Virginia Beach Friends Meeting
Called Meeting Minutes
Eighth Month, 16th, 2021

Meeting began at 6:32pm with waiting worship with 15 friends present via blended technology. At 6:45 the clerk reviewed the agenda, which was posted on the website.

Attending: Linda Smith (clerk), Dave French, Nancy Craft, Tom Kennedy, Larry Herz, Nancy Delle Femine, Jeanne Crawford, Elizabeth Waitekus, Lisa Kennedy, Patrick Goold, Margaret Reese, Mary Pelham White, Lewis White, Hank Ghittino, Gwynne Wells, Faye Bailey

Recorder: Dave French

*From the clerk: Since the notes from this meeting are lengthy, I have copied/pasted the key summaries here:

1. (page 3 of this document) The clerk thanked us for prayerful consideration of the topic of hiring an attorney, but sensed that there is not unity here.

2. **Minute**: (page 4) Clerk, having sensed unity on presenting the 1984 lease and Bert Poole lease amendment to another called meeting for discussion among all interested members prior to next meeting for business. The needed information for the called meeting will be sent out prior to the meeting.

The issue of laying down the task force will be considered as a separate agenda item at the next meeting for business.

The purpose of this called meeting is to bring light, clarity and unity surrounding the questions and concerns today about the lease amendment and hiring a lawyer. It is to connect to our spiritual responsibility as friends when engaged in meeting for business.

Clerk Linda described her lengthy conversations with a dozen Friends in recent weeks with the purpose of listening and gaining a deeper understanding of Friends' thoughts and opinions about the matter at hand (the renewal of a lease between the school and meeting and the proposal to hire a lawyer). Opinions are divided and include concerns that Meeting's property is in jeopardy, to concerns about the spiritual well-being of our faith community. We are urged to treat each other with love and kindness.

Prior to this meeting, we were asked to read from "Spiritual Responsibility in Meeting for Business" by Patricia Loring*. It had resonance with some, who spoke about it. One thought was emphasized was that "we are all to be clerking" and everyone present must be practicing spiritual discernment. Some have a lot to say, and should be fully heard.
*Attached to these minutes.

Over the past few weeks, the clerk has sensed a lack of understanding about the role of the clerk of meeting. It seems a point worth reviewing. The role of the Clerk (or convener of a committee) is to be a facilitator and recorder of the spiritual truth of the community, to remain neutral and not participate in the substance of a matter. The Clerk sets the pace for the meeting and provides space for everyone to be heard. The Clerk does not "take sides" on an issue nor endorse a proposal nor grant authority to any individual of the meeting. The recording clerk is responsible for reviewing the agenda, preparing for meeting for business, anticipate minutes to be written, and after meeting for business review the minutes for accuracy, grammar, and punctuation with the Clerk.

The recommendation of Meeting's members of the Property Task Force was submitted as below:

The Property Task Force recommends that the meeting approve $2500 as a retainer for hiring a lawyer. The attorney's job would be to review our lease and proposed amendments and advise the Meeting on any legal implications; plus advise us on what may be in the lease or missing from the lease (and proposed amendments), to protect our interests or avoid risks. (Meeting would commit to paying a $2500 retainer).*

* the word lease refers to the 1984 lease of property owned by the Meeting but used by the school. The "proposed amendments" refers to the recently suggested changes to this lease as drafted by Bert Poole, but also changes that Meeting members suggest.

Discussion followed.

Clerk summarized the discussion but sensed a lack of unity on this request from the task force.

Further discussion included:

- There were questions about what changes we wanted to have the attorney review, but it was said that it is premature to know what they are, since we haven't processed concerns to come to any agreement that we would then want an attorney to review.
- Another question related to the role of trustees in any legal issue. The role of the Trustees is stated on our Virginia Beach Friends webpage.
- A member spoke about the need for us to see each other (school and Meeting) as one, and thus we don't need a lawyer.
- Another person spoke about a lack of trust as the basis of this concern, and not understanding why we would want an attorney to tell us what we think.
- Another thought was that, as we are talking about changing an important legal document, we who aren't lawyers should seek competent legal advice.
- Lewis provided a summary of the work on amending the lease and Bert Poole's work. He said that Bert would represent both school and Meeting. This has been going on since mid May 2021.

- Dave said that the lease amendment continues to evolve, so we should not think that we aren't making some progress.
- Another view is that we shouldn't consider this a legal issue, but just agree with trust.
- A question is "how long do we have; do we need that long?" We have expertise among us that we should just draw on.
- School asked Meeting to have an amendment to the lease. They wanted the lease to have flexibility and control. I think that school is asking for too much; it lasts for the next 162 years. We have heard it said that if school isn't here, the land will become apartments. If that were to happen, we would want the lease to end, and we need to be sure that wouldn't happen that the lease transfers to them. We are reminded that school is independent from the Meeting, and we can't imagine might happen in the distant future. We don't want to needlessly risk anything for the Meeting. I'm (Tom Kennedy) working on trying to draft a lease amendment that we can review. I feel gridlocked until we have an attorney to assure us about the concerns I have.

Clerk then asked for a period of worship to allow space for those who have not yet spoken but may wish to.

- A member said that he is confused and disappointed that this lease isn't done. Proposals are onerous to the school, and therefore unacceptable. Suggesting that the lease should be shortened dishonors the founders. The school will survive and thrive, and would buy out the Meeting if we decided to sell our land. It is absurd to think Meeting would sell. Bert has worked to have a good lease. The only reason to hire another attorney is to support a few people who want to advocate for onerous conditions. The Meeting should take over this from Joint Property. People aren't being reasonable, and it is tearing us apart. Approving Bert Poole's lease amendment is a start. This proposed amendment is only number one; if there are other issues with the lease, they could be addressed as amendment two if needed.

Summary: The clerk thanked us for prayerful consideration of the topic of hiring an attorney, but sensed that there is not unity here.

Clerk asked: Is there any third option of hiring or not?

Further discussion:

- A member said "I'd like to see this opened up so everyone has the (Bert Poole's) proposed amendment and documents. Note that the school has sold off lots of its property, causing this change. There are lots of details and lack of common understanding of them. A Quakerly process requires full openness."
- A suggested way forward is that joint property task force should be laid down and that Meeting as a whole take it over. Then the meeting should consider ap-

proving Bert Poole's draft of the amended lease. Clerk sensed some support for this notion, but not unity.

- Clerk observed that there are a lot of details that may be overwhelming. She restated the suggestion of laying down the task force and putting the lease amendment on the agenda for next business meeting. A called meeting for the purpose of understanding the lease and amendment proposal would help this process.
- It was noted that the lease isn't the only item that the task force is working on.

- ACTION: Clerk requested that the task force make a list of the projects they have been working on and share this list with the meeting.

- The trustees can handle any other issues, so the task force isn't needed. The trustees' job definition is already in place on our web site.

Minute: Clerk, having sensed unity on presenting the 1984 lease and Bert Poole lease amendment to another called meeting for discussion among all interested members prior to next meeting for business. The needed information for the called meeting will be sent out prior to the meeting.

The issue of laying down the task force will be considered as a separate agenda item at the next meeting for business. (Details of who will do what will be worked out later).

Action: Meeting's School committee members will communicate this to school committee.

Meeting closed at 8:36pm with 16 persons present.