



Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting February 2010 Special Edition

Why a Special Edition?

EXTRA!

This special edition of our newsletter is intended to give you some quick, easy-to-understand background on the important matters concerning our new meetinghouse that we will consider at our

February 21 meeting for business. At this meeting, we will discuss a minute presented by the Coordinating Committee that will propose how we move forward on four aspects of the funding for building our new meetinghouse. The newsletter will also highlight the [comments of several meeting members](#) about the new meetinghouse.

Our efforts to build the new meetinghouse are moving along well on all fronts. Since the Meeting approved moving ahead with design of the new facility in January of 2008, the Client Committee, working with the design professionals, has completed a preliminary building design which the Meeting approved, and is ready to move to the design development phase. The Campaign Committee, which has an overall goal of \$3 million, has raised \$832,000 of the \$1.5 million we need to raise among Meeting members, and is actively seeking buyers for two works by James Turrell who is donating his fee of \$600,000 per piece to the campaign. The committee is preparing to lead the Meeting in seeking gifts from Quakers outside our Meeting, art enthusiasts and others. While the fund-raising campaign is the primary source of money for the new meetinghouse, there are also four other sources of funding, and the Coordinating Committee needs the Meeting's approval to move forward on each.

If you attended the January meeting for business, you know that there was an in-depth discussion of the funding decisions we need to make to continue the strong momentum towards making the new meetinghouse happen. If you didn't attend, we hope this newsletter will serve to crystallize the issues involved so we can all come to meeting for business on 21 February prepared to make these critical decisions.

In this newsletter, you will find:

- The [text of the proposed minute](#) (shown below with this color background) that will be presented at the February 21 meeting for business
- A short explanation of each of the [four aspects of funding](#) contained in the minute and [the other steps proposed](#). Where background documents are available, you will find links to them.
- [Comments from several Meeting members](#) about why they are enthusiastic about the new meetinghouse
- A link to the [draft Minutes of the January meeting](#)

We hope you find this short newsletter helpful background -- it's a quick 10 to 12-minute read, at most.

Proposed minute from Coordinating Committee

Chestnut Hill Monthly Meeting approves the use of the following sources of funds towards the goal of building its new meetinghouse:

- proceeds from the sale of the current meetinghouse
- the balance of the Yarnall fund
- a portion (\$43,000) of the Meeting's operating reserve
- long-term financing of up to \$600,000

To the extent that cost savings or unexpected additional available funds are realized during the building process, those positive results will first be applied to a reduction in the amount of long-term financing.

The Meeting further requests that:

- **Peace and Social Concerns** and **Tuition Assistance** committees bring to Meeting for Business proposals for continuing the portions of their work that have recently been supported by income from the Yarnall Fund.
- **Finance Committee** bring to Meeting for Business a proposal to borrow funds for both short-term and long-term financing in a manner that is consistent with Friends' principles, including a preference for:
 - Borrowing from Quaker sources
 - Borrowing from local institutions rather than national ones
 - Borrowing from individuals, where possible
- **Client Committee**
 - complete the design development process consistent with the sources of funding approved by Meeting for Business
 - seek, throughout the building process, opportunities to reduce the overall cost of the project in ways that will not adversely affect the new meetinghouse's suitability for our proposed uses

- ensure, through its handling of the bidding process, that potential savings in construction costs realized as a result of the current world financial situation do not result in unfair or inequitable compensation of the individuals who work on our meetinghouse project, whether hired by the Meeting or on its behalf
- **Campaign Committee** continue to seek and encourage opportunities for members and attenders to help with the capital campaign by making a pledge, speaking to friends and colleagues about the project, seeking partners and donors to the project, or helping with visits, grant writing, and event planning
- **Worship and Ministry Committee** prayerfully consider how the Meeting can stay in unity, true to Friends' testimonies, while we build a new meetinghouse

Background Information on what's proposed in the minute

Here is background on the four proposed sources of funds that the Meeting must okay to be used to fund building the new meetinghouse:

1. Proceeds from the sale of the current Meetinghouse



Several years ago during earlier discussions about building a new meetinghouse, we paid for a real estate appraisal of the Meeting's property, including the building and the small area of land around it. At that time -- 9/28/2001 -- the appraised value was \$375,000. Applying standard methods for projecting forward from that appraisal to present-day market value, we estimate that the building could sell for \$450,000.

United Cerebral Palsy Association has right of first refusal on buying the property, a condition that was negotiated when we purchased the lower lot from them a few years ago. This means that we are obligated to offer it to them before we place it on the market; but they are under no obligation to buy it, nor are we required to offer them a special price.

2. The balance of the Yarnall Fund

D. Robert Yarnall and his wife, Elizabeth, were among the [founding families of Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting in 1924](#). Robert Yarnall owned and operated the Yarnall Waring Company that occupied the original set of

buildings that now form the core of United Cerebral Palsy Association's facilities. Yarnall arranged to sell to the Meeting for a nominal amount the small parcel of land on which the meetinghouse now sits.

After Robert Yarnall's death in 1967, his will directed that 40 percent of his estate be held in a trust for the benefit of eight local organizations, including Chestnut Hill Monthly Meeting. Each organization received a share of the income of the trust. Our Meeting asked Peace & Social Concerns to recommend causes to which the Yarnall income was donated. When the Yarnall trust terminated in 1986, the Meeting received its one eighth share of the trust, which became the Yarnall Fund.

In 1989, a committee of the Meeting recommended using the fund for the construction of a new meetinghouse, but that building effort was not successful. The idea of using fund income for scholarships for the Quaker education of children appears to have first come up in 1991 when members expressed concern that the \$1,000 per year from the Meeting's operating budget used for scholarships did not go far enough. That year, the Meeting decided that half of the Yarnall income would be used for Quaker education and the other half would continue to be allocated to causes recommended by Peace & Social Concerns.

Two important items of note:

- Before beginning to use income from the Yarnall Fund for Quaker education scholarships and grants from Peace & Social Concerns, the Meeting funded those needs through current income in its operating budget.
- Our Meeting has money set aside for members of our community who encounter dire circumstances, financial or otherwise. Care and Counsel Committee handles applications for loans from this fund, but the source of the money is and always has been our operating budget, not the Yarnall Fund.

3. A portion of our operating reserve

Because the Meeting has ended recent fiscal years with a surplus, we have an operating reserve of \$116,618.25. The Finance Committee has recommended retaining an operating reserve equal to one year's operating budget. We can shift \$43,000 to the new meetinghouse project and leave the equivalent of one year's operating budget (about \$74,000) in the operating reserve.

4. Long-term financing of up to \$600,000

The Finance Committee seeks approval to borrow up to \$600,000 of the

total cost of construction. While we may not need to seek a mortgage if construction costs remain low and/or if the Campaign Committee exceeds its fund-raising goal, the Finance Committee recommends that we find out the details now of our mortgage options to help them develop concrete plans for handling a mortgage if the Meeting decides to seek one after the building is completed. The Committee recommends that the Meeting investigate our options for borrowing up to \$600,000 at the end of the construction of the new meetinghouse. The Committee has determined that the Meeting has the financial capability to make mortgage payments without putting a strain on our operating budget.

Requests to specific committees

- The minute requests that the two committees, **Peace and Social Concerns** and **Tuition Assistance**, who have relied on money from the Yarnall Fund, bring to Meeting for Business proposals for continuing the portions of their work that have recently been supported by income from the Yarnall Fund. These proposals could include identifying alternate sources of funding.
- The minute requests that **Finance Committee** bring to Meeting for Business a proposal to borrow funds for both short-term and long-term financing in a manner that is consistent with Friends' principles. This request arises from specific requests made at the January meeting for business.
- The minute requests that Client Committee
 - complete the design development process consistent with the approved sources of funding
 - seek opportunities to reduce the overall cost in ways that will not adversely affect the new meetinghouse's suitability for our proposed uses
 - ensure that potential savings in construction costs realized as a result of the current world financial situation do not result in unfair compensation of workers

These requests respond to specific concerns raised at the January meeting for business. (See minutes.)

- The minute requests that the **Campaign Committee** encourage opportunities for members and attenders to help with the capital campaign by making a pledge, speaking to friends about the project, seeking partners and donors to the project, or helping with visits, grant writing, and event planning. This request stems from a desire on the part of all involved in the building committees to foster the widest possible engagement of the community at all levels of this project.
- The minute requests that the **Worship and Ministry Committee** prayerfully consider how the Meeting can stay in unity, true to Friends' testimonies, while we build a new meetinghouse. While the Meeting decided to move forward with the building process over two years ago, this intention continues to trouble a few Friends for a variety of reasons.

Worship and Ministry Committee has worked to make space for the voices of those who, in standing aside, continue as valued and beloved members of our community.

Viewpoints on the new meetinghouse

On moving forward in an uncertain economy

by Dennis Wint



Our architects have designed a meetinghouse that is graceful, practical, and environmentally sound, with room for Meeting membership to grow and for our activities and outreach to expand. Artist James Turrell, whose medium is light, has volunteered to design a skyspace for our building, which will help with fundraising, make the building an immediate local landmark, and bring more people to Quakerism. The Campaign Committee and its consultants have developed a solid fundraising plan, and the Coordinating Committee is appropriately considering other financial resources.

I have been raising funds for important projects for over 40 years. There has never been a good time to raise money - the economy is too uncertain, there is too much competition for donor support, and there is too much else demanding attention. While the current economic conditions are the worst in decades, it is even more important that we take careful and continuing actions now to bring our new meetinghouse into reality.

By continuing now to visit potential donors, our meetinghouse Campaign Committee is making sure that people learn and ask questions about our building plans and the Turrell artwork, as we continue with financial and operational planning. The economy will improve and when it does, our Meeting will be positioned to request support from potential donors who already know why we want to build a new meetinghouse and understand the significance of the Turrell skyspace.


Dennis Wint

On the role of the Turrell Skyspace in the project

by Ginny Christensen



I wasn't part of the Meeting's decision to include the Turrell space in our new building design, having become a member



too late to take part in that exploration and discussion. What would it really be like? Would this space feel like the meetings I had experienced in Monteverde, I wondered, where they have big screened windows all around and you feel like you're right in the cloud forest? I decided that I'd just have to see for myself.

At the end of January I visited the gallery PS1 in Long Island City. It was a frigid day (mid 20s) with a light breeze. I turned the knob and walked into the installation. The room contained nothing but sky above and benches below -- blonde wood, with backs four or five feet tall, slanted so that sitting and leaning back to look up would be comfortable. I buttoned my down coat all the way up and all the way down, put on my hat and gloves, and sat.

Looking up, I was immediately entranced. The sky was nearly cloudless but I couldn't take my eyes off it. I noticed slight gradations in blue that I'd never seen across the sky and watched the slow traverse of an airplane and then the speedier one of a bird. The liquid nature of air, as it entered the room in gentle swirls, was unmistakable. Without noticing, I centered and settled in the quiet and the peacefulness of the room. Time went by. There, all by myself, I had a very satisfying Meeting for Worship.

Ginny Christensen

Some reflections on unity **by Ellen Deacon**



Friends in our Chestnut Hill Meeting have increasingly been reaching for a deeper understanding of what it means to be in unity, and of how we may find unity in our current situation. At the Quakerism 101 meeting in October, Phil Anthony reminded us that “when we disagree about business matters, it is our task and our opportunity to hold each other in love as we seek unity. Further, “unity” does not mean total agreement; rather it is a sense that all concerned are feeling the guidance of the Inner Light, and that our way forward is in that Light.

As months have passed, I have continued to see stirrings of hopeful shifts that are possible. Worship and Ministry committee had a deep and productive worship sharing time about unity with our Clerk in January, and we continue to share our insights and feelings over email. It appears that there is interest among many in our meeting in having real conversations that might shift the “ecology of relationship” whenever we gather – for worship, business concerns,

committees work or in conversation.

We need to ask each other: "How are you doing?... feeling?" Such encounters will help us stay grounded in the Spirit. In our search for unity, we are called to "lift each other up with a tender hand."

Ellen Deacon, member, Worship and Ministry Committee

This special edition was prepared by Liz Williams, Jean Warrington, Phil Jones and Ginny Christensen.