

NYYM
WCC
Fall Sessions 2016
Ethical Culture Society of Westchester
White Plains, New York

MINUTES
Witness Coordinating Committee
November 12, 2016

Mary Eagleson, Clerk
Andrew Mead von Salis, Recording Clerk

2016-11-12-1

Friends center in silence at approximately 7:10 p.m. Warm greetings are exchanged.

2016-11-12-2

The clerk opens the meeting with a prayer from a Dineh woman, Lyla June Johnson, which upholds for safety and healing the Standing Rock Camp activists at the North Dakota oil pipeline site, and all others involved in the related projects and protests. The Clerk proceeds to review our agenda.

2016-11-12-3

The clerk announces that the deadline for submission of requests for spending from the Sharing Fund, and for Witness activities Fund applications, and Witness committee budget requests is now mid-January 2017, since at that time the requests will be reviewed for action.

2016-11-12-4

Minute 2016-07-08 reads:

The NYYM Finance Committee has recommended that the Yearly Meeting work with a professional for all financial campaigns. All members of the Coordinating Committee are charged with going back to their home meeting to look for a people to form a task group to work with this professional.

As this information was not correct, the clerk propped revising the minute to read:

2016-07-08: The NYYM Finance Committee may be considering a suggestion that the Yearly Meeting work with a professional for all financial campaigns. If this is the case, Witness would need to align its Sharing Fund fundraising efforts with that professional. All members of the Coordinating Committee are charged with going back to their home meeting to look for people to form a task group to work on raising funds for the Sharing Fund.

We approve this correction of our Minute.

2016-11-12-5

Ruth Bryan has offered to serve as our appointee to the M4D Steering Committee. We approve her appointment expiring in 2019.

2016-11-12-6

We expected at end 2015 that the NYYM office would no longer combine the budget lines for EAQWER and Earthcare into a single budget line. This raised the question of what money already in

that budget line should go to each of these two purposes. The Clerk proposes that EAQWER receive \$1,000 of the \$3,434 in the combined line. The remainder would be combined with the \$696.64 in the current in the QEW line. We don't have a committee – only a working group – to handle the QEW funds. The Clerk therefore proposes changing the name of our QEW line to “Earthcare Working Group,” and changing the name of “working groups” to “EAQWER.” The clerks of QEW and EAQWER have agreed. Friends approve. We note that this action does not affect the percentages of income from the Sharing Fund that these two groups will receive during the remainder of 2016, which has already been fixed at 1% for each for this year.

2016-11-12-6

Solitary confinement, described by its survivors as “being buried alive,” has become a control strategy of first resort in many penal institutions, although many prisoners subjected to it suffer from mental illness, sexual abuse, and other traumas or discrimination. High rates of spiritual, emotional and physical harm have resulted. Solitary has been condemned by many US and global organizations as a form of torture. Manasquan MM and Shrewsbury-Plainfield Half-Yearly Meeting have therefore minuted that they consider solitary confinement to be immoral, and that they support NRCAT, Quaker Initiative to End Torture (QUIT) and a New Jersey State Senate bill, the Isolated Confinement Restriction Act, No. 2588, that awaits gubernatorial action. We understand that the bill is modeled on, and largely similar to, the pending New York State HALT bill, which would restrict the use of solitary confinement in various specific ways. We decide to ask NYYM to approve the S-P H-YM Minute, and send it to the Governor of New Jersey with a cover letter acknowledging that we know the bill was passed by the State Legislature and we urge that it be signed into law.

The coordinating committee approved endorsing the Shrewsbury-Plainfield minute and forwarding it to the body for endorsement by New York Yearly Meeting.

2016-11-12-7

The Clerk reminds us that four WCC individuals have been apportioning the Sharing Fund among the Witness committees that request funds. She asks if we wish to adopt a policy of asking our nominating committee to find and recommend Friends to us as for that duty. Friends approve.

2016-11-12-8

The Indian Affairs and Earthcare groups jointly offer their Minute regarding the Dakota Access Pipeline across sacred Sioux sites, and the NYYM office has related minutes from over half a dozen other meetings in NYYM and beyond. The Clerk reads our own groups' joint Minute for our consideration. (Minute appended.) Friends approve forwarding this minute to the body [and it is approved by them.]

The meeting ended abruptly, as our time in the Ethical Culture building had ended.

Appendix

Minute of the Indian Affairs Committee of New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) approved 8-30-16; approved by Earthcare Working Group of NYYM 8-31-2016 Our two Committees strongly support the Standing Rock Sioux in their actions opposing construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. This 1100-mile pipeline would create the same dangers as other projects, such as the XL Keystone Pipeline, and should be rejected for the same reasons. The proposal should properly have been subjected to the same thorough review prior to approval as the XL Pipeline,

so that the Standing Rock Sioux could have their voices heard and their historic rights respected, including the right of access to clean water, the foundation of all life, and the protection of their burial sites and other sacred sites as the 1978 Native American Religious Freedom Act guarantees. This includes honoring and respecting the promises of the United States to the Great Sioux Nation in the 1851, 1859 and 1868 Treaties of Fort Laramie which this project would violate.

All the others affected by the project are also entitled to be heard. Anything less, particularly for a project of this scope, is a failure of the democratic process and is a lack of transparency. It is a deliberate avoidance of the environmental review process and undermines the laws intended to ensure that all environmental effects are considered and properly weighed before approving an undertaking of this magnitude.

As Friends, we bear witness to the equality and to the sacred nature of every person, since every person carries the same Spark of Divine Light. The principle of equality is also a fundamental principle of a democratic society. When we shut out voices and ignore the rights of the people of Native Nations within the U.S., we deny that principle.

Friends also have had a particular concern for the relations between the European settlers on this continent and its First Nations, beginning with our founder George Fox's encounters with Native inhabitants during his North American travels in the 1680s and the founding of Pennsylvania. New York Yearly Meeting has had a standing Indian Affairs Committee since the 1790s and maintains warm relations with Native Nations and Peoples of this region up to this day. Thus we stand beside our First Nation brothers and sisters in insisting that the legal and treaty rights of the Standing Rock Sioux must be honored and must not be violated by the construction of this pipeline. Too often, Native Nations have paid the price for projects intended to benefit American society by actions that violate treaties and Native rights, such as taking land or constructing dams.

As Friends, we also hold sacred our responsibility, the responsibility of all humanity, to care for the Earth, our home, and preserve it for the future generations of humans and of all life. Our Native sisters and brothers have long led the way in showing the importance of taking into consideration not only our own desires, but also the needs of the future generations, before we act. Projects such as the Dakota Access Pipeline imperil the waters of the earth, vital to the Standing Rock Sioux and to all life.

Pursuing the use of fossil fuel rather than finding renewable and sustainable alternatives imperils the atmosphere, the air we breathe and the climate necessary for the continued existence of humanity and of the many forms of life that we know and claim to cherish. We must move quickly to implement environmentally sound practices to preserve our Earth-home and all life on it.

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe requests that statements of support be sent to:

- publicrelations@standingrock.org
- Call or Email your Congressional Representative or Senator.
- Call or Email Denis McDonough, Chief of Staff to the President and Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of Army Corp of Engineers:

o Denis McDonough, Chief of Staff to the President dmcos@who.eop.gov (202) 456-3182

o Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of Army Corp of Engineers joellen.darcy@us.army.mil
(703)697-8986

- Additional places to send:
- US President
- Other meetings and NYYM clerk (so we have a record)
- NY Council of Churches

Steve Sitting Bear

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe - External Affairs Director

PO Box D, Bldg #1, N. Standing Rock Ave - Fort Yates ND, 58538
701-854-8638 work - 701-301-1484 - cell 701-854-3488 fax
ssittingbear@standingrock.org