**Bethesda Friends Meeting**

***ad hoc* Digitization of Records Committee**

**Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business**

**Final Report, 06 May 2018**

**Members of the Committee:**

Bernie Benson (ARE & former webmaster), Loie Clark (S&F), Marion Harrell (Child Care & Webmaster), Susan Kaul (Archivist & former mtg co-clerk), Jabez McClelland (M&W & former Treasurer), Lu Molenje (DRC co-clerk), Rick Morgan (PC and former Recorder), Jillaine Smith (DRC co-clerk, former PC & currently S&F), and Andrew Van Dam (O&C)

**Committee Charge:**

The *ad hoc* Committee for the Digitization of Records (DRC) is charged with supporting Bethesda Friends Meeting (BFM) in a Meeting-wide discernment process for identifying the best way to assure that information about our community is accessible, useful, up-to-date, and secure. Responsibility for managing Meeting data currently falls to no single standing committee, and the co-clerks have concluded that the work of each committee and the well-being of our community generally might be enhanced if the Meeting had a better sense of what data are currently collected and how they are currently organized and used; what best practices exist in other Meetings and similar institutions; and how—if at all—BFM might better approach the issues of data collection, management (including security), and privacy.

**A. Committee History:**

DRC met for the first time on the 17th of May 2017. Generally we met monthly except for August and around the holidays. We contacted each committee to discern and evaluate their needs. In some cases, some committees were already using some digital methods of data storage, using specific software applications such as QuickBooks for finances, LibraryThing for our book collection, the cloud for archives, and our website for general meeting events.

**B. Committee Process:**

We contacted other area Meetings to explore how they were handling their data, including whether they were using packaged software or something they had programmed in-house.

After much research, we narrowed down our choices to six vendors, signed up for trial usage where possible, and then, with a “pretend” pool of data similar to what we will actually deal with, we took the six most promising “out for a spin and kicked the tires.” We quickly narrowed our list of six to three (Breeze, Tapestry, and Wild Apricot). Of these three, the members of the committee agreed that *Wild Apricot* seemed to fit our needs the best.

**C. Wild Apricot’s (WA) General Appeal:**

1. WA allows unlimited custom fields, so we can structure it to reflect our needs.
2. WA makes several major releases a year in response to user “wish list” requests.
3. WA has a strong help desk and helpful documentation.

**D. Wild Apricot’s Important Capabilities**

1. WA can handle online donations, record keeping of all donations, offers a website with secure document storage, and is used by large and small nonprofit organizations.
2. WA will be able to maintain people and membership data.
3. WA will be able to generate mailing labels.
4. WA will be able to produce our directory.[[1]](#footnote-1)
5. WA will produce summary financial donation reports and will be able to export data to QuickBooks.
6. WA can be used to create custom reports (such as for the Recorder) which can be saved for regular use.
7. WA has different levels of authorization for access to different kinds of data, allowing us to limit access to confidential information.
8. WA will no doubt be able to fulfill other requests by our users once we have identified new needs.
9. WA can be accessed from all major current web browsers and has a mobile app.

**E. Costs and Pricing:**

1. The package we recommend will handle 2,000 records. This will allow us to maintain a separate record for each member, attender, and associated family members. Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM) has asked us to keep some data on former members, and this number of records will allow us to do so. The cost will be $1,728 per year. Included in this fee is a website with secure login features that will immediately replace our current website provider.
2. Our current website costs of $276/year will be saved.
3. We may find it advantageous to hire a WA consultant to set up our system for a one-time fee of between $1,500-2,000.
4. We expect the Meeting will need to hire ongoing assistance. A baseline estimate would be $30-40/hour (which is what we currently pay experienced BFM contract workers).
5. We estimate that the Outreach & Communication Committee (O&C) will need a budget in the range of $6-8,000 to sign a one-year contract with set-up costs. Included in that amount are the anticipated set-up costs of running two redundant systems for one year, and administrative personnel costs of an initial $40 per hour.

**F. Procedures Which Will Not Change in the Foreseeable Future:**

1. The Meeting’s finances will continue to be kept in QuickBooks.
2. The Library will continue to house their catalog in LibraryThing.com.
3. We will continue to need a Weekly Bulletin—print and email.
4. Our Monthly Newsletter will still be offered in print and by email.
5. The 2019 print-version Directory will be published as usual.
6. In general, we will continue to use the BFM email list for the Services Exchange, Weekly Bulletin, and Monthly Newsletter until we are confident that Wild Apricot can accurately produce the email list.

**G. DRC’s Gratitude:**

The more we have thought through our needs, and the data we hope to capture with Wild Apricot, the more we are in awe of what is being done by the many amazing people who have been doing this yeoman’s work over the years, quietly, behind the scenes.

**H. Recommendations Going Forward:**

1. We recommend that there be one overall system administrator to oversee the setup and to whom committees can turn to with questions (as we currently have with our Editor, Recorder, Treasurer, and Website Manager).
2. We further recommend that Jane Meleney Coe act as an advisor in setting up the necessary “people information” fields.
3. DRC requests that this proposal lie over for one month for approval.
4. If the plan is approved next month, the *ad hoc* Committee for Digitizing of Records will ask to be laid down.
5. We recommend that the co-clerks appoint an *ad hoc* Records Implementation Committee (RIC), to set up the system and to follow it during the trial year.
6. After a one-year trial effort, the Meeting as a whole will decide whether or not to accept the new system, or return to researching a new system. If this occurs, the co-clerks will need to appoint a new *ad hoc* committee.
1. For one year, we will simultaneously continue with many of our current practices, including the database that Jane Coe maintains for the Directory. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)