

MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MERCY HOUSE OF SARATOGA, INC.

The ninth meeting of the Board of Directors of Mercy House was held on the day and place set forth as follows:

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Date: April 6, 2020

Place: Zoom (Thank you Karen Finkbeiner for setting up a pandemic-driven meeting online.)

Present:

Board Members: Gordon Boyd, Mary Withington, Mark Claverie, Howard Nelson, Tom Remington, Mary Sanders Shartle.

Invited Guest: Karen Finkbeiner

MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the meeting minutes of February 3, 2020 be entered into the record. A motion made by Howard Nelson was seconded by Mary Withington. All affirm, no nays. The minutes were approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Gordon highlighted Item #2 under expenditures to explain that the check we paid to Transitional Services Association is actually for dues to the Saratoga North Country Housing Alliance. The Alliance is an informal coalition of about thirty agencies, who provide housing for people with needs and includes Mercy House as a member. TSA hosts monthly meetings and acts as a fiscal agent for the Alliance, hence the check made out to TSA.

The Chamber of Commerce, though expensive, is a good sounding board and potential advocate for what we're doing. The leadership there "makes very nice noises about us." Gordon attends the mixers, etc. They have a quarterly meeting of non-profit organizations (SPAC, Shelters of Saratoga, etc.) called the "Impact Sector," who can share their experiences and frustrations. The Chamber is a good networking organization.

We had a productive time at the EOC Interagency Awareness day on March 11th at the City Center, one of the last public events held in Saratoga Springs before the COVID 19 emergency. We collected business cards in a raffle for a nice flower arrangement. Those names and agencies have been added to Gordon's Excel contact file. Those who dropped a card for the raffle received an email from Gordon thanking them for stopping by the table and asking them to keep in touch.

The Selective insurance (Item #9 under Expenditures) is for Directors and Officers that protects us personally from non-negligent actions or litigation brought against Mercy House.

There being no questions, Gordon asked for a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report. Mary Withington so moved, and Howard Nelson seconded. All ayes, no nays, no abstentions.

OLD BUSINESS

Pre-Construction Activity – We are in a state of “modified limbo.” The City gives us things to do; we do them. Most important is that the Mylars, the laminated civil engineering plans, were signed on March 9th giving us approval for the civil engineering aspects of the plans. This includes the area around the site and around the church building including the drainage for stormwater as well as the sidewalk, bicycle stand, street tree plantings, etc. With those signed Mylars, we now technically have eighteen months to get a building permit. We hope it won't take that long.

The next step is to get a foundation permit, which will allow us to move in excavating equipment, do test drilling for bedrock and put up a fence to secure the lot. The city said, however, that they would not give us priority consideration, because we are not considered an “essential” project, according to Governor Cuomo's order to suspend all but essential projects during the COVID 19 emergency. But essential projects do include homeless shelters and affordable housing, which describes Mercy House. The City said we need to be approved as essential by Empire State Development (ESD) to gain their support for us on this issue. Last week Gordon contacted Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner's office asking them/her to advocate with ESD and thereby the City to give our paperwork priority, since we are not actually under construction at this time. The State budget was passing at that time. With the Easter/Passover break after the budget was signed, it will be at least a week before ESD is contacted and we can restart some of the dialogue with the city.

But the City has contacted the church to pay another \$1500 for technical consultant reviews (a notice from the LA Group) an expense for The Chazen Companies, which is the City's consultant reviewing our detailed plans. We are supposed to see all the invoices for Chazen Company's activities. Gordon has requested those.

The first activity we will see on the site before groundbreaking are the test pits to know exactly where the bedrock is, and which could result in possible changes in the basement plans and interior walls.

The Design Review Commission approval lapsed while we were involved with the City building department and engineer at the end of last year. Bethesda had to reapply. The meeting we would have been included was April 1st, which was cancelled because of the COVID 19 emergency and the city's shutdown. Gordon is sure there will not be a problem getting the approval, which we need before we can obtain the building permit. We hope they set up a virtual committee meeting, but Gordon has not received any notice on that.

The equipment staging is another unanswered logistics issue. Sano-Rubin wants to close the sidewalk to have more space, but they'll have to stage equipment on site or at a storage location. Frank Zarro, who has the vacated site across from the library, has offered that location for us, since he's not ready to start construction yet. That would be a last resort.

Financial Picture – Our anonymous donor is still in good shape with the commitment to Mercy House. We remain confident on that front, despite the precipitous fall in the stock market. The overall construction cost is around \$11.5 million, which will be increased by the required storm water drainage plan at the east side of the church building, which will add another \$50,000 - \$100,000. The final figure is going to come to us between now and getting the foundation permit. Sano-Rubin is going to come to Bethesda with a Guaranteed Maximum Price. This is under the model contract called Construction Management which is an AIA standard form agreement. The contract gives the Owner a maximum price which cannot be exceeded. But we can still make changes and if we save money, Bethesda gets 80 percent of those figures. However, there is a provision for change orders, if we change something in the project's scope. We changed the exterior walls from stucco to brick by request of the donor. The brick will look as grey as possible, so that it matches the color of the church stone.

Housing Partners – Everything is in good shape.

- Transitional Services Association - Gordon and Sara Manny met with TSA to discuss the terms of the lease. The terms of the letter of intent are still good. There was a question about a court settlement some years back regarding the density of housing that accommodates people with disabilities. TSA wanted to check to see if the numbers of disabled people in the on accommodation would create a problem in the layout of Mercy House.
- Salvation Army – Gordon exchanged emails with them today. They've been overwhelmed with the emergency situation, which seriously affects their operation. Gordon is working with their representative in Syracuse.
- BEST – Backstretch is okay with their letter of intent.

Development – We have memorials for Garrett Smith and Jean-Marie Crocker, which have been accumulating. Once we break ground there will be a stronger case for additional fundraising. After the pandemic, we will be able to do more effective fundraising face-to-face.

Reflection or action – We have been following the parish policy of two approvals on each invoice and two signatures on checks. At this time might we consider digital approvals for the invoices if not signatures on the checks? This would probably be a change to the bylaws. Needs to be looked into, Do the bylaws say these should be written, or does it just indicate “approval”? **Action to be tabled until bylaws are read.**

There was a motion to adjourn at 7:35 p.m. given by Mary Sanders Shartle and seconded by Howard Nelson.

The next meeting is scheduled, if possible, for Monday June 1st, 2020 at 43 Washington Street.

MSS

Mary Sanders Shartle, Secretary