

***Summary of meeting minutes on project plans to unify the three school divisions in one location with:  
the Opportunities for Our Future ad hoc committee of Bethesda Friends Meeting (BFM), Sidwell  
Friends School (SFS), & Ennead Architects on 11/17/2015.***

***Full minutes will be available on BFM's website.***

**Present:** Katie Lindsey, Susan Rodriguez, Molly McGowan, Dan Stube, Julia Chapman; five BFM members (representing Opportunities for Our Future ad hoc committee): Susan Kaul, Marion Ballard, Ralph Steinhardt, Amy Lear White, Peirce Hammond

The meeting opened with shared silence and introductions of those present representing BFM, SFS, and Ennead Architects.

**Summary of comments and information from SFS:** It is a key priority for SFS to make a home for Bethesda Friends Meeting, “if you will come.” The Ennead architects were invited to SFS to hear from BFM how they currently use existing facilities at Lower School (LS) and to learn answers to the question: “What works well and what could be done better?” This meeting was the first of many opportunities to meet for further input and feedback.

SFS looks forward to unifying school divisions at one site. An initial task is to get zoning approval to change the use of The Washington Home (TWH) to educational use; this process includes a Master Plan to show renovation, parking, traffic, definition of new construction, etc. The LS property will not go on the market until DC rezoning is successful. SFS does not know who will be buying the Bethesda LS campus, zoned R-60 residential, but there has been tremendous interest in the property. Because SFS cannot borrow more for the purchase of TWH, they will need to maximize the value of the LS property to assist with the purchase of the WTH. While this process continues, they are moving forward with detailed planning and programming decisions.

Further details about the timeline: December, 2016 purchase; mobilize in Spring, 2017; occupancy in Fall, 2019. But this is predicated on financial capacity of the school; they do not have extra money, so they will need to fundraise for this endeavor. They will establish a capital campaign based upon a right-sized assessment of the project. The campaign will be both for this project and for an endowment.

**Summary of comments and information from Ennead Architects:** Working with institutions and understanding their 24/7 core missions drive Ennead’s planning. Understanding an institution and the “Spirit of Place” and its impact on development plans of a project are important to them. With the SFS project, they are working to understand, “What is the mission of a Quaker School in the Nation’s Capital? Their process is to listen, lead, and synthesize—then, to create a plan that is uniquely suited to this place and its mission.

Ennead is working closely with the LS on plans. LS faculty have expressed a desire for a Meeting Room at TWH that is the approximate size as the current LS Meeting Room. They prefer weekly Meeting for Worship with a few grades at a time. So there are similar concerns between LS and BFM in thinking about a new Meeting room. Ennead and SFS are considering different spaces, including the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of TWH, a central space at the heart of the school that will have natural light. The current configuration of the building may offer additional spaces like the rooms that BFM now have at LS. Also, there is enthusiasm for figuring out coordination of the SFS Quaker books archives and the BFM library resources, perhaps in adjacent classrooms outside a new Meeting Room.

Space for the children’s program in classrooms will be easy to provide. However, because they’re maintaining the existing structure and mature landscaping, the playground will not be immediately adjacent to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Childcare for children 0-5 years old will be available in the Early Childhood Learning Center, although the location has to be decided.

**Summary of comments and information from BFM:** BFM members enumerated how and when BFM uses the LS campus including details from the “Space for Spirit --Discussion Draft, 12/8/15.” [This is available on BFM’s website]. Information and ideas were shared with the caveat that threshing sessions had not yet begun and that more information would be forthcoming.

During the conversation about architectural plans, a BFM member communicated a keen concern that an approach by Ennead and SFS to create a “special” place for Meeting for Worship and BFM would be misguided. He explained that what makes the Meeting a “special place” is not because of opulence, but because of the people. He noted that there is tension around the perception by some that the School is elite and privileged. He clarified that Quakers have a heritage around the idea that they can meet anywhere.

Other observations from BFM members included that the Meeting is a place of simplicity, quiet worship, community, a place where one feels at home. BFM is committed to “right sharing” and environmental practices: the design and operation of the building should exemplify that commitment. A suggestion was made that Ennead look at Pendle Hill as an example of how spirit translates into architectural design in a successful, environmentally sound manner.

**Discussion:** In response to the reflections about simplicity, a representative of SFS shared that at the heart of this project are the questions: Their aim is to get this right: there will be modesty; modesty that acknowledges community and collaboration. Their aim is that there will be “nothing for show.” She noted that the School is looking for simplicity in its new design and that “less is more.” Environmental stewardship and mission (e.g., using reclaimed materials and repurposing the building) are critical. They aim to be mindful of creating the best possible space for BFM in a simple way and to balance the needs of the School and BFM.

**Addendum:** Friends are encouraged to read the Ministry and Worship document, “Spirit of Place,” which was referenced and given to Ennead and SFS for information on what are essential and current features needed for the BFM community. Ennead recorded the list below in its minutes of the 12/17/15 meeting. Ennead’s minutes and notes from BFM members present were the source for this summary.

Submitted by, Amy Lear White

## Ideas for new space:

- 1) Improved HVAC and amplification
  - 2) Access to bulletin board, table for name cards, brochures, restrooms, place to hang coats, and space for First Day School program and childcare
  - 3) Inclusion of benches, credenza, bookcases in the library—plan to bring current book cases to new meeting house space; use of library space for other meetings
  - 4) Similar lighting to current space that is contemplative and warm
  - 5) Spirit Led messages are often led by reflections on the natural world; at present; there are three facades with windows
  - 6) Accessible (ADA); essential that we are open to all people
  - 7) Dedicated office space; desk, plus space for at least two file cabinets for records of the meetings
  - 8) Full access to space during the week
  - 9) A library/resource room (larger space)
  - 10) Adequate space for hospitality for 50-60 people
  - 11) Access to dishwasher, refrigerator, place to warm food
  - 12) Access to a kitchen and storage
  - 13) Access to playground and garden shed for children (exploration of gardening with LS)
  - 14) Access to additional rooms for gatherings that meeting at the same time