

December 4, 2016

Final Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Opportunities for Our Future

In September 2015, Sidwell Friends School informed Bethesda Friends Meeting of its plan to sell the Bethesda campus and move the lower school to the Wisconsin Avenue campus, and invited BFM to likewise move to the Wisconsin Avenue campus. Head of School Bryan Garman described the school's plans at our Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business in October 2015.

In response, BFM established an Ad Hoc Committee on Opportunities for Our Future (AHCOOF) to gather information and facilitate dialog to support BFM's discernment about how to respond to the news of Sidwell Friends School's move. The charge for the AHCOOF stated:

The Opportunities for the Future Committee is an ad hoc committee of Bethesda Friends Meeting, which is asked to support BFM in a Meeting-wide discernment process about the location of a new physical home for the Meeting and the opportunities that the Meeting envisions as part of this choice. This committee has the authority and responsibility to organize and facilitate this discernment process, collect and help the Meeting clarify our questions, gather information (both about the Meeting's needs and about options available), and organize information sessions, threshing sessions and meetings with representatives of Sidwell Friends School and others. The committee will provide one or more reports to the Meeting summarizing what has been learned about options for a new Meeting location but will not make a recommendation on which option to choose. It is the role and responsibility of co-clerks of Bethesda Friends Meeting to help us find a "sense of the Meeting" on these choices. After the choice has been made by the Meeting, the ad hoc committee also is asked to develop a proposed charge for a new ad hoc implementation committee.

The BFM clerks appointed the following members to serve on the ad hoc committee:

| | | |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Marion Ballard | Susan Kaul | Doug Smith |
| Alex Bell | Gail Kohanek | Ralph Steinhardt |
| Peirce Hammond | Jabez McClelland | Amy Lear White |

With the help of others in the meeting, the ad hoc committee outlined the space needs of the meeting, consulted with Sidwell Friends School about its facility design plans and BFM's space needs, investigated options for renting appropriate space in or near Bethesda or elsewhere, and looked into options for building or purchasing a building. The ad hoc committee also consulted with other monthly meetings, examined the financial implication of different options, and collected views of the meeting community through a questionnaire. The AHCOOF sought

to share the information it collected with the meeting through reports to meeting for business, information sessions, and posting of written materials on the BFM website. Opportunities for information sharing and dialog included:

Oct. 2015 business meeting – report from Bryan Garman on Sidwell Friends School’s plans, and the school’s invitation to BFM to join the school in the move
 Nov. 2015 business meeting – approval of the charge for the AHCOOF
 Dec. 2015 business meeting – report from the AHCOOF
 Dec. 13, 2015 – Information session
 Jan. 17, 2016 – Threshing session
 Feb. 2016 business meeting – report from the AHCOOF
 Feb. 21, 2016 – Worship sharing session
 March 2016 business meeting – report from the AHCOOF
 April 2016 business meeting – report from the AHCOOF
 May 2016 business meeting – report from the AHCOOF
 June 2016 business meeting – report from the AHCOOF
 June 26, 2016 – Information session
 July 2016 business meeting – report from the AHCOOF
 Sept. 18, 2016 – Information session

BFM met in Called Meetings for Worship for Discernment on October 1 and October 8, 2016. At the October 8 meeting, the meeting approved the following minute: “Bethesda Friends Meeting joyfully and gratefully accepts the invitation of Sidwell Friends School to move to the consolidated Wisconsin Avenue campus.”

The Nov. 2015 charge to the AHCOOF states: “The Meeting will be asked to lay down the work of the ad hoc committee at the end of 2016, assuming a decision has been made by then, and to approve a charge for an implementation committee. A future implementation committee may or may not include members of the Opportunities for the Future committee.”

Sidwell Friends School’s original plan was to sell the Bethesda property in mid-2016. It now appears that the lower school may not be moved until mid-2020 at the earliest, and it is not clear when the Bethesda property will be sold. With this delay, it seems premature to draft a charter for an implementation committee and to form such a committee. Instead, informed by discussions during the Meeting’s consideration and discernment and by consultations with the co-clerks, the AHCOOF proposes the following specific near-term steps to pursue while we await further developments:

1. The co-clerks of BFM, in cooperation with the Meeting’s liaison to the School and the various BFM Friends who are members of the School’s Board, should remain in close and periodic contact with the leadership of Sidwell Friends School regarding the sale and move, assuring a steady flow of information between the School and the Meeting. As needed, they should update the Meeting on developments and assure that the space

needs (based on the Space for Spirit Inventory developed by the Ministry and Worship Committee in 2015) and other interests of the Meeting are articulated to the School in a timely and supportive way.

2. The co-clerks, with input from the meeting community, should consider ways of enhancing the relationship with Sidwell Friends School and bringing suggestions to the Meeting as way opens.
3. The Library Committee should consider the implications of moving the library. The School is aware that the library must move with the Meeting, but it would be helpful to communicate about space needs and any other concerns to the School soon.
4. The Ministry and Worship Committee should explore the possibility of “satellite Meetings” at various times and places to accommodate Friends who wish to remain affiliated with Bethesda Friends Meeting but who do not wish to worship at the consolidated campus of Sidwell Friends School. That Committee will report to the Meeting as way opens.
5. The Advancement and Outreach Committee should explore the practicalities and costs of a transportation plan – which might involve carpools, a van service, or a ride-sharing platform (e.g., Uber) – to assure that Friends are not discouraged by transportation logistics from worshipping on First Days with the Meeting after the move. That Committee will report to the Meeting as way opens.
6. The Stewardship and Finance Committee should explore the possibility of making substantial contributions to Sidwell Friends School and to Friends Meeting of Washington, on either a recurring or one-time basis. That Committee will report to the Meeting as way opens.
7. The Minute of Discernment from 8 October 2016, and other AHCOOF documents of ongoing value and interest, should remain on the webpage. Any other written material on the AHCOOF’s work over the past year should be archived.
8. The Ad Hoc Committee on Opportunities for Our Future, having completed the tasks assigned to it by the Meeting, should be laid down.