**Advent Lutheran Church – Church Council Meeting – April 27, 2022 Minutes**

**Present – Voting (n=10)**: Pastor Danielle Miller, Damaris Maclean, Hans Kriefall, Dorothy Trigg, Bree Vandenberg, Michael Hammett, Dorothy Clementson, Amanda Garcia-Harris

**Present – Not Voting** **(n=2):** Deanne Walters, David Richards

**Not Present – Excused** **(n=0):**

1. **Opening Reflection & Prayer**

Pastor Danielle opened the meeting with a reflection and prayer.

1. **Consent Agenda**

Pastor Danielle highlighted a few items from the Pastor’s Report – worship & Holy Week recap, some building notes, and that Pastor Danielle will be away for 2 weeks in May for continuing education. She also shared that the apartment on Central Park West is going to become vacant at the end of May, as the ED of Seafarer’s who is currently living there has decided to move. The Executive Committee is looking at a number of options for use of that space in the future.

There was one question on the financial reports: There appears to be a $75,000 withdrawal from the mission fund, what is that for? The fund is reconciled quarterly, so that is the drop in value for the investment account.

Dorothy Trigg also shared a brief update on the progress of our DEI task force work with consultant Korin Mills. The team is in place (6 members total, including Dorothy leading the team). The team is having 1-on-1 alignment calls with Korin this week, and scheduling a group meeting for the first week of May. The team will work with Korin throughout the month of May to determine the team’s agenda, and then move forward to review & recommendations on their own.

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Council voted to approve the consent agenda.

1. **Basement Renovation Proposal**

David Richards shared the basement sub-committee’s report and recommendation for basement renovation and use of the $400,000 Synod matching grant. They met with Karl Lehrke and Richard McElhiney Architects LLC, and created the recommendation with 2 questions in mind – what is least disruptive to our regular operations, which is also probably least expensive? And what gives us the most flexible space possible?

This is the team’s recommendation:

There are 2 plan options presented, which are relatively similar. The biggest wild card is whether or not the city will require updates to the bathrooms in order to meet new code regulations, and this is the difference between the two plans. There is not a way to know if the bathroom update will be required until after we submit plans to the city.

Option 1 is the committee’s proposed plan, which is the recommendation regarding creating flexible, sound proof meeting spaces in the basement, and will also bring everything up to code. Option 2 also expands and renovates bathrooms, should we need to upgrade the bathrooms to meet NYC code.

The team received cost estimates for each of these renovations, which are included in the Council resources folder. They are not bids, but rather educated guesses at expenses, based on past practice, etc. The bids do not include "soft costs", such as architect costs, engineers, expediters, etc., and reserves for surprises/changes. Karl said we should estimate an additional 10-15% for "soft costs", and 10% for surprises/changes.

This would make Option 1 $458,403 in estimated construction costs, $45,840-$68,760 in soft costs, and $45,840 in surprises/changes, or $550,083-$573,003 total. Option 2 would be $618,555 in estimated construction costs, $61,856-$93,783 in soft costs, and $61,856 in surprises/changes, or $745,267-$774,194 total. These estimates assume we start work by the end of 2022.

The team estimates that the current elevator/lift project will cost approximately $125,000 (hopefully a little less), which would leave $275,000 remaining from the $400,000 Synod/matching funding. This results in an estimated shortfall of $300,000 for Option 1, or $500,000 for Option 2.

The task force believes the Council should explore using additional Mission Fund funds/grants (or suspension of grants), and entertain some type of capital campaign to enable the renovation to happen. Perhaps 50%/50%? One challenge highlighted earlier is that the bathroom renovation would cost an estimated additional $200,000, which we wouldn't know about until part way through the project. The team does not recommend doing this work on the bathrooms now, if we don't have to.

David also shared that the committee is thinking about the breakdown of spending and grant money vs fundraising as:

* $275K remaining Synod grant is applied to the work on the hallway & brining the space up to code
* The additional fundraising required is to give us more flexible space that’s usable for multiple meetings at once, a better & safer floor, and better & prettier lights.

He also noted that there are cosmetic things in the plan that we could take out (floors, ceiling) to get closer to being within budget, but if we’re starting work already does it make sense to do this piecemeal? And some of the cosmetic things could help us be a more welcoming space and has the potential to increase space sharing income down the line.

There were a number of questions about the bathroom update specifically:

* Could we make one unisex bathroom that’s larger, in line with our overall more flexible and welcoming space? No, the city code still requires bathroom capacity numbers that are divided by gender.
  + Pastor Danielle did pose the thought that while we have to “label and designate” bathrooms in a specific way we wouldn’t have to *use* them in that way practically.
* How much work is worth doing thinking we *won’t* update the bathrooms? Would submitting without first add significant extra time/money? No, moving forward with the assumption we don’t need to update the bathrooms would not be wasting money. There would be some parallel path work done in order to get more precise bids on both plans, but it’s mostly work that would need to be done anyway. And no money will be spent on construction (which is the largest cost) until we know 100% what we’re doing and the plans are fully approved by the city and the congregation after a formal bid process.
* What are the chances we will need to update the bathrooms? The plans are going to be submitted to the city as an alteration to older plans, which is why we think the update may not be necessary. But David believes it’s a 50/50 shot, mostly depending on if whoever reviews the plan lets it through as an alteration up to code instead of a complete renovation.

It was also asked, if we haven’t been fined before or had any issues with the city, do we need to do this renovation and code update now? Since the costs are above what the Synod grant would cover, and we’re ultimately not making a huge structural change, is it worth it? The main concern is that we can’t get a certificate of occupancy without it, so while we can have gotten by under the radar so far, we can't legally host events & celebrations for the community and continue growing into a true community center space. There’s also always the chance that someone would come and shut us down for not having the certificate of occupancy.

The next steps in the process for the building team are: plans need to be created to send to the city; to get more real estimates they would bring in some engineers, etc. Before starting that, the team needs direction if this is the right plan, or we feel it needs to be scaled back or increased significantly.

The biggest question for Council after that is *how* to finance the $300-$500K additional. In the Council retreat scheduled for June 18, a major focus is going to be looking at how we’re allocating our resources. What can we fund and how? What can we handle with the people we have? What is the right mission direction? We’ll discuss building, Spanish ministry, hunger, children/families. The $400,000 grant from the Synod has to be used this year, so we will move forward with this basement work, but Council will determine in the next few months what the ultimate final spend can be and how to finance those additional costs.

While thinking about this project, and future work, we want to ensure we are being forward thinking about if a particular investment now will be more helpful to the congregation of the future. An example of this thinking is:

* Is there a world where the City doesn’t require us to update the bathrooms, but we decide to anyway in order to create a more welcoming/mission-oriented space?

**Action** ***(Motioned, Seconded, Approved)*:** The Council voted to have the building sub-committee continue working with the experts on both Options 1 & 2, presenting Option 1 to the City, returning to the Council with the City’s response to Option 1. The motion was approved with 1 abstention.

Thank you to David Richards and the basement sub-committee for their dedicated work to craft this proposal!

1. **Next Meeting**

The next Council meeting will take place on Wednesday, May 18, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

**Adjournment — Closing Prayer**

Damaris Maclean closed the meeting in prayer.

*Respectfully submitted by D.Trigg 04/27/22*