

September 17, 2015

Dear New York Quarterly Meeting Members and Clerk Andy Von Salis,

We write to you as the members of the School Committee who have been appointed by the Quarter and charged with sharing the task of stewarding the Friends Seminary School.

We are very mindful of the long history of support that the Meeting has provided to the School over its 229 year history. That support has at different times included housing the school in a portion of the old Queen Street Meetinghouse itself and housing the school in a two story building on Elizabeth Street connected by a bridge to the old Hester Street Meetinghouse. Later, it has included housing many of the programs and activities of the School in the 15th Street Meetinghouse itself and the Central Building and their grounds, and facilitating, with the support of many donors as well as the proceeds of the sale of the prior school building, the acquisition of land and construction of the Old School building as well as later a portion of the land acquisition for and construction of the Hunter Hall building.

More than that, at various times over the course of the School's long history the Meeting has supported the operation of the School's programs themselves with Meeting funds as the School's financial health has gone through ups and downs, school enrollment has expanded and contracted and fluctuated between mainly children of Meeting families and greater numbers of non-Quaker families (who have been exposed to Quakerism through the School) and as the demographics of the School's potential clientele have shifted over time with varying degrees of desire to choose and ability to pay for a Quaker education. Today there are a great many families who seek out Friends Seminary specifically because of its Quaker principles, some of whom are fortunate to have a substantial ability to financially support the School and its mission. All of this has taken place as the city, the Society of Friends, practices in primary and secondary school education, and national culture generally have all changed and evolved as well.

In turn, as the School has grown stronger and more well established, its operations have been able to finance the acquisition of additional buildings and extensive renovation and upkeep of the entire complex of buildings, and at times in the past helped cover operating deficits of the newer and more fledgling Brooklyn Friends School.

We are also aware that over many years the Quakers of the Meeting have fluctuated many times between, on the one hand, close involvement in and embrace of the School and its mission, overseeing its operations and serving as trustees and administrators, and, on the other, neglect, indifference to, and/or disdain for same. This has occurred while the Society of Friends itself has gone through many transitions, schisms, periods of vibrancy and dormancy, times when country Quakers or city Quakers have held more sway in the Society, and as the size of its membership and the social and economic prominence of its members in New York as well as their participation in various movements and causes of peace, equality, and social welfare have all waxed and waned. And the School as well, over its more than two hundred year history, has changed names and at times identities, emphasized to a greater or lesser extent its uniquely Quaker character, balanced principle and compromise, and dealt in different measures of accommodation and resistance with pressures to focus on the pursuit foremost of prestige and social recognition.

Fortunately, as the Quarter appointed members of the School Committee we report to our fellow Quarter members that the school today is a vibrant Quaker school, embracing as much as or more so than ever before its distinct mission, a School which exists today because the Meeting has continued

through all the years to have and to support a School and many administrators, trustees, and teachers as well have at many different times newly recommitted the School to its mission and the Quaker beliefs at the center of the School's history.

On the question of separation of property as part of a separate incorporation of the School we are understanding of the fact that Trustees of the Quarter may feel very strongly bound by a fiduciary duty which they feel requires them not to transfer property without receiving appropriate monetary value in exchange.

It is our view that at this juncture we Friends are not being asked to "give away" the school property. Rather, we are being asked to join the School administration and School community in bringing into existence a newly created legal entity, with a board half of which will be appointed by the Quarter, to the stewardship of which we are turning over the Friends Seminary school buildings for their ongoing use in perpetuity, in keeping with the mission and purpose of our Society, as a Friends K-12 school guided by agreed upon essential principles. This represents the purpose for which they were originally constructed/acquired by Friends (and later, exclusively with the funds generated by a then financially robust School), and for which the School has used them to their fullest capacity ever since.

Therefore we ask that the Clerk bring this request before the Quarter: that it act in unity to direct our Trustees to 1) transfer title for nominal consideration the Masonic Temple Building, the Townhouses, and the 1964 Building (Hunter Hall) to the separately incorporated School, 2) for nominal consideration, either transfer title or provide a long term lease for the Corner (Old School) Building to the separately incorporated School, and 3) work to reach agreement to any amendments to shared use agreements regarding the Central Building and the Meetinghouse (as well as 15th Street or Quarter use of any of the School buildings/facilities), including a fair financial consideration which reaffirms the School's longstanding commitment to maintaining and improving the properties from which we all benefit.

We are also aware that part of the disagreement and conflict between the School and its administration and School Committee on the one hand and the Trustees of the Quarter and members of the Meeting on the other are based on personality clashes and disagreements stemming from the current and historic use of space and the inevitable frictions which may arise from the fact of being housed together in a shared complex of buildings. We are sure that those who came before us were not free of these sorts of conflicts either, nor will be those who come after us. We recommit ourselves, together with the rest of the School Committee and School administration, to strive to live together in peaceful, direct, and honest relation to each other. We are hopeful that through working to manage and resolve our conflicts we may continue to enjoy together the many great mutual benefits of a School, a Meeting, and other Quaker offices and tenants all sharing a complex of historic buildings, which we are all fortunate to be able to occupy.

In the Light, and as your fellow New York Quarterly Meeting members,

Scott Carlson	Margery Cornwell	Elizabeth Enloe	Liz DiGiorgio
Mark Doty	Libby Johnson	Benjamin Smith	Carol Warner