

First Parish Cambridge Governing Board Minutes
August 29th, 2024 at 10:00 AM
(Virtual)

Present:

Tod Hibbard Chair	Cade Murray, Past Chair
Jane Stabile, Treasurer	Rev. Rob Hardies, Minister
Julie Duncan, Vice Chair	Carol Lewis - Church Administrator
Patrick Sullivan, Member at Large	Rich Lawson, Clerk

Regrets: Nina Lytton

This ad hoc board meeting was called by Tod Hibbard to discuss a proposal to provide temporary housing to an immigrant family in the First Parish Building. See [a copy of the proposal](#) at the end of this document. The proposal was developed by Julie Duncan, Susan Shepherd, Patrick Sullivan and Carol Lewis.

Tod thanked Julie Duncan and the rest of the team for their work, especially with such a short timeframe.

Julie Duncan then provided a brief overview of the proposal. The main change to the idea discussed at the board meeting on the 20th of August was the space to be utilized. Rather than using Y2Y space, the Chapel would be used.

Carol Lewis explained the rationale for that change. In a conversation with the leaders of Youth on Fire they explained that their clients and Y2Y clients overlap. They would have a hard time understanding how the shelter space would be open but accessible to them. This could be traumatizing to those individuals who have already suffered trauma. Other concerns were raised, such as language barriers and training of volunteers to deal with individuals who have suffered trauma..

Carol noted that the primary issue was illustrated as she was having this discussion with Youth on Fire. An individual who was with Youth on Fire heard the conversation and was troubled. This escalated as the conversation continued, and the individual was very upset by the time she left.

With this background to the change of the proposal, the board then discussed this new idea. The board members were all very supportive of trying to find a timely solution, but also agreed that the switch from Y2Y to the Chapel fundamentally changes the equation. This is a fairly public space that is used publicly through the week. Our staff is already stretched pretty thin. Space on Sundays is tight, i.e., with RE classes, because of other building issues..

Carol Lewis shared views from some of the staff. While they recognize the difficulty of the situation and want to help, they also recognize how disruptive this would be to their day to day

operations. This is partly due to the timing, i.e., the beginning of a new church year, but it would also be an additional burden at any time of the year since a public space would be repurposed.

At this point in the discussion there was a consensus that this was a worthy idea to explore, and one that the board and the staff would like to support. Without access to the Y2Y shelter space, however, we need to find a different way to address this crisis. Using a public space in the church building is not viable. We should engage the congregation to explore other options.

Since two families in the congregation have experience hosting families, there was a suggestion that they could speak about their experiences. Rev. Rob suggested that on Sunday the 15th of September, the families could do this during the offering testimonial. Cade Murray added that this could be followed by an informational event after the service.

The board also discussed the issue of Y2Y closing during the breaks in the academic calendar. There is currently no committee to support the relationship with Y2Y; Carol and Roland manage that relationship. Carol noted, though, that since the Y2Y lease is up next year, this is the perfect time to start talking about the longer-term solution. Forming a committee now would be valuable to support that process. As we begin those discussions, the board recognized that Youth on Fire should be involved. Tod Hibbard agreed to add an agenda item to the next board meeting to discuss the idea of forming this committee to work with Y2Y.

The meeting was then adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Rich Lawson, Clerk

Approved by the Board on **DATE**

Proposal to Provide Temporary Housing

What: house one family (no more than 10 people) in the Chapel (we will discuss at the meeting why we're recommending the Chapel instead of Y2Y as originally proposed). Guests will be able to use the Y2Y showers accompanied by a volunteer.

When: trial period Monday, September 2 through Sunday, September 8. Decide on Friday, September 6 whether to have a family for one month (Sunday, September 29). We feel there are benefits to giving the family a "move out date;" we can then consider whether to continue the program with a new family.

Who: will have 2 volunteers stay with the family each night. In addition, will have at least one volunteer in the building during daytime hours when paid staff aren't present. This will allow the family to stay in the building during the day if they would like.

Needs: Spanish/Creole-speaking volunteers who can translate, either in person or by phone; 2 overnight volunteers each night; bedding; a plan for food (folks will likely have resources to buy food but shopping assistance could be needed)

Questions:

- Have we cleared this with our insurance company?
- Do we need City of Cambridge approval?
- Can we arrange with Y2Y to use their showers?