

St. Mary of the Hills
Vestry Meeting Minutes
September 20, 2022

Vestry Members Present (In person): Tim Silver (Senior Warden), Bob Finney (Junior Warden), Lisa Kaufmann, Chip Monroe, Roy McCraw, Doug Galke, Leslie Billingsley, Marjory Holder

Vestry Members Present (Via Zoom): Patty Patella, Buddy Fore

Vestry Members Absent: Joe Doswell, Faith Jones

Others Present: Fr. Andrew Hege (Rector), Elizabeth Sudderth (Clerk), Fr. Sam Tallman, (Priest Associate), Burt Mulford (Vestry Member-elect, Seasonal)

Fr. Andrew called the meeting to order at 5:32pm.

The Vestry voted to give member-elect Burt Mulford voice, but not vote, during the meeting.

Fr. Andrew requested acceptance of the meeting agenda.

Roy McCraw made a motion with a second from Leslie Billingsley to accept the meeting agenda.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew requested approval of the August meeting minutes.

Leslie Billingsley made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted.

Bob Finney seconded the motion.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Bob Finney noted that a reference in the minutes indicated he would be presenting a proposed Gift Acceptance Policy at some point, and that he plans to make that presentation at the October Vestry meeting.

Fr. Andrew led a devotion to open the meeting.

Fr. Andrew shared the Financial Report in Amanda White's absence.

Income over the past month greatly exceeded expenses.

70% of pledges have been collected YTD.

He noted a new restricted account has been established. Play Space Holding Account #7001-11 with a balance of \$49,248.98 is in place to fund the new play space. Marjory Holder made a motion with a second from Bob Finney to accept the financial report.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Doug Galke shared the grant allocations proposed to be distributed from the 2022 Tour of Homes.

Doug shared a detailed spreadsheet listing each organization proposed to receive a grant, the amount given to that organization in a 2021 grant if applicable, the amount of grant requested, and the final grant amount proposed to be given. The organizations and proposed grants are:

1. Blowing Rock Cares 2,000
2. Blowing Rock Library 2,000
3. Blowing Rock Parks and Rec 1,000
4. Blowing Rock School 5,000
5. Blowing Rock Women's Club (New) 1,000
6. Blue Ridge Conservancy-Middle Fork Greenway 1,000
7. Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture 3,000
8. BRAHM 500
9. Casting Bread Ministry 1,500
10. Watauga Children's Council 4,250

11. Club 12 (New) 750
 12. Community Care Clinic 7,750
 13. Crossnore School Inc. 1,000
 14. FARM Café 2,000
 15. Habitat for Humanity 5,000
 16. High Country Caregivers 1,500
 17. Hospitality House Networx (New) 2,000
 18. Hospitality House Shelter 5,000
 19. Hospitality House We Can 5,000
 20. Hunger & Health Coalition 7,000
 21. LIFE Village 3,000
 22. Mountain Alliance 2,000
 23. OASIS, Inc. 4,000
 24. New Directions Mustard Seed (New) 2,500
 25. WAMY Community Action 5,000
 26. Western Youth Network 5,000
 27. LEAD Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (New) 5,000
 28. Blowing Rock Police 1,500
- Total \$86,250

Vestry members asked questions about a few of the organizations and discussed the allocations. Doug reported the amount proposed to allocate leaves just over \$1,000 in seed money for next year's TOH. Marjory Holder made a motion to approved the Tour of Homes allocations as presented. Roy McCraw seconded the motion. The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew shared the allocation approved by the Outreach Committee this month: Watauga Community Housing Trust \$200 to establish a website for this group which has worked for several years to establish low-income housing in Watauga County. Roy McCraw made a motion to endorse this allocation. Lisa Kaufmann seconded the motion. The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew shared the contract from Mountaineer Maintenance Inc. to provide grounds maintenance and snow removal. The complete contract was shared with the Vestry and provides for grounds maintenance at a monthly fee of \$725 and snow removal at a weather-dependent prorated rate. Roy McCraw made a motion to approve the hiring of Mountaineer Maintenance Inc. per the provided contract. Leslie Billingsley seconded the motion. The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew shared the contract from ServiceMaster Commercial Maintenance Systems to provide janitorial services. The complete contract was shared with the Vestry and provides for janitorial services at a monthly fee of \$1,950 based on a twice weekly service. We would pay more for special occasion work. Marjory Holder made a motion with a second from Lisa Kaufmann to approve the hiring of ServiceMaster Commercial Maintenance Systems per the provided contract. The Vestry approved the motion.

Fr. Andrew noted that the hiring of these 2 companies will cover large portions of the work done by our retiring Sexton, Bill Stroh. As an example, ServiceMaster will help with some setups such as switching the Parish Hall from arrangement for Coffee Minute on Sundays to setup for meetings. A job description has been posted for a part-time facilities manager. No one has applied yet. The grounds committee will have to pick up a lot of the landscaping needs. Also, more frequent outside Parish Work Days may be needed. Fr. Andrew will share more

about interim coverage of all the duties Bill handled soon.

Fr. Andrew shared news about the annual giving campaign. The theme for this year's campaign is "More Than Enough". Fr. Andrew asked for volunteers from the Vestry to share reflections on stewardship with the congregation.

Bob Finney shared the Junior Warden's report.

The handicap ramp has been repaired. The construction company stated we should have about 6 more years of life from the ramp before it will require a complete resurfacing.

Regarding the previously addressed contract proposal for lawn service, Bob noted that the contract from Mountaineer Maintenance is over \$10,000 per year less than the other proposal which was received from New Horizons. Also, New Horizons cannot do snow removal. The reserve study is still in process. It should be completed by October. Special thanks to Joe Doswell, Olivia Knight, Ron Armstrong, Michelle Curry, and Bill Stroh for their work on this project. Work on the crisis management plan has been put on hold pending completion of the reserve study. Bob hopes to present it at the November Vestry meeting.

Work on the play space should begin late in the week of September 12. All paperwork for granting of the permits has been submitted to the town. Approval should be granted shortly. The budget for the project needs to be adjusted. The Vestry approved a budget of \$106,447.50 after sales tax refund. That amount included \$3,956 for building of an access ramp to the NW corner of the space. The cost of the ramp has been determined to be significantly higher than that with the proposed design. The design was modified to lower the cost. There is also a need for a wall on the southern side of the play space to hold the mulch and compacted dirt. With these modifications, Bob proposes that the Vestry approve the use of \$37,701.73 from the Capital Endowment Fund to cover the cost of the play space.

Lisa Kaufmann made a motion to approve the use of \$37,701.13 from the Capital Endowment Fund for the play space.

Leslie Billingsley seconded the motion.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Bob shared that the wall on the south side of the church (nursery area) has cracks in it. He provided pictures in his report. He has talked with Drew Critcher from 01 Masonry and he recommends that we use silicon caulk to patch it and watch it for a year. If the cracks reappear that may be a symptom of the wall moving or settling and we will need a structural engineer to do a more detailed review of the problem. Bill Stroh has been asked to apply the caulk.

Bob reported a cat has recently had kittens in the Closure which were taken to the Humane Society. He will treat the crawl space and wash the exterior to remove any smell.

The next work day is scheduled for October 29 with a rain date of November 5.

Tim Silver shared the Senior Warden's report.

Tim reflected on areas he is focused on as we move toward budget work for next year. He feels it is crucially important for the Vestry to move forward with enhancing our sound system. He feels this needs to be a high priority for 2023. These last few months of 2022 should provide us with some time to think about what sort of budgeting and/or fundraising will be needed.

As a longer-term goal, he feels we should move forward on some of the ideas expressed by Sarah Ogletree in her sermon on creation care (delivered on September 11). We are already doing significant things such as making the Tour of Homes a "zero waste" event, and almost completely eliminating single-use products from parish events. Tim feels we should investigate solar power options. In the past few years, solar power has become significantly more affordable and aesthetically viable. It is only a matter of time before any investment in solar power pays for itself. He has been working on educating himself on what might be involved in such a project at St. Mary's. He recently attended a webinar on affordable solar power. He learned that Duke Energy is offering up to \$75,000 to non-profits until the end of this year to help with solar power projects. He also learned a company called Sun Wealth offers a leasing option for solar power equipment with no initial payment. He shared that he and Fr. Andrew plan to do more research on this topic and report back to Vestry in the coming months.

Another area Tim mentioned relating to creation care is divestment. This means paying attention to what we are doing with our money. With whom are we investing the funds entrusted to us? Are those companies and corporations behaving as good stewards of the environment and how do they treat their employees? How do they view their responsibilities to the wider human community? In short, can we, as followers of Jesus, not just be comfortable, but also look with favor on their policies and practices? The Diocese is providing important leadership on this issue, and we take it seriously at St. Mary of the Hills. But it might be time for the Finance Committee and others involved with church funds to have another look at what we are doing and consider whether changes need to be made.

Fr. Andrew announced that the parish will hold a festive reception on September 25 after the 10:10 service to celebrate Bill Stroh and his almost 30 years of faithful ministry and service as our Sexton on the occasion of his retirement.

The Blessing of the Animals will be held in partnership with Rumble Memorial Presbyterian on the front lawn of Rumble on October 2 at 2pm. The service will alternate locations between our church and Rumble each year.

Fr. Andrew will soon share opportunities to attend events with Bishop Curry as he attends the Diocesan Convention this year.

Those grieving loss in our parish family include the families and friends of Kitty Norris and Jim Fort. Fr. Andrew asks for prayers for all affected by these losses. It is also a bittersweet time in the parish as we begin to see parishioners leave for homes in other areas.

Patty Patella announced on behalf of the Outreach Committee our participation with Rumble Presbyterian in Rise Against Hunger on November 6 from 2-4pm at Blowing Rock Elementary School. This event involves packaging meals for hungry people around the world. Our congregation has participated in Rise Against Hunger events before. Patty directed those interested in helping out with this event to contact Olivia Knight for the link to sign up. The link will also be published in the parish communications in the coming weeks.

Roy McCraw noted that the inaugural event to celebrate and recognize those who have made their intention known to share with the parish through Sustaining Grace was a wonderful success with 23 people attending.

Roy McCraw made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:55pm.

Marjory Holder seconded the motion.

The Vestry approved the motion.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Sudderth, Clerk of the Vestry