

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Administrative Council  
Saturday, October 15, 2016  
Approved Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: Andrew Anderson (Asst. Treasurer), Julian Brelsford, Harry Bryans, Penny Colgan-Davis (*ex-officio*, PYM Clerk), Bruce Haines (clerk), Ventina Hershey (by phone), Linda Lotz, Fred Melroy, Joyce Moore, Richard Morse (by phone), Tom Peterson, and Ron Ploeg (*ex-officio*, PYM Treasurer).

STAFF PRESENT: Christie Duncan-Tessmer (*ex-officio*) and Linell McCurry.

REGRETS: Suzanne Day and Roy Zatcoff.

1. **Opening Worship**—The Meeting opened in worship and then brief introductions around the room.
2. **Review and Approval Agenda and Minutes**—The minutes of the September 17, 2016, meeting were **Approved** with two minor changes.
3. **Opening reflections**— Bruce opened by observing again, “we are all white.” The Council also noted that the new structure had been in operation for a full year; people have accepted that the old structure has been laid down and the work of PYM is moving forward.
4. **General Secretary’s Report** – Christie Duncan-Tessmer shared recent activities:

Although PYM’s youth programs are highly rated, the number of young people in the yearly meeting continues to decline. Last year, many parents, youth and others participated in a survey. On October 1, 30-35 people participated in a visioning session and brainstormed ways to better serve youth and their families. Input from these two efforts will be reviewed by the sprint working on youth.

*Happy Birthday to Us!* – An important part of the staff’s role in supporting the transition to the new structure has been to focus on community engagement. Tricia Cosia is leading this effort, with the help of two fellows who are posting “news” stories on the website. Friends are encouraged to submit “two paragraph” stories -- and to visit the website regularly to see what others are doing. Staff is monitoring how many people are reading these stories.

The goal of the website, continuing sessions, collaboratives, and other aspects of the community engagement process is to provide a variety of entry points so Friends can be more knowledgeable about - and involved in - the yearly meeting. In discussion, the query was raised: How will we know if the new structure and

processes have successfully replaced the ways in which people traditionally shared information or had conversations on a variety of topics?

An estimated 80-90% of the people who attended Interim Meeting are involved in the new structure. While some collaboratives are essentially the same as the former working groups, others have more people and are looking in new directions. There are new groups as well, such as the people coming together to address mass incarceration. Overall, one year into the new structure, Christie was optimistic.

Over the past few months, Christie has been invited to talk about Friends' beliefs as part of several interfaith discussions. During one discussion, she described some of the Yearly Meeting's efforts to address racism; the group spontaneously joined in prayer for her and the work of PYM.

A bi-annual meeting with the clerks of Monthly Meetings was recently held; there are a lot of exciting things happening in our meetings. (Penny Colgan-Davis, PYM Clerk, is also holding bi-annual sessions with Quarterly Meeting clerks.)

- 5. Taking Stock of Progress as a Council** – Members were invited to reflect on the first year of the Administrative Council, and suggest priorities for Year Two.
- a) Several new committees have been created to address key functions, including finance, governance, property, etc.
  - b) The Granting Committee is now in place and has been working to consolidate several of the smaller granting groups.
  - c) The Personnel Committee continues to operate as it did previously. In the coming months, some Council time will be devoted to reviewing the committee's work and the process for the annual assessment of the General Secretary.
  - d) The transition to the new structure required a great deal of work by the Nominating Council. Some new processes have been created to support their efforts, such as asking registrants for continuing sessions to provide some personal information. Special attention continues to be given to the need to involve more Friends of color on the various Councils and committees, such as outreach to the local chapter of the Fellowship of Friends of Color.
  - e) Membership development needs attention, including attracting more young people to become active in our Meetings and involving them in PYM. Since membership on Councils is limited to members of monthly meetings, the question was raised: How can we involve active young Friends who may choose not to join a meeting due to being at college or starting their careers?
  - f) Additional attention to development is urgently needed. Membership issues also affect fundraising; some people may not become members because they are unable to contribute financially. Bruce and Christie will bring some ideas to a later meeting. Should PYM hold a dialogue on the culture of

- philanthropy? This could be done in collaboration with the Quaker Life Council.
- g) The 2015 draft of the PYM Governance Handbook will soon need some revision. This should be done in collaboration with the other councils, leading to the publication of a handbook addressing all three councils.
  - h) Property issues –The Trustees of Burlington Meeting House met with PYM staff in September to discuss what steps New Jersey Friends would need to take to acquire ownership of the BMH property from PYM, should their discernment lead them in that direction. The Trustees, who are managing BMH through June 30, 2017, under a 2013 agreement with Interim Meeting, expect to make a decision by March Continuing Sessions. An Administrative Council subcommittee, clerked by Suzanne Day, is “in watchful waiting” to support this process. Everyone was encouraged to attend the William Penn Birthday program, a fundraiser for Arch Street.
  - i) The shift from three committees into a single Finance Committee has been seamless, and seems to have freed up time so staff can address some upcoming property matters.
  - j) Our Council’s work is part of the structural change; it is led by Spirit, and there is good spirit amongst its members. We were reminded that a leading (such as changing the structure) is not always about the person or people having a leading, but about the people affected by the resulting activities.

## **6. Governance Committee Report**

- a) Committee Membership. Roy Zatcoff and Jeff Perkins have agreed to join the Governance Committee. Other committee members include Suzanne Day, Bruce Haines, Ron Ploeg (ex officio), and Sue Petrocelli, who has rotated off the Council. The need to recruit additional younger and more diverse members was recognized.
- b) Handbook. The Property, Finance, Governance, Communications and Personnel Committees were asked to draft or review their charge; set goals for the coming year; draft a profile for committee membership including the range of skills, talents, and gifts needed; and report on actions taken based on the committee’s “game plan.” Goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, i.e. SMART.
- c) Communications. The clerks group – including the PYM Clerk, the three Council clerks, and the General Secretary – noted the importance of reporting on the work of the Councils to the rest of PYM. At a future meeting, the Administrative Council should consider ways it can report on its work. For now, the Council’s minutes are posted on the PYM website and the Clerk reports at Sessions and periodically in writing.

## **7. Feedback to the Undoing Racism Group**

Reflecting back on the discussions about racism in PYM during Annual Sessions and looking forward, Council members lifted up the importance of Quaker process and the careful seasoning of proposals. They reviewed language for a minute drafted by Suzanne Day, whose purpose was to

communicate the Council's willingness to address diversity issues within its purview. Members approved the following minute:

**The Administrative Council encouraged its clerk to engage the Undoing Racism Group leadership in an affectionate dialogue, to listen and discern how the way might open for the Council to address racism within PYM.**

8. **Nominations** - Council members were asked to suggest people who might serve on the Granting Group Committee and Nominating Council, as well as the Administrative Council's Governance and Finance committees. In the new structure, nominations are addressed in multiple locations; it is important for these groups to work together.
9. **2017 Meeting Schedule** - the Council approved the proposed meeting schedule, with the majority of the meetings being held on the third Saturday of the month. A report will be made in the future regarding possibly moving from Arch Street Meetinghouse to Friends Center for a range of reasons.

**In 2017, the Administrative Council will meet on January 21, February 18, March 18, May 20, June 17, July 15, September 16, October 21, November 18, and December 9. Council members were asked to reserve August 19 for a called meeting or conference call, if needed. A final decision on meeting in April was set aside until the new year.**

10. **Closing Worship** - The meeting closed with worship.

Respectfully Submitted  
Linda Lotz, Co-Recording Clerk