

**St. Matthew's Episcopal Church**  
**Vestry Meeting Minutes - November 28, 2023 @ 6:30pm**  
**Location: In-person and hybrid in B-14 (Wilson Room) and on Zoom**

**Vestry Members in Attendance:** Joyce Statz (Senior Warden), Bob Ascott (Junior Warden), Natalie Lynch (Clerk), Ann O'Connell, Armando Ruiz, Blythe Wilson, Christopher Hansen, Gary McNeil, David Kennedy, Anne Webster, Stephanie McCollum, Carole Taxis, Jenny Watson, Natalie Lynch, Jason Bagshaw, Steve Ryder by Zoom

**Clergy in Attendance:** Rev. Katie Wright (Rector)

**Business Manager:** Chris Schumacher (present)

**Treasurer:** Lisa Ottenbacher (present)

**Observers:** David Hogan, Lise Harding, Allen Juneke

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The November 28, 2023 meeting of the Vestry of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church was called to order by the Rector Katie Wright at 6:35pm who determined that a quorum of members was present. Jenny opened the meeting with a devotional from Corinthians and Luke, asked 4 related questions, and a prayer.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Lisa Ottenbacher

Lisa reported that the Treasurer's Report is blessedly boring. The good news is that our income is now only approximately \$4,000 off-budget. There is a hope that the congregation will be generous during the Christmas season. Because of severance and other issues, clergy compensation is higher than budget but has not changed month over month. This month, however, was a negative deviation that is somewhat larger the overall year. Joyce clarified the importance of expressing urgency to the congregation to cover the shortfall. There was consensus that the unavoidable expenses like high utilities and storm damage but we have gotten back on track with all other expected expenses. We also have \$11,000 in commitments for pledges next year. The reserve study funds were not budgeted and we could really use funds to cover that necessary expense too. There was a particular question about non-food items and it was clarified that this was an expense for ice machine repair. Additional programming like the newcomers lunch are incredibly necessary for the financial health of the future but look off-budget this year. Lisa shared that she is immensely grateful that the congregation and its members are financially stable.

**BUSINESS MANAGER'S REPORT:** Chris Schumacher

There was an improvement in the IT infrastructure, an employee timeclock, we offered David Duran a job to be full time. There was an additional tree removed. There was the discovery and treatment of carpenter ants and rats that will each be remediated. We hired two students to grab all the tree moss. Pedro is getting a lot more efficient in his work and really knocking out his to-do list. The sanctuary and parking lot lights will both be addressed, at least initially, in the coming week.

**Approve Consent Agenda Items:**

The first order of business was to approve the consent agenda items provided in the pre-read folder, including Vestry Budget Meeting Minutes, Annual Parish Meeting Minutes, Commission/Committee/Council Reports. **Joyce made a motion, Ann O seconded and passed unanimously.**

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

Joyce reminded the Vestry of the business completed since the last meeting. Including:

1. Communications Commission created by the Vestry as part of the approved Strategic Plan.
2. Designation of new Vestry member Jason Bagshaw to serve the unfulfilled term (1-year).

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

1. The safety council is working on bylaws as well as a safety plan, according to Joyce. They are committed to developing and implementing the policies and procedures for this group. Several pertinent leaders are serving on the board of this group. There is also a communication piece of this to the vestry but generally, this group is focused on safety matters and things are occasionally confidential. In the proposed budget, the security guard, there is training and maintenance of the FEMA equipment over time. There was gratitude expressed to Jeff Jury. Jenny asked a question about the confidentiality waiver having a different approval structure than other provisions.
  - a. There is a provision regarding mandatory reporting and it was clarified that nearly every Texan is a mandatory reporter.
  - b. Carole sought to clarify how large the safety committee can become and it was clarified that counsel members can theoretically serve endlessly. Mother Katie explained that she very much hopes to have a problem that there is too much participation.
  - c. There will be a fire drill at the end of one church service this year.
2. Stewardship report. Blythe reported that there are 153 pledges accounting for \$918,000. The vestry call-athon increased the pledges by \$44,000. She expressed gratitude to everyone that participated. She explained there was also a huge impact last year. Last year at this time there was slightly more money pledged. She reminded us that sometimes pledges and actuals are sometimes different. Blythe's sense is that the quantity of pledges is less but the amount of dollars collected is increasing.
  - a. We will each send a packet of thank-you notes to the pledgees. The vestry should return their executed thank you notes by Tuesday, the 5th of December.
  - b. Blythe explained that Nooshin and Lise also created great pledge cards that fit in the sanctuary.
3. Ann explained that Lise managed a very clean FEMA procurement process and we selected Fletcher to do our window film and BestLine that will perform the video and all other line items. We are now going to contract with them and will mandate multiple contract versions because of the various dollar amounts.
4. Regarding the endowment fund, the overall asks were bigger than the budget and the groups that received funds received less than their ask but more than their previous receipt. Great attention was given to the passion areas that were identified in the strategic planning, such that the percentage of passion votes was generally allocated in alignment with the percentage of the dollars.
  - a. If you would like to serve on the outreach commission, there are applications in December of this year for the various positions.
  - b. Joyce requested clarification about the ongoing plan of assigning the dollars in alignment with the passion votes of the congregation and it was explained that the intent is generally to honor the outcomes of the strategic planning results. Katie foreshadowed that the funding will change as the congregation's passion areas change and that will be documented in future strategic plans.

- c. Jenny and Carole expressed amazement that the endowment committee did such a wonderful job making the strategic plan come alive in that committee.
  - d. Joyce also requested clarification for the hibernation period of participation and grant-requesting individuals serving on the commissions.
  - e. There is a motion to approve the outreach commissions' proposed allocation of funds held in 501-030 for 2023 Outreach Grants, which includes the 2023 Outreach grant chart in the meeting documents. **Ann made a motion, Jenny seconded and passed unanimously.**
5. Solar Panel Update. Chris H explained the history of the solar project previously fizzled out because it did not previously make sense but now the incentives and technology are different. David Hogan has done a lot of research on the incentives, technology, and potential applications at this campus. He reported that the initial estimates and two of the three vendors provided viable proposals. Both vendors have asked for a letter of intent to work together. A more detailed proposal will include concepts to trench cables and permitting. Chris would like discussion about the vestry's opinion to move forward with one of the vendors.
- a. The biggest reason to move forward is creation care and there is a financial case for the long term use of cheaper power. Chris S. anticipated the insurance coverage will likely be about \$1,000 per year.
  - b. David responded to Ann O's question about pledges for this work and David reported that if it was last year the funds will exist. There was a discussion about whether the vestry intent or the preliminary funders. There is also a desire to have this voted on conclusively by the annual meeting.
  - c. The vestry cost is about \$60,000 after rebates and the savings will be recuperated in 3.5 church. Katie made the point that we should take out a loan even if we don't have pledges.
  - d. There was **motion with unanimous approval of the vestry to move forward executing a letter of intent with one Lighthouse Solar.**

#### CLERGY AND WARDEN COMMENTS:

Katie:

- 6. The endowment committee already approved and brought forward to buy new microphones for each clergyperson. They currently pass around microphones. It will also allow us to have bluetooth speakers. The current speakers are used in a bandwidth that could come to \$55,000 per day if we were caught by the FTC. The other approved approval is for the Episcopal Parish Conference and to send 7 people. This year it is in Houston, which also helps keep our costs low. This conference has historically been very valuable to the clergy.
  - a. Grant Name: 2024 Annual Episcopal Parish Network Conference  
Grant Amount: \$10,500  
Grant Owner: Katie Wright  
Description of spending: 7 attendees x \$1500 each (registration, 3-nights hotel, meals, gas/bus)
  - b.
- 7. AV motion made by David seconded by Jenny, unanimously approved
  - a. The conference, second by Joyce, unanimously approved
  - b. Grant Name: Self-Serve music and clergy-specific mics in Sanctuary  
Grant Amount: \$7,940  
Grant Owner: Lise Harding, Clark Hughes  
Description of spending: More wireless mics \$7,540 + Bluetooth audio device \$400

8. The endowment committee takes a rolling average to make the budget for next year. The intent is to only dip into the amount that allows for a sustaining.
  - a. The Vestry approves moving \$33,353 out of relevant accounts and making available for Endowment Committee grants in 2024. Second by Jenny, unanimously approved.
9. The annual meeting will be in January. Katie suggested having it at 9:00 between the two services and in Huffman Hall. There was an interest in also streaming that offline and an acknowledgment that those individuals cannot vote.
10. Staff employment assessments have begun and there is a hope and expectation that will continue annually. There is input provided to the employee from the other co-workers or parishioners that work with them often. Similarly, there will be input sought for Katie's review.
11. Candidates for vestry and several committees are on Mother Katie's mind. Jenny agreed to be Senior Warden for next year.
12. There has been a great reception to Christine's stewardship and is lately thinking about that position being permanent.
13. Mother Katie expressed appreciation again for Ann O's work to standardize and create processes that can be explained to all newcomers and those newly wanting to be involved.
14. Chris Wilson oversees the investment in alignment with the vestry guidance. The investment oversight was second moved to another state and we need a second congregation member.
15. The love notes concert is coming up and is a wonderful event.
16. The school's La Noche is coming up in February and is held in the sanctuary.
  - a. The Vestry retreat is likely to be February 1st and then pick up Saturday the third night so that folks can attend.
17. The tower bells play something at noon. Doug Webster suggested playing fun Christmas music when the kids are getting out of school.

Joyce:

- The vestry was encouraged to welcome all the families that came to the services.

Bob

There will be a sign up sheet for the pot luck at the next meeting at the Webster home.

#### **CALENDAR REMINDERS:**

Katie closed the meeting with a prayer. Meeting Adjourned at 8:50pm

Submitted by Natalie Lynch, Clerk of the Vestry