

ST. ALBAN'S PARISH, WASHINGTON, D.C.
VESTRY MINUTES – September 16, 2008

Attendees: Clergy and staff: Scott Benhase, Tim Boggs, Ron Hicks; **Vestry:** Kate Bouve, Jim Sottile, Natalie Bramson, Andrea Farr, Kammie Hedges, Chuck Holmes, Keith Jones, Danette (Dani) Kauffman, Sam Lewis, Jennifer Thorson Martin, Eric Melby; **Delegates:** Dee Dykstra, Barbara Manard.

Opening Prayer by the Rector

Minutes of the previous meeting: There were no minutes offered due to the absence of Secretary Stephanie Kinney.

Treasurer's Report: There was no Treasurer's Report offered due to the absence of Treasurer Chris Holmes.

- '06 & '07 Audit Update
 - Scott informed the Vestry that the audits are underway.

- Fall EMP
 - Tim informed the Vestry that co-chairs have been appointed and a timetable is set to begin the pledge drive on time and conclude it with "lost sheep" calls before Christmas.
 - Scott, Tim and others expressed concern that the current shaky economy could affect giving. Scott noted that many parishioners are out of work.
 - Tim and Nathalie, one of the EMP co-chairs, distributed letters and pledge cards to Vestry members urging the Vestry to pledge before the start of the campaign in order to inform the congregation in the Oct. 1 EMP mailing that the church's leaders have already made their financial commitment for 2009. Natalie said the Vestry would send a strong message of the importance of the campaign by demonstrating the Vestry's commitment.

Junior Warden's Report (Jim Sottile):

- Handicapped Restroom Update
 - Jim informed the Vestry that the bathroom expansion and fittings are nearly complete. Minor detail work will be finished soon.

- Other items
 - Jim informed the Vestry that the stainless steel food service table which the Vestry previously authorized for purchase has arrived and will soon be installed by Ron.
 - Nothing new to report on the boiler updates as discussions are still taking place with the contractor.

- SunEdison Proposal for Solar at St. Alban's
 - After a review of the company's proposal and lengthy discussion, **the Vestry by unanimous voice vote approved a motion** (offer by Jim and seconded by Sam) to authorize the Rector and Wardens to pursue a non-binding agreement of intent with Sun Edison to provide a PV solar energy system for Satterlee Hall.
 - No final agreement for a contract would be authorized before the Property and Finance committees of St. Alban's review the proposal and the Vestry again considers the matter at the next meeting.
 - At issue before the committees and the Vestry are two options in the company's proposal (copies of which were distributed to Vestry members):
 - 1) SunEdison would install and maintain solar panels and the system in Satterlee Hall, freeing St. Alban's Parish from significant upfront costs but also requiring the Parish to sign a long-term power purchase agreement. This option reduces the risk to the Parish in capital outlay and unforeseen maintenance costs, but also significantly reduces the estimated cost savings to the Parish over the life of the system.
 - 2) St. Alban's Parish bears the cost of buying, installing and maintaining the solar panels/system from SunEdison, increasing the risk to the Parish but also offering much more in projected savings. Jim said that after D.C. rebates the installation cost would run roughly \$50,000, plus \$10,000 in maintenance over 10 years. The projected energy savings would be \$6,000 a year over the life of the system, estimated at 20-35 years.
 - Scott and Jim noted that under either option, St. Alban's would be reducing its reliance on carbon energy sources, a priority goal expressed during the recent Parish Planning Retreat.
 - Jim explained that the panels would go on the flat roof on Satterlee near the parking lot and would not be visible from street level.

- Keith asked whether the Parish had explored other solar firms, and Scott responded that SunEdison was the only firm that replied to the Parish's request for information and that during this time of great demand for solar energy installations the company was doing this as a favor to a parishioner.
- Jim and Scott said more than half of the Parish's energy costs occur in Satterlee Hall and the solar PV system would provide about 20-25 percent of the energy needs for Satterlee. The total annual Parish energy bill is about \$72,000 annually, Scott said.
- Nathalie suggested that there could be a hybrid option, to initially lease the solar energy services and buy the system later.
- Kate said as the committees and the Vestry continue to consider the options and contract, due diligence is needed to look into Sun Edison's background, contact its clients to ask about their experiences and look into the sub-contractors the company uses for installation and maintenance work.

Senior Warden's Report (Kate Bouve):

- Parish Planning Retreat Redux – Sept. 26
 - Kate reminded the Vestry of the follow-up workshop on Friday, Sept. 26, led by facilitator Royster Hedgepeth. All parishioners are invited to the workshop to refine the work of the Parish Planning Retreat. The intent, Kate and Scott said, is to involve participants in the retreat and other parishioners who were not there.
 - Royster will also attend the Sunday forum on Sept. 28 to further inform and engage parishioners.

Rector's Report (Scott Benhase):

- Dates to remember
 - Scott called to the attention of the Vestry these upcoming events:
 - The Margaret Parker Walk on Sept. 27 to benefit an endowment fund for youth ministries at St. Alban's Parish.
 - Bishop Ulises Prendes of Cuba will lead the Sunday forum and celebrate Eucharist at at least one service on Oct. 5.
 - Bishop Ulises and members of the Parish, including those who took the trip to Cuba in the summer, are invited to a supper on Oct. 9.

- Proposed Contract with Gardiner Hall for Hospitality Improvements
 - Scott informed the Vestry that the firm of Gardiner Hall, which had provided design proposals and cost estimates for improvements to the Narthex, the Wade Room and Nourse Hall, would not be contracted for the job because the firm is not licensed to work in D.C. and showed no inclination to obtain a license. Scott said it was unacceptable to work with the firm.
 - The Hospitality Commission can now move forward on its own to contact carpenters directly, incorporating some of the ideas gained through the process with Gardiner Hall while saving money by contracting directly for the work.
 - Scott said he would ask Lacey Gude to contact carpenters for a range of possible work and bring options and recommendations to the Vestry before any work proceeds.

- Cathedral-Parish Covenant
 - Scott informed the Parish that the Cathedral intends to proceed with plans to establish an infant/toddler nursery for worshippers. This, Scott said, despite a previous statement by Cathedral vicar Stephen Huber that a such a proposal was “off the table.”
 - Scott said he was “shocked and disappointed” by the Cathedral’s decision as it came on the heels of a painstakingly negotiated covenant with the Cathedral, approved over the summer, that called for greater communication and coordination between the two organizations. The covenant was negotiated with the understanding that the Cathedral would not pursue parish-like programs, a sensitive matter to St. Alban’s Parish as it seeks to attract new members.
 - Scott said his biggest concern was that the decision about the nursery was presented to him as a *fait accompli*, not as a matter for discussion. Scott said Huber expressed his regret and, with Scott’s assent, Huber intends to call a meeting of the joint committee to explain the decision. Scott said he has informed the St. Alban’s Parish members on the committee of the Cathedral’s decision and that it is non-negotiable.
 - During the Vestry’s discussion of the matter, several members said the Cathedral’s action suggests that it does not value the covenant. Keith raised the question of whether St. Alban’s should withdraw from the covenant. Bill said that if the covenant has any meaning, the Parish should share its disappointment with the Cathedral decision. In response to a question, Scott said the Bishop is aware of the situation.
 - Scott said he would explore the possibility of having Huber and/or other Cathedral representatives come and talk to the Vestry about the Cathedral’s plans.

- Advent Preaching Series
 - Four distinguished theologians from Virginia Theological Seminary – Ian Markham, Tim Sedgwick, Kathy Greib and Roger Ferlo -- will appear individually at St. Albans during the four Sundays of Advent to lead discussions at the forum and preach at the 9:15 service.

- Estate Settlement
 - Scott said that a final settlement has been reached of the estate of parishioner Betty Nolan, which will result in a bequest to St. Alban's Parish.
 - Sam offered a reminder that the Vestry approved a plaque in Betty Nolan's honor but it has not yet been put on display at the elevator.

- Survey Monkey
 - In response to the poll about the Summer Service, 120 parishioners responded and Scott said opinion was mixed – in general, about one-third liked the changes at the 10:30 services that included more music in the Liturgy, another third did not like it and the balance had no strong opinion.
 - Scott said one change will be enacted as a result of the survey: about 85 percent of respondents said they approved of the singing of the Great Amen, and as a result that will be included in the 9:15 service.
 - Scott said that only about 25 percent of parishioners approved of the singing of the Lord's Prayer and that there were a lot of strong opinions.
 - Scott noted that the poll is still open; Survey Monkey costs the Parish \$19.95 for the year and will be used for further Parish polling.

Old Business:

- Handicap-accessible Ramp
 - Jim offered the recommendations of the Finance Committee on proceeding with design plans for the ramp. After discussion, **the Vestry by unanimous voice vote approved a motion** (offered by Sam and seconded by Jennifer) to authorize spending up to \$25,000 from the Reserve Fund to pay for completing the preliminary design documents for the project.
 - Jim explained that the action would keep the project moving forward and put the Parish in position to solicit bids in the near future. Further expenditures would be deferred, for now.
 - Jim and Scott informed the Vestry that the Reserve Fund should get additional funding -- some \$400,000 -- from estate settlements, though the timing is uncertain. The Vestry discussed various aspects of the Reserve Fund and the ideal balance. Jim said the

Fund needs a minimum of \$350,000, and he would like to see it at \$750,000.

- Columbarium Proposed Fee Changes
 - Scott presented a copy of the current Columbarium purchase agreement for St. Alban's Parish and a review of fees charged by other Episcopal places of worship in the Diocese (ranging from \$1,200 at St. John's Lafayette Square to \$10,000 at the National Cathedral).
 - No action was asked of the Vestry, but these questions were posed:
 - Should St. Alban's increase the fee and, if so, to what?
 - Should the proceeds be used for an endowment for the upkeep/beautification of the Columbarium area?
 - Are changes required in the language of the current purchase agreement? Ron noted at least two changes needed to the purchase agree to reflect current practice: 4.e. – requires Vestry approval before each interment (which has not been the practice); 5.c. – cost of engraving is borne by the Subscriber (St. Alban's Parish has been bearing the cost).
 - Dani suggested that the Property Committee review the questions and make recommendations to the Vestry.
 - Jim said the review would take place and the Vestry would consider the matter at its September meeting.

Compline and Adjournment:

Keith Jones led Compline and the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m. (Noted with much good humor by the clergy and the Vestry as a remarkably succinct meeting compared to the recent norm).

There was no Executive Session.