

New Haven Monthly Meeting  
Religious Society of Friends  
May 28, 2010

**Notes from threshing session on the expansion of Friends Center for Children (FCFC), held May 23, 2010 at the Meetinghouse.**

*Attendees included ~25 members of Meeting, the FCFC board, Allyx Schiavone, Director of FCFC, Frank Cochran from Meeting who is serving as Meeting's counsel and the architects for the building. Session was clerked by Dwight Lopes, recording clerk was Jane Coppock. A site plan of Meeting property showing the location and footprint of the proposed FCFC building was displayed and markers have been placed at the corners of the proposed building site, as well as drawings showing the internal disposition of space in the building and what the outside of the building might look like. What follows incorporates information given by the FCFC director and the architects during the session, all the questions asked by the attendees, organized here by topic, and questions that emerged in individual discussions after the threshing session.*

**PURPOSE OF THE NEW BUILDING**

Allyx Schiavone gave an overview of the philosophy of the Friends Center program (child-centered, based on Quaker testimonies), the need for pre-K child care in New Haven, and FCFC's plan to expand from a "family daycare" licensed for 12 families to a "day-care center" licensed for up to 60 children (~40 families). The primary purpose of the building is to house the daycare center<sup>1</sup>.

The expansion from 12 children to 60 requires a "use variance" from the Board of Zoning Appeals of the city of New Haven. For the building itself, FCFC will need (1) a statement from the Meeting stating that it has agreed to have the building built on Meeting property (either through a land lease or some other kind of arrangement, like a condominium), as well as (2) a variance to expand 15 inches beyond the current property line on the east side abutting the railroad's land.

In the bigger picture, the building represents the next step in realizing the vision and commitment of the Friends who have worked so hard and so faithfully on creating Friends Center for Children for the past 10 years. Their devotion and witness are appreciated and applauded! This document simply reflects the engagement of Meeting and FCFC with each other as the project progresses from one step to another in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Allyx also mentioned possible future activities including summer sessions for older children, training in FCFC philosophy and methods for other child education centers, publications about their activities, and community yoga classes or other kinds of activities for both children and adults.

process. In this particular case, it reflects the developments that we have undergone separately and together since Meeting's decision last fall to offer FCFC two possible locations on Meeting property on which to construct their building.

#### PROCESS WITH MEETING

Since Meeting's decision to offer FCFC a choice of two possible locations on Meeting property, the following people (see footnote <sup>2</sup>) have worked to understand the issues involved and to prepare to bring a recommendation to Meeting for Business about the best approach for working out a land agreement between Meeting and FCFC. In a series of meetings, this group has been joined by Pat Wallace, clerk of Meeting and included one meeting with Frank Cochran, counsel for Meeting, and Scotia Ryer and Susan Bryson of Wiggin and Dana, counsel and advisor for FCFC. The meetings have been very productive (much better than email!) and have been conducted in a spirit of openness and support that is appreciated by all.

#### PURPOSE OF THE MAY 23 AND JUNE 6 THRESHING SESSIONS

The purpose of the threshing session on May 23 was to let everyone in Meeting, including the committees involved,

- (1) hear from FCFC about the current state of its planning and
- (2) begin the process of hearing questions and concerns from Meeting about the FCFC plans.

The second session, scheduled for June 6, will be a follow-up session to grapple with specifics of issues raised in the first session and to hear additional questions and concerns. If there is sufficient unity after the June 6 session, the Property building subcommittee will make a recommendation to Meeting for Business about a general statement for use at the BZA hearing stating that Meeting has given FCFC permission to building on its land. All other questions will continue to be threshed over the summer, with the aim of arriving at a clear and detailed agreement between FCFC and Meeting with respect to all issues judged to be pertinent.

#### WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR THE FINAL GO AHEAD

Nothing is final at this moment. The project will not go ahead without final approvals from the FCFC Board, Meeting, the lending institution, the BZA, and City Planning Department. Both the Meeting and FCFC are also committed to hearing any concerns from the immediate neighbors.

---

<sup>2</sup> Property Committee (Maureen Lopes, clerk) and its building subcommittee (Jane Coppock, clerk) have been working with Friends Center (primarily Wendy Kravitz, FCFC board chair, and Linda Miller, member of FCFC's building committee), as well as Michael Anderson, liaison from FCFC to Meeting and Dwight Lopes liaison from Meeting to FCFC).

## FINANCIAL ISSUES

Q: What is the anticipated cost of the building?

A: Probably between \$1.0 and \$1.5 million, depending on many different factors, including how much money FCFC has to borrow and how much it can raise through donations. The current estimate is that the building (not including furniture or architect's fees) will run around \$213/sq. ft.

Q: Who will pay for the building?

A: FCFC is responsible for raising all of the funds through a combination of private donations and a mortgage.

Q: Will Meeting have any financial responsibility for the cost of construction?

A: No.

Q: Will Meeting have any financial liability if FCFC is unable to meet its mortgage payments at some point in the future?

A: This is a topic for more discussion, particularly with the mortgage lender(s) that FCFC will work with.

Q: If FCFC builds a building of the size described here, and has a large mortgage, will they still be able to provide the current level of financial aid to families (~45% receive aid)?

A: That is part of FCFC's financial plan.

Q: If FCFC succeeds as a daycare and eventually wants to expand into a K-8 or K-12 school and has to sell their building, could Meeting have the first right of refusal to buy it? If Meeting didn't buy it, what kind of business or institution could go there?

A: "First right of refusal" could be written into any land agreement with FCFC. Current zoning would prevent the building from being sold to a commercial operation.

Q: If Meeting was unable to sustain itself financially years from now and folded, but FCFC was thriving, could they buy the Meeting property or would it automatically revert to New England Yearly Meeting?

A: Need further investigation with New England Yearly Meeting.

## LAND AGREEMENT

Q: What kinds of arrangements are being considered to handle the fact that FCFC will own its building, but the Meeting currently owns the land?

A: Three possibilities have been discussed: 1) outright sale of a portion of the land to FCFC; 2) a long term land lease, probably at no cost to FCFC; 3) a condominium arrangement, in which FCFC and Meeting are each a unit in a 2-unit condominium. The two most likely possibilities are a land lease or a condominium arrangement. Further explanation of the second and third possibilities will be provided on June 6.

## INTERNAL CONFIGURATION OF SPACE IN THE NEW BUILDING

Q: Is the internal design of the FCFC building flexible, so as to avoid later regrets?

A: Yes, internal walls (not structural ones) can be removed. It also might be possible to add a full 2<sup>nd</sup> story to the building at some point in the future.

Q: Why are the "early childhood/toddler pods" angled the way they are?

A: The lot isn't square – the building is hugging the setback and is in line with the parking lot. That creates a trapezoid, which created flexible space internally that the architects used for open areas in the building. The open space narrows as you get farther from the entrance.

Q: How does the internal space lend itself to FCFC's multi-age philosophy?

A: The pre-3 pods have a wide range of maturity and ability, the older kids need separate space and the infant pods are separate. Mixing in small groups seems to work well, as well as visiting other classrooms.

Q: Can everyone fit in one space together in the building?

A: No, but that is not necessarily desirable with the proposed age groups..

## EXTERNAL DESIGN/MATERIALS

Q: What is being done to avoid leaks and mold from the flat roof and valleys?

A: The roofing product being considered lends itself to lower pitch roofs. The butterfly roof is where water collection will take place.

Q: What is the square footage of the footprint of the new building and how does it compare to the size of the meetinghouse?

A: The meetinghouse's footprint is 1500 sq. ft. and the proposed building is ~5500 sq. ft.

Q: What kind of façade and materials are envisioned for the new building?

A: The architects are seeking unity of visual effect between the meetinghouse and the FCFC building. The details will be worked out after the needed variances are granted by the Board of Zoning Appeals and City Plan, but the architects want a common visual "language" for the two buildings.

Other comment from Meeting: Since many of the trees in and around the current playground will be cut down and the building has a large footprint, the building should probably not be described as "tucked in the woods."

## PARKING

Q: How many slots are teachers/administrator/parents are planned for the FCFC building?

A: FCFC will need 9 spaces total. The state regulation requires 1 parking spot for each 3 staff members and 1 parking spot for every 24 drop-offs. There are 22 spots total in the

current parking lot. That would leave 13 open spots each day for Meeting or community events taking place at the meetinghouse. Street parking is also legally available on both sides of the street.

Q: Would the parking lot be torn up during construction?

A: Probably limited to one area, on the side along the slope.

Q: Where will run-off go?

A: Since the parking lot and building are 100ft. from a wetland, the runoff isn't subject to special regulation. The proposed green roof for the FCFC building has specific requirements.

Q: What will happen with the trees along the edge of the parking lot? Will it be possible to preserve the special memorial tree there?

A: A ramp will be constructed from the parking lot to the second floor of the FCFC building that will occupy some of the space between the edge of the parking lot and the trees at the border of the property that abuts the railroad land. The idea is to have it feel like a walk through a natural area to get to the building. (Please identify which is the special tree so the architects will be aware of it).

Comments from Meeting:

- a) It is important to keep parking spots open during the week for community and Meeting events.
- b) We need to be mindful that the meetinghouse will be more fully utilized during the week and we will need more parking.
- c) If new pavement needs to be put down, we could use permeable pavers.
- d) Thanks to the architects for including easy wheelchair access via the ramp from the parking lot to the building!

Questions that were asked after the session:

Q: If you have to add parking spaces, where would you do it?

Q: Where will the snow plow put the parking lot snow in the winter?

## PLAYGROUND

Q: Where will meeting children play during construction?

A: This issue is under consideration by First Day School, which will communicate ideas to everyone.

Q: Will the playgrounds be located behind the building? If so, does that mean that meeting children will have to be watched by 1 or 2 adults at all times?

A: Meeting does that now. Because of the different ages of children using playground space, we may end up with two playgrounds. This is also under discussion within FDS.

Q: Is it a good idea of put the playground so close to the woods and the stonewall where children can pick up ticks that may carry Lyme disease?

A: We need to find out if there are any state regulations about this that would affect the location of the playground.

## NEIGHBORHOOD

Q: Since neighbors access the Quarry Park Preserve through the current entrance next to the current playground, how do the architects plan to preserve neighborhood access to the park?

A: Needs to be added to list of concerns.

Q: Will all 60 children be playing outside at once, potentially creating a lot of noise?

A: No.

Q: How much added traffic will there be with more parents picking up and dropping off their children?

A: The drop-off hours are 7:30-9:00am and the pick-up hours are from 3:30-5:00pm, so the traffic will be staggered.

Q: How about noise during construction?

A: There are no immediate neighbors on 3 sides and the building is back from the road, so it shouldn't be too bad. Also, there is no ledge that has to be blasted.

## TRANSPORTATION, SAFE ACCESS TO THE BUILDING

Q: What will be required for the transportation mix for getting to and from FCFC and meeting? Will there be bike racks?

A: Bike racks are under discussion. The architects have even envisioned a natural gas pump or an electric car charging station, but that is probably for the future. The site is on a bus line.

Q: Will there be sidewalks created along East Grand? The FCFC staff would greatly appreciate it and thinks it is embarrassing that we don't have sidewalks. If sidewalks are put in, would it be possible to avoid cutting down the cherry tree next to the driveway?

A: Sidewalks are under consideration. Have to investigate whether it is possible to go around the cherry tree.

## SHARED SPACE IN THE FCFC BUILDING

Q: Will there be room for First Day School to expand into the new building?

A: In the fall of 2009, after a threshing session and much discussion, the Property Committee reported, and Meeting for Business minuted, that there was insufficient support in the Meeting to take on financial responsibility for a shared building. Instead, it

is anticipated that there will be informal arrangements made for use of space by FCFC of the meetinghouse and of Meeting, especially First Day School, of space in the FCFC building, as needed.

#### CHANGES IN THE MISSION OF FCFC

Comment: In the May 23 threshing session, the request was made to FCFC to keep Meeting fully informed of plans beyond daycare since Meeting has only been asked for, and has granted, its support for the creation of a daycare center, not a broader program. Several different mechanisms could be developed to keep Meeting involved in changes in the mission, including yearly reports or a joint oversight committee (the current spiritual care committee?).