

DFM Transition Oversight Committee: Report & Recommendations

In May of 2004, Durham Friends Meeting authorized the creation of an ad hoc Transition Oversight Committee to assist the Clerk in managing the details of the Meeting's move from the old meetinghouse to the newly-built larger meetinghouse. The Committee was authorized to make decisions, institute policies and spend funds necessary for making full use of our new facilities.

Members included Harriet Hopkins, Nikki Vangsnes and Kent Wicker. Clerk Bill O'Connor participated ex officio. Health issues forced Harriet to step down in August; some of her duties were taken over by Kathleen March. Many, many others in Meeting have been very helpful.

This is the final report of the Transition Oversight Committee preparatory to being laid down. It summarizes both the Committee's activities and its recommendations for future Meeting decisions, policies and expenditures.

I. WORK COMPLETED

During the past nine months, Transition Oversight met regularly, collected ideas from the Meeting and did the following:

- Co-coordinated the moving of furniture and furnishings from the old meetinghouse to the new meetinghouse
- Interviewed and hired two cleaning services: one for major post-construction cleaning, and one for ongoing weekly cleaning of Meetinghouse.
- Developed a Committee budget and spending priorities, including the following furnishings:
 - Researched, purchased and furnished the kitchen with new flatware, plates, cups, mugs, bowls, tablecloths and other kitchen items.
 - Researched and purchased new tables and chairs for the Fellowship Room, as well as wheeled racks to store them on.
 - Purchased vacuum cleaner, cleaning supplies and bathroom furnishings.
 - Obtained mats, rugs and wall hangings for the Meetinghouse interior and porch.
- Arranged for the following interior work to be done:
 - A child-proof gate is now installed at the top of the interior stairs.
 - Shelves are now installed in the storage closets.
 - The Library Committee has chosen and purchased appropriate bookshelves and other furniture for the Library/Office area of the Lobby.
 - David Beckett has made and installed coat pegs in the Worship Room vestibule.
 - With help of Henri Gavin and Gale Curry, we hired an electrician to solve dishwasher connection problems.

- Worked on the following landscaping issues:
 - Authorized Bill Trost of Groundskeeping to set up an automatic watering system for our plants along the Ronald McDonald House parking lot.
 - Hired a drainage consultant to give advice for controlling erosion.
 - Interviewed, obtained estimates and hired work crews to implement the drainage consultant's advice, both for rain gutters on buildings and for channeling of groundwater.
 - Sponsored Meeting work days to work on construction cleanup, erosion control and other landscaping issues.
 - Purchased landscaping supplies and equipment.
 - Disposed of excess building materials.
- Worked with Cessane Berry from Carolina Friends School on playground issues.
 - Met with state playground inspector.
 - Obtained estimate for building front porch gates, and for various methods of re-picketing front porch
- Worked with the manager and director of Ronald McDonald House on issues of mutual concern and co-operation; provided storage for RM House yard sale in first floor of Meetinghouse.
- Sponsored a forum on meeting youth space needs in the old meetinghouse and elsewhere.
- Reviewed and revised Meeting policies concerning:
 - Meetinghouse access. Under this policy, the key to the Meetinghouse is kept in a coded lockbox by the front door, and the code is given out to those Meeting and outside users who need access. We purchased as well a larger key box for storing keys inside.
 - Facilities rental and other use. Worked with the Finance Committee and the Meeting Scheduler to draft both a new Facility Use Policy and Facility User Agreement for renters and other users of our spaces.
 - Meetinghouse procedures, systems & appliances.
 - Developed new Meetinghouse Closing Procedure, a copy of which is now mounted inside to the right of the front door.
 - Asked Henri Gavin to write User Guides for all our major systems and appliances, which are kept with the owners' manuals in the kitchen drawers, and are available on the Meeting website.
 - Firstday hospitality program. Established a program whereby members/attenders, as individuals or families, can help in the preparation of Meetinghouse for Meeting for Worship.
 - Meeting committee/position structure and responsibilities. See Committee Responsibilities section for full details.

II. WORK AUTHORIZED AND IN PROGRESS

We have prioritized, budgeted for and authorized the following work with the assumption that it must meet the Meeting's needs for the next three to five years.

LIBRARY/OFFICE FURNITURE

- The Library Committee will organize a work party to prepare, stain and install the library furniture currently on the first floor of the Meetinghouse sometime in the next two months.
- Once this furniture is installed, the library desk will become the Meeting's "communication center," with mailboxes for the Clerk and convenors.
- We authorize Library Committee, in consultation with Housekeeping, to also purchase a small table and three or four sturdy, comfortable chairs for the Library/Office area.

OTHER INTERIOR ISSUES

- We are sponsoring a work party to finish the general cleaning out of the old meetinghouse.
- We authorize the Youth Steering Committee to obtain 2-3 couches of good appearance and durability to be placed in the old meetinghouse.
- Housekeeping will create a recycling center in or near the kitchen.
- Nikki Vangsnes will purchase carpet runners for the vestibule and other Meetinghouse areas.
- Kent Wicker or Nikki Vangsnes will purchase a storage unit for the 4th/5th grade classroom area of the Fellowship Room.
- Building Maintenance will
 - determine a way of further dimming the lights in the Worship Room (perhaps by removing every other tube on one circuit)
 - place the sensor lights in the restrooms on a longer cycle.
 - install strikeplates on the exterior deadbolt doors that lack them.
 - install a bumper to prevent the vestibule door from striking the wall, as well as any other bumpers necessary on other doors.

MEETINGHOUSE EXTERIOR

• SEAL BRICKS

Sometime during the next six months, Building Maintenance will seal the exterior brick of the Meetinghouse (sealant info available through Joe Graedon), either by purchasing supplies and forming a work party for this purpose or (should doing the job safely prove beyond our abilities) by hiring a crew. Meeting will set aside funds for this purpose.

- SEAL AND STAIN DECKS & SIDING

Sometime around May or June of this year, whenever the weather is dry enough, Building Maintenance will purchase supplies and form a work party to stain or seal the rear deck, front porch and cedar shake siding. Meeting will set aside money for supplies.

We recommend sealing the siding, decking, uprights and railings, but staining the supporting posts and headers of the front porch above the level of the deck (and possibly the front porch railings as well) with the same stain used on the classroom building, to create a more unified look for our campus.

- CONSTRUCT PORCH GATES

The spacing of the upright pickets on the railing of the front porch meets the 4-inch requirements of Durham's code, but does not meet the 3-inch requirements of the state's preschool code. We obtained opinions and estimates for several different solutions to this problem.

Rather than replace all the pickets or cover them with solid material, we have authorized sturdy and attractive gates to be built at the bottom of the front porch stairs and the ramp that lead to the porch, to aid Early School teachers in keeping the children off the porch. David Beckett has volunteered his labor and expertise for this job. Meeting will set aside money for supplies.

OUTSIDE LIGHTING

- Building Maintenance will either purchase and install adequate outside lighting or hire others to do so within the next three months. Current outside lighting is inadequate for events taking place in the evening. In particular, we need lighting that can help users of our facilities walk to the Meetinghouse and back again to their cars. We also need a motion-activated light by the main doors, so that there is adequate light for locking up.

SIGNS

- Meeting will purchase and mount a large "Durham Friends Meeting" sign at least three or four feet tall by Alexander Avenue. Our current Meeting sign is small and can be read only by pedestrians who take the time to do so. Plus, our main building is no longer at the northeast corner of the property. Therefore, Meeting will install this sign on the slope at the southeast corner of our property, near the Ronald McDonald parking lot, where it can be better seen by motorists, and maintain it in such a way to ensure that it is never obscured by weeds. (\$1500)
- The following small signs will be posted by Building Maintenance to assist visitors, renters and new attenders:
 - A "Durham Friends Meetinghouse" sign by the main door of the Meetinghouse
 - A sign by the main door of the old meetinghouse indicating its current name/use (as determined by New Uses Committee).
 - A plaque by the main door of the old meetinghouse stating "Historic Durham Friends Meetinghouse/Built 1956" (date?) (or some other appropriate text as determined by New Uses Committee.)

TOY SHED

- Carolina Friends Early School needs to build a shed in which to keep outside toys. Kent Wicker will continue to work with John McGovern of Carolina Friends School and the Durham City/County Planning Office to obtain a permit and construct the shed by the end of April.

GROUNDS

- We authorize Groundskeeping to purchase a lawn mower, a weed cutter and other minor equipment they may need, assuming Meeting is not forced to hire an outside yard service
- Within the next three months, Groundskeeping will
 - Stabilize the bank behind the new Meetinghouse with excelsior matting or whatever other method is most appropriate.
 - Add rip-rap at the end of the drainage ditch at the northwest corner of the property in order to make a small check dam

III. WORK BUDGETED AND RECOMMENDED

PATHS

- We recommend that, within the next three months, Meeting pave a path from the bottom of the front stairs through the central gate (just south of the old meetinghouse) and along the old meetinghouse, then turning north to join with the existing brick path by the old meetinghouse.

The current gravel paths tend to wash out, and people tend to track the gravel into the Meetinghouse. Brick pavers would most nicely match the existing brick walkway in front of the old meetinghouse, and the work might be done by Meeting members. But estimates we received on this work indicate that the job would involve over 120 person-hours of work by a professional crew (3 ½ people x 4 – 4 ½ days), so we believe this may be beyond Meeting abilities. Brick is also very expensive.

Business Meeting suggested we consider asphalt, which is cheaper and might give a smoother surface for easier universal access. Therefore, while brick might still be best on that portion of the path nearest the old meetinghouse, we recommend asphalt for at least that part of the path lying in the playground/courtyard area, if not the whole path. If Meeting approves, Kent Wicker will get further estimates for this work and contract for it. Once this is done, we recommend that Groundskeeping supervise.

NEW MEETINGHOUSE ROOM DIVISIONS

- We need further small, classroom-type spaces for both adult and child education. One way we can achieve this is by better separating the classroom space in the Fellowship Room (currently used by 4th & 5th graders) from adjoining areas. Therefore, Transition has obtained estimates for the following work, which it recommends that Building Maintenance supervise:
 - We will contract to install a set of windowed doors between the Fellowship Room and the Lobby capable of blocking at least some of the sound between those spaces.

- We will contract to enclose the Nursery, continuing the half-wall to the ceiling, but adding a large (3-4 ft wide) window and converting the existing half-door to a dutch door opening in two sections.

We chose this approach over enclosing the classroom space itself because a permanent wall there would make our Fellowship space less flexible, while a sound-insulating movable wall is too expensive, given current competing budget priorities.

Plus, the 4th/5th grade teacher tells us she enjoys having the “spill-out space” of the Fellowship Room for projects. Meanwhile, the Nursery is an area which almost certainly will never be used as dining space during Fellowship, since we will nearly always need it as a Nursery. And the option of opening both a window and the top of a dutch door would enable this space to be much more open and connected to the Fellowship Room whenever that is appropriate.

ACOUSTICS IN THE MEETINGHOUSE

- We recommend that Meeting set aside funds sufficient to cover the ceiling of the Fellowship Room with acoustical material, but wait until after some of the other work we have recommended (such as nursery enclosure and bookshelves installed in the library) is completed so that we can better discern which areas most need the help.

Based on conversations with Chapel Hill Meeting and their acoustical consultant, we found that the high, sound-reflective ceilings in the Fellowship Room and Lobby/Library area tend to create an echo that makes conversation difficult to understand. Soft floor coverings, wall coverings and curtains can help, but only so much. Soft fabric hanging from the ceiling can also help, and might cut down on fluorescent glare from the lights. But the most effective way of dealing with the problem is to put in a ceiling of better sound-absorbing material.

Chapel Hill Meeting had a similar experience with their Multipurpose Room, and ended up lowering the ceiling. But lowering the ceiling in our Meetinghouse would also require lowering or changing all of the light fixtures, and would be very expensive. A cheaper option that we have been told would be only slightly less effective would be to affix an acoustical material to our current ceiling.

We have no clear recommendation on this currently, except that the Meeting set aside the funds sufficient for this last option, and wait until room divisions are finished before determining exactly what solution is needed. At that time, a final decision should be made by the ad hoc Space Modification Committee.

- The acoustics of the Worship Room, perhaps because it was designed in consultation with an acoustical engineer, seem to function better. But there are still those who have difficulty hearing others in this room. The solutions that might work in the Fellowship Room, however, would not work here, since the ceiling cannot be altered without radically compromising the design of the Worship Room. Possible solutions include electronic devices to boost hearing gain.

How this problem is approached has a lot to do with the nature of the difficulty people have in this space hearing the vocal ministry of others. (Do voices not carry? Or is there too much extraneous noise? Is the problem worse in some spots than others?) Therefore, we recommend that Ministry & Counsel and/or Oversight survey worshippers to ask what sorts of hearing problems they are having in what areas of this room, and then consult with appropriate acoustical consultants.

IV. FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

NEW FENCE

- We recommend that the chain link fence running from the front porch ramp to the Ronald McDonald parking lot be replaced by a sturdy and attractive wooden fence, ideally in the same general style as the front porch railings, within the next two years. We recommend that long-term plans include the replacement of most or all of the chain link fence with something more attractive.

PORCH FURNITURE

- We recommend that Meeting encourage the donation or construction of reasonably new, attractive wooden weather-resistant rockers and benches for the front porch, in a style that harmonizes with the porch and existing furniture there. Said harmony can be determined in consultation with Housekeeping Cmte.

NEW OPERATING BUDGET ITEMS

- We recommend that Building Maintenance use Meeting annual budget funds to hire a firm with appropriate equipment and insurance to clean the rain gutters of our buildings on a regular basis. In two years time, Building Maintenance should review this situation to see whether gutter guards of some sort would be an effective way to lower our long-term gutter-cleaning costs.
- If there are no members of Meeting willing to be independently responsible for regular tasks such as lawn mowing, we recommend that Groundskeeping use Meeting annual budget funds to hire a yard service.

NEW COMMITTEES

We recommend that two new ad hoc committees be created with the following responsibilities:

NEW USES FOR THE OLD MEETINGHOUSE COMMITTEE (AD HOC)

We recommend that a three-person ad hoc New Uses (for an Old Meetinghouse) Committee be convened as soon as possible for a four month term to determine the following:

- How we can best take care of this resource that has been handed down to us?

What needs to be done to keep this building healthy and functional? What needs are most urgent? Do we need to replace the old oil-burning furnace? Do we need to replace the existing restrooms with a single universal-access restroom? Building Maintenance has already begun a survey of systems in this building which might prove helpful.
- How will Meeting be using this building, both short-term (in the next three years) and longer-term?

When taking up the project of building a new meetinghouse, the Meeting made a commitment to use the old meetinghouse as classroom space for our youth. Will

this space also be available to Meeting for other uses, both within Meeting and as rental space?

Also, our children and youth programs continue to grow rapidly. While our middle-schoolers use this building for Firstday school, we still must rent space for our high schoolers across the street in the Episcopal Center. Should the old 20 x 40 ft. worship space be divided into two classroom spaces, one for high-schoolers and one for middle-schoolers? If so, how permanent should this division be? (Should this be done with drywall, folding wall panels or wheeled storage partitions? Transition has some information on options we could share.) Would dividing this space limit any of our long-term options for this space? Long-Term Envisioning can share their sense of Meeting's longer-term concerns with this committee.

SPACE MODIFICATION COMMITTEE (AD HOC)

We recommend that the Clerk of Meeting and the convenors of Building Maintenance and Housekeeping meet from time to time as a three-person ad hoc Space Modification Committee, under the following conditions. This is not a standing committee, and has no other duties.

- Once the enclosure of the nursery and installation of Fellowship Room doors is completed, the Space Modification Committee will make a final decision as to our best strategy for improving acoustics in the Fellowship Room.
- Sometime during the year following the enclosure of the nursery and installation of Fellowship Room doors, the Space Modification Committee will
 - Determine whether or not heavier doors are needed between the Lobby and Worship Room vestibule.
 - In consultation with those who use the space, determine whether or not further division between the classroom bay and the larger Fellowship Room – such as a pull-out accordion wall -- is needed.
- In two to three years' time, the Space Modification Committee will
 - Determine whether or not it would be advisable to construct closets in which to store Fellowship Room tables and chairs.
 - In consultation with the Library Committee, review whether or not the Library should remain a part of the Lobby space, or be separated from it with glass doors.

V. SUMMARY OF NEW RESPONSIBILITIES FOR STANDING COMMITTEES

GROUNDSKEEPING COMMITTEE

ONGOING RESPONSIBILITIES

While Quakers historically have taken stewardship very seriously, the care we have shown for our grounds – and our support for the Groundskeeping Committee -- has not always been as great as it might be. But two new buildings in the past three years have greatly expanded our little campus and changed how we need to care for it. We now need to be much more systematic in how we approach the care of our grounds. Therefore, we recommend:

- If Groundskeeping cannot find members of Meeting willing to be independently responsible for regular tasks such as lawn mowing, Meeting funds should be used to hire a yard service well in advance of the need.
- At the beginning of each year, Groundskeeping should draw up a regular yearly calendar of at least five predictable (perhaps every fourth Saturday in Spring & Fall) Meeting workdays and publicize them to all Meeting members and attenders well in advance.
- Groundskeeping should work closely with Carolina Friends Early School, paying particular concern to minimizing erosion on the playground.
- Groundskeeping can store lawnmower, tools and supplies in the first floor of the Meetinghouse.

UPCOMING TASKS – SHORT TERM

- Groundskeeping will supervise paving of the paths, once the job is contracted.
- Groundskeeping will supervise fencing, once the job is contracted.
- Within the next three months, Groundskeeping will stabilize the bank behind the new Meetinghouse with excelsior matting or whatever other method is most appropriate. Groundskeeping will also add rip-rap at the end of the drainage ditch at the northwest corner of the property in order to make a small check dam

UPCOMING TASKS – LONGER TERM

- Groundskeeping (in consultation with others, if desired) should develop a long-term landscaping plan by Fall of 2005. Such a plan would designate what areas are currently to be treated as natural areas, lawn, playground or garden, describe how each is to be cared for, and outline what our longer-term plans for each of those areas are, including both garden and foundation plantings, paths, fences, retaining walls, etc.
 - In particular, we urge that the very visible area between the playground and the Meetinghouse be landscaped as soon as possible, and that the chainlink fence in this area be replaced by a sturdy and attractive wooden fence (see above).
 - Because a memorial garden requires an important commitment from the Meeting, any proposals for a memorial garden should be first considered by Ministry & Counsel and approved by Business Meeting.
 - We recommend that long-term plans include the paving of additional paths:
 - from the base of the Meetinghouse porch stairs southward to the Ronald McDonald parking lot
 - from the Meetinghouse porch ramp to the handicapped parking spaces in front of the old meetinghouse
 - We recommend that long-term plans include consideration of a sidewalk and low retaining wall along the length of the Ronald McDonald parking lot, as well as the extension of the retaining wall along the northern edge of the property, near the classroom building entrance.

BUILDING MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE

ONGOING RESPONSIBILITIES

- Building Maintenance is responsible for:
 - maintaining our mechanical, structural, plumbing, HVAC, electrical, phone, fire alarm and other systems;
 - maintaining, repairing and replacing appliances;
 - maintaining or upgrading roofing, gutters, flooring, paint (both interior & exterior) and hardware;
 - any major change to the interior or exterior of our buildings
- Building Maintenance will annually review the structure, systems and appliances of our buildings so as to anticipate any major needs and expenditures before they become urgent.
- Building Maintenance will annually review any maintenance contracts (gutter cleaning; HVAC service; fire alarm) and change them if necessary.
- Building Maintenance will monitor the humidity of the Meetinghouse and adjust as necessary.

UPCOMING TASKS

- Building Maintenance will contract & supervise the following projects, which Transition will fund, spec and get at least one estimate for:
 - The installation of wooden gates at the base of the stairs and ramp leading to the front porch (David Beckett has offered to do this)
 - The enclosure of the Nursery
 - The installation of two windowed doors at the entrance to the Fellowship Room
 - Any acoustical work in the Fellowship Room
- Building Maintenance should install (or have installed) additional outside lighting as stated above.
- Building Maintenance will install non-skid treads on the front porch steps.
- Building Maintenance should form a work party to seal or stain the front porch, rear deck and cedar shake siding around May or June of 2005, whenever the weather is dry enough, as stated above.
- Building Maintenance should either form a work party or hire out the task of sealing the exterior brick, as stated above.
- Building Maintenance should perform the following tasks, as stated above:
 - Post signs identifying the buildings of our campus
 - Change the cycle of the sensor lights in the restrooms
 - Determine a way of dimming Worship Room lights
 - Install strikeplates on the exterior deadbolt doors
 - Install any needed bumpers to prevent doors from knocking walls

- Building Maintenance should hire a firm with appropriate equipment and insurance to clean the rain gutters of our buildings on a regular basis. In two years time, Building Maintenance should review this situation to see whether gutter guards of some sort would be an effective way to lower our long-term gutter-cleaning costs.

HOUSEKEEPING COMMITTEE

ONGOING RESPONSIBILITIES

- Housekeeping should oversee the use of the kitchen and maintain supplies there. We recommend that all Housekeeping members be familiar with the working of the dishwasher.
- Housekeeping should hire (either from within or outside the Meeting) and supervise cleaning services for the new and old Meetinghouses.
- Housekeeping should purchase all necessary kitchen, bathroom and cleaning supplies or equipment needed beyond what the cleaning service may provide.
- Any change in access policy should be initiated by Housekeeping, in consultation with the Scheduler and Clerk. Housekeeping should work closely with the Scheduler and the Finance Committee to ensure
 - that spaces are ready for renters and other users of our facilities
 - that renters and other users know how to use our spaces
 - that our Facility User Policy, our access policy and our closing procedures are workable and appropriate.
- Housekeeping should work closely with Building Maintenance to ensure that all spaces of our facilities are functional and ready for use.
- Housekeeping should work closely with the Library, Oversight, Adult Education, Child Education and Ministry & Counsel Committees to co-ordinate Firstday and other use of the Meetinghouse.
- Housekeeping, in consultation with Ministry & Counsel, should determine the best number and placement of chairs in the Worship Room as well as the best temperature and environment during various seasons, so as to pass along appropriate window and thermostat settings to each week's Firstday Host.
- Housekeeping should institute and maintain a Firstday hospitality program through which Meeting attenders and their families can assist in opening the building, preparing it for Firstday activities, and providing refreshments for after Meeting for Worship.
- Housekeeping will determine what furnishings, wall hangings and other décor are appropriate in our buildings and porches, and change or replace them as needed. Housekeeping is responsible for the bulletin boards in the old meetinghouse.
- Housekeeping is responsible for cleaning out and maintaining the first floor of the Meetinghouse.

UPCOMING TASKS

- Housekeeping will create a recycling center in or near the kitchen.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE

- The Library Committee should call a work party prepare to prepare, stain and install the library furniture currently on the first floor of the Meetinghouse sometime in the next two months.
- The Library Committee, in consultation with Housekeeping, should purchase a small table and two or three sturdy, comfortable chairs for the Library/Office area.
- In consultation with the Space Review Committee, the Library Committee should review in 2-3 year's time whether or not the Library should remain a part of the Lobby space, or be separated from it with glass doors.
- The Library Committee be responsible for maintaining the neatness and order of the library/office area, and inform Housekeeping of any special cleaning concerns.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

- The Finance Committee should administer the Facility Use Policy recently co-drafted by the Finance & Transition Committees as approved by Business Committee. The Finance Committee should work closely with the Meeting Scheduler on rental issues and regularly review the rental fee schedule to make sure it is appropriate for the current rental market.

MINISTRY & COUNSEL COMMITTEE

- Ministry & Counsel will advise Housekeeping about appropriate environmental controls during Meeting for Worship.
- Ministry & Counsel and/or Oversight will survey those who have difficulty hearing in the Worship Room, in order to better meet their needs.
- Ministry & Counsel should begin a discussion on the advisability of a memorial garden on our property, so as to advise Groundskeeping in the development of its master landscaping plan.

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

- Oversight and/or Ministry & Counsel will survey those who have difficulty hearing in the Worship Room, in order to better meet their needs.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

- The Communications Committee is responsible for maintaining the bulletin boards in the Meetinghouse, including a dedicated space for the use of committees.