

St. Francis Episcopal Church
September 17, 2024 Vestry Meeting

The Vestry convened online via Zoom on Tuesday, September 17, 2024, at 7:30 p.m., Fr. Mark presiding. Members attending: Ms. Tendall, senior warden, Mr. Feagles, junior warden, Ms. Byam, Mr. Hunter, Ms. Hurdle, Ms. Oleson, Mr. Ruf, Dr. Schneider, Mr. Tester, and Ms. Warren. Also attending: Mr. Smith.

Invocation

Fr. Mark led the invocation.

Bible Study

Ms. Oleson led a Bible study on Micah 6:6-8 that focused on what the Lord requires of us in our daily lives, and our actions with others. The Vestry offered their views on what God requires of us – to show love to everyone and be gracious to others.

Consent Agenda

Audits

Fr. Mark said the 2022 audit is finished, and a copy is posted on the church’s Google drive. The 2023 audit is beginning, and Mr. Maroulis, who will serve as the primary contact with the auditor, has scheduled a meeting with the auditor and our accountant to discuss it. The 2023 audit should be a much faster process, and should be completed by the end of 2024.

Capital Projects

The Vestry and Fr. Mark reviewed a list of capital projects the church had completed since 2016, many of them at lower cost than the Dutton Report’s estimates, because so many were completed by our handyman. Fr. Mark also pointed out that nearly all the projects described had been coordinated and overseen by Shanti Nanan, our parish administrator, who has prioritized effective and cost-conscious maintenance. Georgetown Hill Early School (GHES) has also paid for painting their classrooms and installing flooring, projects that the Dutton Report assumed the church would need to undertake. We have made significant progress, but we are behind the Dutton Report’s recommendations in some areas, and there is plenty of work that we expect to need to do in the coming years. Dr. Schneider and other Vestry members suggested the Vestry publicize the list of completed projects to show parishioners and newcomers to the church how active we have been in caring for our property, how wisely donations have been spent, and what projects are planned for the future.

Facilities Walk-Through

Fr. Mark, several Vestry members, and the GHES principal did a “walk through” of the church’s facilities last week to review their conditions and to plan what repairs need to be done in the coming year and which capital projects we expect to undertake in the next several years. The report will be shared with the vestry next month, after all involved in the walk through have reviewed. The only major project still in progress is Phase II of the HVAC upgrade, and Phase III of the upgrade is the major project we expect to need to complete in the next several years.

Organ Renovation

As mentioned last month, the organ blower failed shortly after our new hybrid instrument was installed, so we are currently relying on digital music only. The digital voicing of the instrument and the preparation of estimates and priorities for further repairs to the pipework cannot be completed until the blower is repaired. Jim's Electric Motor Company, the firm repairing the blower, initially assumed that the blower motor would need to be replaced, but later found that the ball bearings were also worn out and needed to be replaced. The ball bearing replacement is estimated to cost less than \$5000, and so Fr. Mark approved it with the wardens' consent, because it falls below the cost threshold for vestry approval. The total cost of repairs is still far lower than what a new or reconditioned blower would cost. The metal door to the mechanical room had to be removed to get the blower out, and a new and slightly wider door is needed, a small project that also falls below the threshold and was recommended by the Dutton Report. Fr. Mark said that the digital voicing of the organ (a special tuning that ensures that the pipes and the digital sound are identical) was part of the original organ contract. Dr. Schneider asked if the organ could experience a mechanical failure due to an electrical surge and if a surge protector needed. Fr. Mark said such a situation was unlikely, but could require a technician to reprogram the organ's electronics. He also told the Vestry that Mr. Widmann, church organist, has been supervising the organ renovation with great attentiveness.

Church Nave Microphone

We had originally planned to install a microphone dropped from the ceiling over the choir to eliminate the tripping hazard caused by the placement of the microphone stand in the chancel. The microphone there captures the sound of the choir for the livestream. Since then, the bench previously in the space has been moved, which has eliminated the hazard, so the drop down microphone is not needed for now. One challenge of the fixed microphone is that it tends to only amplify a few voices in the choir, but this has not been a cause of complaint among those joining us via the livestream.

Finance Committee Report

Mr. Ruf presents the Finance Committee's report (copy attached). Members of the committee have committed to several tasks, including updating the Dutton Report and 7-Year Financial Plan. Prentiss Feagles is composing new language to govern the Legacy Fund.

Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda

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

Lighting in St. Francis Hall

Ms. Hurdle reported on new LED lighting in St. Francis Hall. The lighting will meet the county codes and other requirements and should provide consistent illumination throughout the space. Dr. Schneider said new lighting has brightened St. Francis Hall, and the new flooring is also an improvement in the building's environment.

Flooring in St. Francis Hall

Ms. Warren reported some of the new flooring in St. Francis Hall has to be re-glued, as the glue for the new flooring did not adhere properly. Dr. Schneider asked about the warranty for the

flooring, and Ms. Warren and Fr. Mark promised to report back with details. Ms. Tendall expressed her concern the cleaners know how to clean the new flooring without causing any damage.

Pledge Campaign

Mr. Hunter acknowledged Ms. Nanan's help in getting the pledge letters ready for mailing for the end of September.

Fr. Mark said the church has lost several large donors due to deaths and moving away, which has reduced potential donations in 2025 by \$75,000. We plan to ask parishioners to increase their pledge by 15%, if possible, to compensate for this loss, as many pledges are below \$5,000, and significant increases may be possible and would make a big difference. The Vestry said the church's financial needs should be noted to parishioners as well as how the pledged money is allocated. The Vestry also discussed giving for special projects like the sound system as well as the general operating expenses. Fr. Mark said the Lenten Appeal is used for special needs. Mr. Ruf said the Dutton Report's project list of \$1.8 million ranked projects as low, medium, and high priorities. The HVAC project, which is the largest project planned for the next several years, is expected to cost around \$500,000.

HVAC Project

Mr. Ruf, in Mr. Whitlock's absence, reported the HVAC's boiler units for the church and the classrooms have shipped. The valves and pump replacements will ship in November. We should have consistent heating by October 15, the traditional beginning of the heating season in our area.

Capital Campaign

Mr. Ruf said the committee is in the beginning stages of the Capital Campaign and is looking at the projects in the Dutton Report and their costs. The Vestry agrees that the Capital Campaign should not start until 2025 so as not to disrupt the fall pledge drive.

Audit Report

Mr. Ruf said the Finance Committee met with Hosick & Company, who performed the 2022 audit. They reported finding no fraud or other problems, but did make some suggestions about changing the language around the Legacy Fund and noted that some adjustments needed to be made in preparing the accounts in the ways that assets were classified. Mr. Feagles said the transition from Ms. Riddle accounting to Your Part-time Controller (YPTC) and the long time without an audit had presented issues that have been resolved, and the church is in a better position. We estimate that the 2022 audit cost in total about \$35,000, and also demanded a great deal of Fr. Mark's time. But the next audit should be completed much more quickly, since there is now a baseline for accounting going forward (especially in classifying net assets). Hosick has recommended that church not change from its current modified cash accounting method, and YPTC agrees with this decision.

Finance Report

Mr. Tester, treasurer, said the church has paid for large capital projects in August that reduced church funds in the operating budget's balance, as noted in the Monthly Financial Summary

(attached). The capital expenses will reduce our reserves but wouldn't show up in the operating budget, as those are non-operating expenses. Otherwise, there were not significant concerns.

Motion to Approve the Treasurer's Report

Ms. Warren made a motion, seconded by Ms. Tendall, to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion carried unanimously.

Fellowship Events

Ms. Hurdle said there will be a courtyard cocktail party on September 22nd and invited everyone to attend. Mr. Hurdle is asking the Men of St. Francis to help him with the November lobster dinner. An evensong with a reception is planned for September 29th, and Ms. Hurdle is asking for volunteers to help with the reception.

Sunday School

Dr. Schneider reported 10 children with 4 teachers are attending Sunday School.

Motion to Adjourn

Dr. Schneider made a motion, seconded by Ms. Byam, to adjourn the Vestry Meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

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