

Abington Quarterly Meeting for Business

Held at Norristown Monthly Meeting

Fifth Month 5th, 2019

Abington – 4: Byberry –0 : Gwynedd/Foulkeways - 4 : Horsham –0 : Norristown – 11: Plymouth – 7: Richland – 0: Unami –0 : Upper Dublin – 1 : Children –3

Kelly Green welcomed us to Norristown.

We opened with a moment of worship. The clerk asked that the meeting hold the family of Holly Olson in the light. She was the vibrant coordinator of Bucks Quarter for many years and died this past week.

Friends approved the minutes from Second Month.

Tom Armstrong (Plymouth) presented the semi-annual report from the Abington Quarter Trustees. Friends Fiduciary will continue to honor our request for a 4% return on the Green Fund. The Trustees are pleased with the audit. There is a gap in our returns between the Consolidated Fund and the Green Fund. The Consolidated Fund has outpaced the Green Fund at such a rate that it is a concern (larger than 20% difference). The Trustees will revisit this. They would like the difference to be less than 10%. They also hope that we can continue to support funds that eventually eliminate all investment in fossil fuels. Friends accepted the Trustees report as given.

Dan Hazelton presented the Treasurer's report. The current return on the Spruance Fund is not larger than the outgoing expenses. This is not an immediate concern but something to note. This report will be fully audited by the fall. The report was accepted as given.

Bonnie Miller (Plymouth) reported about the Home and Care Committee. Rebecca Cratin is working with Foulkeways personnel to improve communication. There has been an increase in applications for assistance from people with financial need. There is a trend toward people who wish to stay in their homes and need medical and end-of-life care. There is also an increase in requests for help purchasing medical equipment. Friends accepted the report as given.

Dean Beer, Chief Public Defender of Montgomery County, presented about ending cash bail in the county. He said that it costs \$35,000/day to house a person in jail pretrial. Bail hearings are held by magisterial district court judges, elected officials who do not need to be lawyers. Many are former police officers. Public defenders are not present at the initial hearing. Even if a defendant hires an attorney, the judge will often prohibit the attorney from entering to support the client. This hearing is not a "court of record," so no stenographer is present, and there is not a standard checklist for judges to follow.

If a person is incarcerated pre-trial for at least three days, statistics show that people will lose

their jobs, which snowballs into losing housing (either for inability to pay rent or losing their housing voucher). Pre-trial detention leads to more innocent people being convicted of crimes because they are forced to plea to a crime they may not have committed just so they can get out of jail.

After worship with Norristown, Joe Schatz (Plymouth) updated us about JFC/MSFC this year, which will take place at George School from June 16-21. JFC has at least 20 participants, MSFC 6, and Faith and Leadership, 7, the new program for rising tenth graders. The theme this year is “We are Friends.” Youth Programs has requested \$3,000 from AQMF.

Friends approved the following minute in support of the Youth Programs’ request:

At Abington Quarterly Meeting held Fifth Month, 5th day, 2019, gathered members minuted support of the Abington Quarter Youth Conferences’ application to the Abington Quarterly Meeting Fund for a grant of \$3,000 to support the Junior Friends and Middle School Friends Conference and Faith and Leadership Programs.

Lydia Lynes, the Community Education Coordinator of Laurel House, the county’s domestic violence agency, described the services that Laurel House offers. These include: emergency shelter, 24hr confidential hotline, individual and group counseling, children’s program and legal advocacy. They also have transitional housing and medical assistance programs. In addition to offices throughout the county and one shelter for women and children in Norristown, they have two thrift stores where clients can shop: Laurel’s Loft in Lansdale and Marian’s Attic in King of Prussia.

Eric Malm (Norristown) presented a proposal to develop a nonprofit apartment building. He said that the departure of the Head Start program from the meeting a couple of years ago caused the meeting to examine ways to be connected to the Norristown community. He and fellow meeting member Nan Harp shared an interest in affordable housing and homelessness issues and started looking at cooperative housing models. They started talking with the former director of Laurel House. Laurel House was planning to relocate from across the street from the meeting and would have a building available. They met with a local Mennonite couple who have been renting apartments to people at below-market rates for the past twenty years so that the renters can save for their own homes. They learned of a model called dividend housing in practice in Ohio.

Laurel House has gotten zoning approval to relocate. Eric explained that the apartment building would rely on referrals from Laurel House and Home and Care Committee. It would not be a traditional apartment building but offer more of a cooperative housing experience.

Kelly Green read Norristown’s minute of approval for the creation of this nonprofit apartment building. Those gathered endorsed Norristown’s minute in support of this project. The minute reads:

Until the early 1970s, a Friends boarding home was operated near our meeting on Swede

Street. We, the members of Norristown Monthly Meeting, minute our support for the creation of a non-profit apartment building at the current site of the Laurel House shelter building. We believe this project will provide needed quality housing options for members of the Laurel House, Quaker, and surrounding community. This project will help renew and strengthen our ties to the local neighborhood. It will support Laurel House and provide an opportunity to engage in work that is consistent with our testimonies.

Paige Menton (Plymouth) requested that the Quarter endorse H.R. 763, The Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act and urge Madeleine Dean to co-sponsor this legislation. Those gathered endorsed this legislation and supported a letter being sent to Rep. Dean.

The clerk urged members to attend the Abington Quarter picnic at Plymouth in Eighth Month. Those gathered approved the rental of a canopy to be used at the picnic. The Abington Quarterly Meeting Fund will fund the request.

Julia Jennings (Abington) presented a report on the Abington Monthly Meeting Youth Committee. It currently has four members. It has five goals: to serve as a liaison between the committees and youth, to promote intergenerational activities, to encourage a modern and youthful examination of Quaker queries, to support the experience of youth at Abington Meeting, and to serve as a platform for the youth's ideas and projects. They have hosted a number of events: casserole making in the fall for a homeless shelter, "bring a friend" day to bring non-Quaker friends to meeting for worship, and coming up-- an intergenerational game night.

We closed with a moment of worship.

Respectfully submitted,

Paige Menton

Amelia Diamond, Clerk