fr. Mark said that Mr. Dove of the Viscount Digital Organ Company had explained that the instrument would be shipped from Italy. The first payment of \$104,000 is due at the signing of the contract; a second payment of \$30,000 is due when the instrument arrives in the U.S. (perhaps in July); and the third and final payment of \$73,000 is due when the work is complete (in about September). Mr. Whitlock noted that \$24,000 had been budgeted as a contingency, to include the electrical

work. The rector and wardens propose that the project be funded in this way: \$80,000 from the gifts and memorials fund; \$70,000 from the employee retention tax credit expected to be received in April or May, \$60,000 from a major gifts campaign; and \$20,000 from reserve funds. The \$60,000 goal for the major gifts campaign seems feasible because a \$25,000 pledge has already been received.

A task force led by Prentiss Feagles and Leigh Alexander plan to launch a special appeal to a select group who have supported the music program in the past after Easter. Another suggestion raised was to ask parishioners subject to the IRA disbursement requirement to consider a charitable donation to the organ appeal.

Vestry Retreat

Fr. Mark said that this year's annual Vestry Retreat will last about one-half day. The Vestry will discuss the church's general goals and projects and plan the strategies for 2024.

Finance Committee and Related Financial Matters

Prentiss Feagles reported that the finance committee task force is soliciting guidance from a group of parishioners who are knowledgeable about financial matters and also seek input from Ms. Krajcik, church financial secretary. The Finance Committee will be a collaborative and consultative committee to advise the Rector and parishioners in making sound financial decisions. He suggested that we consider an outside firm to conduct the annual church audit rather than asking the committee members to take on this responsibility.

Ms. Krajcik, the new financial secretary, has completed integration of the accounting system. The process took less time and at a lower cost than anticipated and is proving to be more efficient and time-saving. Ms. Tendall, the new Senior Warden, has approved the checks for various parish expenses.

Fire Alarm System

Fr. Mark reported that Mr. Randy Earle, the church's fire consultant had conferred with the Montgomery County Fire Marshal's office, and the estimated cost of the upgraded fire alarm system is \$37,146.54, shared equally by St. Francis and Georgetown Hill School (GHS). The upgraded fire system will comply with the Montgomery County Fire Code, including the Fire Code's more stringent requirements for facilities accommodating young children and infants. Work on the fire alarm system will begin after the HVAC system work is completed. The Vestry will investigate whether the church qualifies for a lower insurance premium with the upgraded fire alarm system.

Fr. Mark said that Mr. Earle had devoted a large amount of time to this project and had donated his fee to the church.

Communications Firm and Related Matters

Fr. Mark is meeting with the TreeBranch communications company on various issues and will inform the Vestry on their discussions. Fr. Mark said that Mr. Sean Smith, the church's AV Coordinator, had been absent due his wife's illness, but Ms. Schneider has come in to help with the communications matters in his absence on several occasions.

Fr. Mark said that about 40 – 50 parishioners and others were viewing the Sunday service on-line. He also said this was the only option for some people due to mobility issues, illnesses, etc.

Organist Position and Related Music Matters

Fr. Mark said that the permanent organist choirmaster position had been offered to a candidate in early February, but he declined it. Fr. Mark had been in further discussion with the current supply musician, John Widmann, who is willing to take the post, with a starting date of May 1. He has a good rapport with church members, and Fr. Mark has recommended the Vestry's concurrence in an arrangement by which Mr. Widmann's salary would be based on the diocesan rate for his level of experience and education and the number of estimated hours, adjusted down to allow for a larger number of Sundays away. Mr. Widmann has also been working closely with Joshua Dove from Whitesel Organs for final stop selections on the Viscount organ.

Ms. Mimi Rinaldi who is the choir's new soprano section leader and the choral instructor at Gaithersburg Middle School, is working with the choir in the absence of a choral master during Lent when John has commitments elsewhere.

The church has continued to budget money for the organ's on-going, routine servicing.

Columbarium Fence

David and Anne Mosely have donated money to pay for a new and better quality fence behind the columbarium. The Vestry asked that Father Mark speak to the Moselys about whether they would like a plaque installed on the fence, recognizing their gift.

Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda

Ms. Tendall made a motion, seconded by Ms. Olson to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried.

HVAC

Mr. Whitlock said that shipping the HVAC's air handler and chiller had arrived and would be installed after the old HVAC equipment was removed. The process should be completed between late April and the middle of May. The church will make the first payment of \$100,000, then the second payment for \$200,000 and the third payment for \$300,000 to pay the HVAC project's \$570,000 cost.

In answer to questions from the vestry, Mr. Whitlock noted that the HVAC system provides both heating and cooling. The boiler heats the wall radiators, but as it is 50 years old, the same age as the church buildings, its useful life is ending and subject to period problems. The boiler will be replaced as part of HVAC project's Phase 2. The condition of the heating pipes in the building is unknown. The current supply chain problems resulted in lengthy time horizons to replace worn-out HVAC equipment. The HVAC upgrade will use gas – the oil tanks previously used for the church boiler were removed several years ago.

Miscellaneous Matters

The Vestry discussed various ways to leverage the costs for the organ renovation and upgrades to the buildings and facilities, e.g., replacing the St. Francis Hall's flooring. This income could come from holding church concerts and renting St. Francis Hall to outside groups. Fr. Mark said

that the church had rented the church's facilities once or twice last fall without any problems, e.g., the GHS staff liked to rent St. Francis Hall for the activities. Fr. Mark also said that the church may want to revisit the rental charges as they may be too high.

Motion on Financing the Organ Renovation

Mr. Feagles made a motion, seconded by Dr. Schneider, to approve the planned income sources for the organ renovation – \$80,000 from the Gifts and Memorials Fund, \$70,000 from the federal Employee Retention Tax Credit; \$60,000 from a major parish gift appeal; and \$20,000 from the church operating reserves. The motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Maroulis, Treasurer, presented the Financial Report (attachments). He said that the church's financial situation was good. The church has \$800,000 in investments and \$120,000 in cash (which would go towards Phase 1 of the HVAC project's costs). He also said that GHS did not make the January utility payment, but this was merely a timing issue. We notice it because of the shift to cash basis accounting in the presentation of reports.

Motion to Approve the Treasurer's Report

Ms. Bahar made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jannotta, to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion carried.

Church Signage

There has been no further discussion of changes to the signage on Falls Road. Fr. Mark will discuss the signage issue with GHS officials.

Motion to Adjourn

Ms. Bahar made a motion, seconded by Ms. Tendall, to adjourn. The motion carried.

Adjournment

Fr. Mark led the Vestry in the closing prayer:

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give thine angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for thy love's sake. Amen.

Respectfully submitted,

Les Smith
Clerk