



Administrative Council Report to Sessions, July 2023

Query: Is our meeting for business held in the spirit of a meeting for worship in which we seek divine guidance?

The Administrative Council considers prayerfully the concerns that are lifted up on any issue, acknowledging that the search for Truth is dependent upon what Spirit requires. When there has been lack of clarity or unity, agenda items have been remanded to a future meeting to allow further discernment.

About Administrative Council: The Administrative Council holds full authority and responsibility for managing the affairs of PYM except for the authority and responsibility assigned to the Quaker Life Council or reserved to Yearly Meeting in Sessions, the yearly meeting officers, or staff.

As a council we are called to work in alignment with PYM's seven Strategic Directions, with a focus on the fiduciary responsibilities as outlined in the PYM Governance Handbook. Admin Council's authority and responsibility includes: property, finance, budget preparation, audit, investments, development, grantmaking, personnel and periodic strategic planning. The Council may appoint and lay down its own committees as needed, assigning responsibilities, and appointing committee members who need not be members of Admin Council but are asked to do related work. The Council holds committees and other structures under its care accountable to their charge.

In addition to its own meetings, Admin Council continues to meet jointly with Quaker Life and Nominating Councils monthly on the third Saturday of almost every month. This year, we were able to reinstitute in-person meetings at the Arch Street Meeting House, and we continue to meet by Zoom for those unable to attend in person. Our shared time is focused on receiving the General Secretary's report and considering other matters of joint interest. As needed Admin and Quaker Life Councils meet for joint agenda items.

Members of Admin Council are encouraged to participate in events and programs sponsored by PYM and its meetings.

Members: A list of our members can be found on the [Philadelphia Yearly Meeting website](#). We are a diverse group with broad geographic representation and extensive governance experience in a variety of fields including education, law, business, finance and non-profit management. The Governance Handbook provides that Admin Council will consist of up to 15 members serving not more than two terms of three years each. The Presiding Clerk, Rising Clerk, Treasurer, and General Secretary serve ex-officio. There are currently nine members (so

we can definitely accommodate additional members). New members help to maintain the council's health and stability and long-term vision of PYM.

Communications: Admin Council posts minutes of meetings to the PYM website within a week or two of their approval at the subsequent meeting. Admin Council also reports to the body in writing and in person at continuing and annual sessions.

Business and Actions

Support for Nominating Council: Admin Council approved appointing three of its members to serve on Nominating Council on a temporary basis, until other new members can be identified. Also, the clerk and assistant clerk of Admin Council are reaching out to the leadership of quarterly meetings that are not currently represented on Nominating Council to encourage the quarters to make appointments. As a matter of policy, Admin Council now asks each quarterly meeting to minute the appointment of a new member from that quarter and report that appointment to the clerk of Admin Council.

Climate Change Language Minute from Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting: Admin Council considered a minute from Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting proposing that PYM use the term "impending climate crisis" when speaking of climate change. After hearing from a representative of the quarter, Admin Council decided that any such change should first be considered by the Climate Witness Stewards. The response from the Climate Witness Stewards was presented to Admin Council in April. The stewards concluded:

Many of the consequences of global warming are indeed catastrophic and the expression, "climate change" is definitely insufficient to express the scope, number, and interrelated catastrophes we are facing. Our concern with the choice of "climate catastrophe" is that it suggests that the consequence of global warming is one comprehensive event. We are also trying to find other wording that we hope suggests how we might address the coming catastrophes and how to use wording that reveals openings for change as well as demonstrates the larger perspective of potential planetary systems failures. The CWSs have also been considering ways we might communicate the urgent reality that would indicate a way forward without causing despair.

Admin Council received that response with thanks and approved a minute commending that response to the attention of Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting.

Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust Bylaw Changes: Admin Council approved an Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust (ASMHT) proposal for changes to its bylaws. ASMHT proposed that two-thirds (2/3) of its Trustees, including ex-officio members such as the PYM General Secretary, be members of the Religious Society of Friends, rather than members of PYM. The wider membership will help support the ASMHT capital campaign. We

also approved new appointments taking effect at the time of appointment rather waiting until the next annual meeting.

Donor-Restricted Funds: Admin Council received a Granting Committee proposal for PYM to create a new fund for grants to social justice causes by redirecting income from some of the aging and education funds. The council welcomed the idea of support for this important purpose. However, donor-restricted funds may not be diverted to other causes, but must be spent in alignment with donor intent. PYM aging funds, education funds, and building funds are fully used and benefit many in our community. Admin understands the granting groups already do pay attention to equity in their granting and encouraged the Granting Committee to continue to explore how they can express that commitment. The council continues to be aware of the concern for granting support for social justice ministry.

Membership on PYM Committees: Admin Council received a requests to loosen current membership requirements to permit non-Quakers to serve as members of PYM granting groups and committees and to allow non-members to serve on granting groups. The council did not approve these requests. It noted that the granting funds are primarily for Quakers and chose to keep the membership requirement. The council identified an additional highly qualified member for the committee making the change request.

Review of PYM Governance Structure: The Governance Advisory Committee was charged to review the governance structure that has been in place since 2015 to see how it works today. Their report noted the structure's continuing evolution, which has been healthy, dynamic, and responsive to challenges. Incremental changes include the addition of the Clerks' Group, the Governance Advisory Committee itself, and increased interaction between the Quaker Life and Administrative Councils. The report pointed out some issues around the shrinking number of Friends available for PYM service. Governance recommended continual discernment and adaptive changes over time with the goal of increasing structural simplicity and a more productive alignment of structure and community. To this end Admin Council will:

- Share what we have learned more broadly and seek input,
- Recommend continued incremental changes for the foreseeable future,
- Keep evaluating and assessing progress.

Admin Council Member Intervisitation: Last year, following discernment of the joint councils, Admin Council created an intervisitation program to be in greater communion with our monthly and quarterly meetings, especially since the pandemic significantly restricted our physical presence. Volunteer council members will visit up to three meetings a year, but not their own meetings, to help forge deeper and long-lasting connections and help us understand what is important to individual meetings. Three council members have enthusiastically been visiting a total of eleven meetings this year.

Standardizing Terms of Service: Admin Council standardized terms of service for councils, committees and granting groups: three-year terms with a limit of two terms. Admin Council also approved standardizing the end dates of terms, which now happen at Annual Sessions, as well as starting dates for appointments that occur between Annual Sessions.

Policy to Support Meetings' Special Project Fundraising: Admin Council received a proposal to give monthly and quarterly meetings an option to use the donations page on the PYM website for special purpose fundraising campaigns. Admin Council approve the proposal, which is subject to the following conditions: PYM operations will provide an online option for special purpose campaigns for monthly and quarterly meetings. Meetings may run only one campaign at a time. The campaign must have a designated end date. A campaign must belong strictly to a monthly or quarterly meeting; it may not be a joint venture with other nonprofits or community groups or a project that fundraises for the use of another organization. The sponsoring meeting must agree to cover the donation platform fee on campaign gifts, currently 3.95%.

Appointment of Assistant Clerks: Admin Council approved a Governance Advisory Committee recommendation to name and appoint assistant clerks for each of the councils. The assistant clerk role is intended to be a means to help share the clerking workload when appropriate or necessary and to help develop candidates for a potential succession. It is not a "rising" role. Following approval, Nominating Council named Tom Zemaitis as Assistant Clerk of Admin Council. Administrative Council named Tacie Trull as Assistant Clerk for Nominating Council.

Self-Evaluation: The results of the survey completed by Council members were discussed by Admin Council. To guide that discussion, the Governance Advisory Committee provided the following queries: How well do you think your Council carries out its responsibilities? Are members of your council able to contribute their gifts, skills, and talents to their council work? What resources could make your Council more effective? How well does your Council work with the other councils and the PYM staff? How can that be improved? What additional changes do you think should be considered?

Collection of Council Demographic Information: Admin Council approved a proposal from staff to collect demographic information from council members. Doing so will permit PYM to provide aggregate data on diversity and make councils aware of their own demographics. This will allow us to focus on how well Admin Council is representing our full community in our governance structure.

Nominations Capacity Building Sprint: Admin Council approved this sprint, which is looking at increasing possibilities for individual nominations and expanding the PYM database. The sprint developed an outline of 3-month and long-term communication needs. Council comments will

be integrated into a final document. The sprint includes the PYM Director of Communications, a Friend from each council, and a Friend not in PYM governance.

Privacy and Security Policies Sprint: Admin Council approved formation of this sprint, whose purpose is 1) to update PYM's 2013 privacy policy to incorporate current best practices and 2) to develop a security policy, which PYM does not now have. The sprint will include PYM's Director of Communications and members of the community with professional experience in this area. The recommended policies will be delivered to Admin Council.

Committees: Admin Council appoints the members of committees and sprints under its purview. Committees enact, research, season, and discern the way forward for PYM business and important strategic initiatives.

Climate Witness Stewards: The Stewards are not a committee but are in the care of Admin Council. The role was established to stay current with all aspects of PYM's climate change and climate justice related actions, statements, and programs from the monthly, quarterly, and yearly meetings, and their relevant parts. They are asked to synthesize what they learn, so they may provide advice, expertise, and recommendations to the yearly meeting, and its entities, as needed. The Stewards will hold the yearly meeting accountable to its commitment to a yearly meeting-wide witness on climate change and climate justice by reflecting back to the body the status and effectiveness of our ministry.

Development Committee: Development is a small committee by design, working closely with the Director of Individual Giving to foster a healthy philanthropic culture in the yearly meeting. It is a policy guidance body, consulting on development policies and maintaining a high-level view of the goals and outcomes of PYM fundraising. Development helped onboard PYM's new Director of Individual Giving, Merri Brown.

Finance Committee: The Finance Committee monitors PYM's finances and provides advice, expertise, and recommendations to Admin Council. It works with the General Secretary and the Chief Financial Officer to develop financial objectives and policies. It works with the Treasurer in fostering engagement and financial literacy in the wider PYM body. The Treasurer is the clerk of Finance Committee, ex-officio. This year, Finance worked with the Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust on the Shared Services Agreement, effective Oct. 1, 2022, and the launch of the Trust's Capital Campaign.

Governance Advisory Committee: The Governance Advisory Committee has members from all three councils and at-large members appointed outside the PYM governance structure. Its members have a deep understanding and experience of good governance generally and in the Quaker context. It helps ensure the councils are operating in a healthy and consistent manner. It conducted council self-evaluations this past year. It evaluated the current structure, recommending continued incremental and evolutionary changes.

Granting Committee: The Granting Committee oversees PYM's granting function, which grants out approximately \$1 million per year in more than 400 grants, mostly in the PYM community. The committee populates the granting groups and maintains a liaison system of communication and support. It promotes best practices across the granting groups, developing consistent and effective structures and processes. The committee streamlined its own schedule of meetings to make the best use of volunteer time.

Personnel Committee: The Personnel Committee collaborates with PYM's General Secretary to develop and recommend to Admin Council the policies, procedures, and programs that will ensure appropriate, consistent, legal and fair treatment of all personnel and that will foster a healthy staff/organizational culture. It also provides confidential counsel to the General Secretary on human resource issues, as requested. PYM has restructured a number of staff positions and had an above-average number of new hires this year.

Property Committee: The Property Committee advises Admin on any real estate in which PYM has a financial interest. It provides support to quarterly and monthly meeting on issues related to the stewardship and, when necessary, the disposition of property under the care of those meetings. Property recently met with Shelly Stackhouse of Partners for Sacred Places to learn more about free resources for older and historic sacred places that want to plan for their futures. It is working with PYM staff on a Property Thread Gathering in January, 2024.

Conclusion: The Administrative Council functions under the weight of its fiduciary responsibility and is grateful for the trust that PYM has placed in it. It seeks to contribute both spiritually and practically to a strong, grounded and vibrant yearly meeting.

In Peace,

Jim Waddington, Clerk