

Community Liaison Committee  
Minutes of Meeting # 1  
Feb 3, 2010

**Attendance:** Jennifer Watts, Jay Allan, Marlene Coffey, Roberta Sharp, Boris Mirtchev, Liz Cunningham, Geoff Wilson, Shelly Sarwal, Lawrence DeWolfe, David Harrison, Rev. Linda Yates, Hilda Power (chair), Susan MacLeod **Regrets:** Faye Bradley

**1. Introductions** – of all participants

**2. History & Context** – Rev Linda Yates gave a brief history of the consultation, research and decision processes undertaken by St. John’s over the last 5 years which has brought them to this redevelopment plan. The goal is to create space for the church to continue its mission (worship, service, outreach activities) and an apartment complex for seniors. She explained that St. John’s lives out its message of inclusivity by being an Affirming church (GBLTT positive). The goal for Spirit Place is to provide the tenants and the neighborhood an opportunity for the co-use of the facilities.

**3. Terms of Reference** – These were reviewed in detail. All participants agreed to having their names and the meeting minutes being made public though the church website, newsletters and other notices.

**4. Conflict of Interest** – For this purpose conflict of interest was defined as “a situation when someone has competing professional or personal obligations or personal or financial interests that would make it difficult to fulfill his/her duties fairly”. Each participant spoke briefly about their personal interest in the project. This discussion raised the following questions/issues:

4.1 Role of the project manager – David Harrison explained that he has been hired by St. John’s to assist with the planning for redevelopment. He clarified that he is not a developer and the church can end his involvement at any time. Mr. Harrison is included on the committee because of this expertise and familiarity with community consultation.

4.2 Not-for-profit aspect of the project – There is no intention that the redevelopment project would realize a financial gain. The goal is to maintain the church presence in the community and provide housing for seniors.

4.3 Councilor’s role – Jennifer Watts addressed the issue that she is a member of the church and she is considering whether there would be a perceived conflict of interest. She suggested that her role on the committee may change once the application goes to HRM.

4.4 Incorporated Ministry – Rev. Yates gave a brief description of how an incorporated ministry operates.

4.5 Jay Allan clarified that he does not represent Sobeys and questioned whether he had anything to offer the committee. He generously offered the community room at Sobeys as meeting space and highlighted that Sobeys is a supporter of community. He will consider his role and communicate his decision to the chair.

4.5 Rev. Linda Yates clarified that the group will provide input and perspective from the neighborhood. Its reports will be given to the Implementation Team, which is accountable and under the governance of the Official Board of St. John’s United Church.

The group is not able to make decisions; that can only be made by the congregation through its governance structure or through the Board of the Incorporated Ministry when it is formed.

4.6 Rev Yates explained that if this project does not go forward St. John's United church would then decide if, how, and where to continue as a congregation. This would take a number of years. Eventually, the property (which is currently owned by would revert to the Halifax Presbytery and held in Trust by the congregation), and would probably probably be sold. Presbyteries often will agree to move proceeds to another congregation if amalgamation is approved and occurs. The church would then decide if, how, and where to continue as a congregation.

**5. Hopes and Concerns** – Each participant described their perspective on the process. These comments are summarized below:

- Participants appreciate the opportunity to be involved in the liaison committee and agreed that it is not required by HRM rules.
- There needs to be an open 2-way communication between the committee and the community. Transparency is important.
- The committee needs to reach out to the community as much as possible and build trust. It was suggested that an 'open house' idea could be used to involve the community. There is a need to provide safe opportunities for people to voice their concerns and to look at plans. The Community Health Board could help with facilitating events or supporting strategies to involve the community.
- A group consisting of community members has been formed to discuss the church's redevelopment plans. They have had several three meetings.
- Suggestion that the committee appoint 2 co-chairs, one from the church and one from the community.
- The committee membership has been defined already which may limit the involvement of the broader community. The immediate neighborhood is represented but not beyond. This may result in a perspective that is too focused. Suggestion: invite one more person from outside immediate neighborhood.
- Have the architects attend an upcoming meeting to share preliminary work
- Meeting once a month may not be often enough to realize the goals.
- There is a desire to find common ground and be good neighbors.

**6. Ground Rules** - There was an attempt to establish ground rules for the committee meeting although the discussion concentrated more on guiding principles. The main points were:

- Respect for each person's opinion is paramount
- The group should decide how they will deal with conflict and unfinished discussions.
- The group should use specific processes for decision making.
- Information on the church's organizational structure and how this committee fits into that structure may be useful
- Information on the vision for Spirit Place may be useful.
- There is a need to consider the purpose of the committee, especially the last 3 points on the Terms of Reference: Spirit Place's role in the community, consultation with residents of the neighborhood and others, other neighborhood issues as they relate to Spirit Place.

**7. Meeting dates and time** – The next meeting will be held in 2 weeks – Feb 17, 7pm at St. John's House.