Administrative Council 2016 Report to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) devoted over three years to Long Range Planning, examining our priorities and setting a clear path for the foreseeable future of our Blessed Community. The result was a Long Range Plan that has been refined into seven Strategic Directions. Two additional years were devoted to preparing to launch a new governance structure - a key element of the plan.

Now we have lived into the new structure for nine months. From the perspective of the newly created Administrative Council, the picture emerging from our work is positive and encouraging. While there is still plenty to do, we are excited by what is emerging from our work and the work of the Quaker Life Council. This is a brief overview of some of the work and output of the Administrative Council as of June 30, 2016.

We convened in October 2015 and set to work getting to know each other and PYM’s new Strategic Directions. We particularly focused on the fourth Direction, which we perceived was most relevant to Administrative Council:

SIMPLIFY AND FOCUS GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

We will use our finite resources of volunteer time and energy to focus primarily on God’s work, and to sustain our extended community. This process will simplify our structure and processes, clarify roles, responsibilities, authority, and accountability, and reduce the number of things we do. Thus, we will create new opportunities for access and participation, open to anyone with the skills, experience, and will to serve, regardless of time and travel limitations.

Administrative Council has the challenge to oversee, guide, and hold groups under our care accountable for stewardship of the affairs of the Yearly Meeting with transparency, while at the same time being more efficient in our use of time and treasure. Our goal is to liberate as much as possible PYM member time and PYM financial resources to provide the greatest available capacity to collectively pursue leadings from the Spirit. The spiritual calling of members of the council is to work in service to PYM seeking to create an effective governance structure that is guided by the Spirit and aligned with the Long Range Plan and Strategic Directions.

We also focused on the charge provided by the Implementation Committee, which begins as follows:

With divine assistance, the Administrative Council maintains the health and integrity of the finances, property, personnel, and long-term vision of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. It ensures that resources are well managed in a sustainable manner.
Guided by the overall charge we studied PYM’s current finances and practices, including review of the current budget and progress-to-date, overview of all invested funds, assessment of periodic financial reporting, and the structure of granting groups which disburse income from PYM granting funds. We then wrote an updated job description for the PYM Treasurer and began to examine the PYM Development function. One result was a minute of our commitment as a council that each of us will give to the PYM Annual Fund each year and will encourage all members of PYM to do the same. We would like to say “Thank you” to each member of PYM who added their personal gift to the Annual Fund this year. This is critical to support the uplifting work and witness of PYM.

The council reviewed PYM’s audited FY15 Financial Statements in January, and we were pleased to find in contrast to the expected limited available funds, there was $75,000 available that could roll over to FY16. In keeping with our goal to provide the greatest available capacity to collectively pursue leadings from the Spirit, we felt it Rightly Ordered to make these funds available to QLC and the General Secretary as a Strategic Directions fund for support of work and witness aligned with criteria established by QLC. We were led to stop our meeting to walk across the hall at Arch Street to interrupt the QLC meeting to share this decision and immediately make the funds available subject to QLC’s discernment.

From the outset, the Administrative Council has divided its work into two parts. First, what do we need to do to keep the Yearly Meeting running smoothly while, second, we are led to create policies and procedures that will make the new structure work best for PYM and align with the seven Strategic Directions. We are also documenting all processes and procedures so they can be monitored and carried forward by future members of the council. With these goals in mind we “mapped” each of our areas of responsibility, grouping work around topics and skills required, and with tasks divided between our first and future years.

The “map” prompted us to create three committees and a sprint: Finance, Property and Governance Committees, and a Communications Sprint. We initially populated these with members of the council. Finance quickly added Lane Taylor, clerk of QLC, Penny Colgan-Davis, clerk of PYM, and Harry Bryans from the Council’s Property Committee - to inform the work of generating next year’s budget. They serve as strong resources to inform Finance on QLC’s and the broader body’s emerging vision for PYM work and witness, as well as PYM property issues. We anticipate adding additional Friends to committees as need and way opens.

Implementation Committee established PYM’s “Interim” Granting Committee (IGC) one year ago. Administrative Council received a report on IGC’s work with gratitude for their significant progress in such a short time. (Granting Committee will offer PYM its own report on Thursday morning of Annual Sessions.) Clearly this group is no longer “interim,” and we removed that distinction from its name and set up a naming group because their clerk, Wright Horne, is moving away. The new structure distributes nominating responsibility among the three councils. Administrative and Quaker Life Council each nominate members to committees they establish, and Administrative nominates the “at large” members to Nominating Council.

Administrative Council Report
Further work and outcomes of the Administrative Council have been completed in the following committees and Sprint:

- **Finance Committee.** The Treasurer will report directly to PYM on behalf of the Finance Committee on Friday morning of 2016 Annual Sessions. The Treasurer serves as the Finance Committee's clerk. Upon formation Finance dove into the spring budgeting cycle informed by second quarter financial results from the current year, which were on-track. Finance presented a draft budget for approval by the council in May which was immediately circulated to clerks and treasurers of monthly meetings for feedback. Revisions were made in June in response to the new federal overtime pay law. For now, Finance is responsible for the work previously distributed between Financial Oversight Working Group (FOWG) and Financial Stewardship. We are hopeful that this will prove to be sustainable and productive.

- **Property Committee.** PYM has three primary property relationships: The Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust, the Burlington Meeting House, and Friends Center Corporation. Friends Center’s board consists of the leaders of the three equity partners (AFSC, PYM and Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting) and other senior representatives. It is an established relationship that runs smoothly. Burlington, by a prior 2013 agreement with Interim Meeting, is being managed by its Trustees through June 30, 2017. To support the Burlington Trustees in their discernment about their future steps, the council has recently formed a dedicated committee to work with them as they move forward. The Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust will share its report of progress on Thursday morning of 2016 Annual Sessions.

- **Governance Committee.** Governance is focused on how the council can best do its own work, and where it needs to lead in offering support to other areas of PYM work. In support of this, the council has established a Conflict of Interest Policy for members of all PYM Councils. All members of Administrative Council have completed the conflict disclosure and we will ask QLC and Nominating Councils to complete the disclosure in the near future.

- **Communications Sprint.** Communications is charged with recommending the best ways for the council to listen to, hear from, and share with PYM. This is a sprint because once successful procedures are established, we will not need a dedicated group to continue addressing this topic, as various members of the council and PYM staff will support processes that are set.

Administrative Council is responsible for initiating processes for timely revisions to *Faith and Practice* and future Long Range Planning for PYM. At 2016 Annual Sessions the current *Faith and Practice* Revision Group is expected to recommend adoption of a revised *Faith and Practice* that they have labored with for some years now, guided by input from the body at each
step of the way. Once adopted PYM can be expected to live into the new *Faith and Practice* for some time before future revision is required. PYM is also just beginning work called for in the current Long Range Plan, so again, our role is to be mindful of when future action is required.

It is exciting to discover how we are led to develop the new PYM structure and take responsibility for making it function in the best interests of PYM, while making our work transparent to all in PYM. We view our work as flexible and to some extent experimental. We will complete processes and policies with our best current judgment, see how they work, then make changes to refine them to offer PYM the most effective possible governance structure.

Our goal for the end of our first year [on September 30], in addition to addressing the ongoing business of PYM, is to have each committee and the sprint complete initial procedures and policies for their functional area. Then in year-two we will put these new practices and policies to work and assess what’s working well, and what may not be, accepting that refinement may be necessary.

We are grateful for the opportunity to be of service to PYM and thankful for the support of members. We invite questions at all times. We too are PYM!

If you have questions about this report, please contact:
Bruce Haines, Clerk of Administrative Council
brucehaines73@gmail.com