

**St. Francis Episcopal Church
February 7, 2025 Vestry Meeting**

The Vestry convened in person on Saturday, February 7, 2025, at 9:30 a.m., Fr. Mark presiding. Members attending: Mr. Ruf, Senior Warden, Mr. Feagles, Junior Warden, Ms. Byam, Ms. Davis, Mr. Harper, Ms. Hurdle, Dr. Schneider, Mr. Tester, Mr. Todd, and Ms. Warren. Also attending: Mr. Smith.

Invocation

Fr. Mark offered an invocation.

Three Articles of Incorporation

Fr. Mark asked the Vestry to sign copies of the Articles of Incorporation that were approved at the 71st Annual Parish Meeting. These documents allow the church to take the next steps towards registration with the State of Maryland as a nonprofit religious corporation.

Consent Agenda

The Vestry had no comments or edits to the Consent Agenda, including the minutes of the January 20, 2025 meeting.

Electing a President

Fulfilling a requirement of Maryland corporation law, the vestry needed to elect a president of St. Francis Episcopal Church, Potomac Parish. Fr. Mark nominated J. David Ruf, senior warden, to be president.

Vestry-Outreach Committee Liaison

St. Francis similarly needs to designate at least one vestry member to review and approve expenses recommended by the Outreach Committee. Mr. Feagles said this could be a committee of one individual or a small group, and this person would report the expenditures to the vestry. Ms. Warren volunteered to fill this position.

Solar Panel Project

Mr. Tester presented his research on this proposed project. He estimated the project's cost at approximately \$210,000 in present value assuming the church pays the full cost over a 25-year period. This would require the church to provide \$62,000 of the project's initial cost net of grants and tax credits, an amount the church can fund without having to finance the project. The church has not yet consulted GHES for their input on this project. The project's cost would also include the hook-up to Pepco's electric grid and bookkeeping and insurance costs. The church would expect to receive electric energy credits for 22 years, providing potential present value ROIs ranging from 1.38%-4.16%, depending on the degree of cost sharing with Georgetown Hill and the consistency of the solar unit credits. The largest dollar values are in the distant future when the cost of electricity is highest, but this is only an estimate, as future electricity costs are unknown along with future electricity demand. It was noted that the church's electricity cost is only a small percentage of the church's operating budget.

The project's cost does not include the costs for replacing damaged roof shingles and related expenses for any other damages done during the project's installation as well as damages during regular maintenance repairs and these costs. The church's roof is 15 years old, with an expected total life of 40 years. The roof warranty has expired.

Mr. Tester and other Vestry members concurred that the project is only feasible if the church receives part of the State's solar panel grant money. There are already groups who have received some of these funds, and these funds may be exhausted before the church's application is approved. Mr. Tester said the church could likely anticipate a 4% ROI over a risk free return.

The Vestry then engaged in a lengthy discussion of this proposed project. Solar panel technology is evolving and may produce more efficient solar panels with less potential damage during installation and low maintenance costs in the future. At the conclusion of the discussion, Fr. Mark and the Vestry thanked Mr. Tester and Ms. Steyn for their research on this project.

Parochial Report

Fr. Mark presented the findings that he and Mr. Maroulis have reached about St. Francis' membership, attendance, activity, and financial information for 2025. Their findings showed that attendance and membership are both flat. Fr. Mark said there have been several new families with children attending St. Francis, but their presence is off-set by the loss of members due to deaths and those moving away.

Fr. Mark will provide the Vestry with the final draft of this report after the Vestry's discussion of the narrative questions during the later part of the retreat. This final version will then be approved digitally early next week.

Dr. Schneider asked about the wider view of these two metrics. Fr. Mark said attendance at Episcopal Church was slowly returning after the impacts of the Covid pandemic, which included young people returning to the church. However, approximately 50% of Episcopalians are in the older generational groups which will impact the church's future unless the church attracts more younger members.

Property Report

Dr. Schneider said the church is making various cosmetic repairs, as needed, on the list of projects until warmer weather returns when other, more extensive outside projects can be tackled. Glenolden House is still experiencing heating issues, and the Tester family is using the church's space heaters when necessary.

The church's two boilers are experiencing problems that impact the radiators. Dr. Schneider said the boilers' remote control unit requires its IT control to be adjusted to maintain heat in the church, and Bradleigh Mechanical & Harris Controls have been contacted. There are also problems with the new flooring, and the company that installed them has also been contacted.

Sound Issues in the Church

The Vestry discussed the sound issues with many in the congregation not hearing those speaking from the pulpit. Fr. Mark will ask Peter Zhang, the new sound technician, for his guidance on

adjusting the sound system's levels. The louvers covering the organ chamber also block some of the organ's sound. Mr. Widmann suggests removing the louvers and replacing them with a cloth covering. This was discussed at length by the vestry.

Motion to Approve the Consent Agenda

Mr. Ruf made a motion, seconded by Dr. Schneider, to approve the consent agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion to Approve the Flywheel Solar Panels Project

Mr. Ruf made a motion, seconded by Mr. Tester, for approval of the Flywheel Solar Panel Project. The motion failed to carry – all vestry members voted against approval.

Motion to Approve Dave Ruf as President of St. Francis Episcopal Church, Potomac Parish

Fr. Mark made a motion, seconded by Ms. Warren, to elect Dave Ruf as President of St. Francis Episcopal Church, Potomac Parish. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion to Approve Ann Warren as Head of the St. Francis Outreach Committee

Fr. Mark made a motion, seconded by Ms. Davis, to approve Ann Warren as head of the St. Francis Outreach Committee. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion to Adjourn

Mr. Harper made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hunter, to adjourn. 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 day and 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