Bricks & Mortals

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

10.20.21

11:00am - 12:30pm

Attendees: Jason Labate, Rev. Dr. Donna Schaper, Kate Toth, Rev. Beverly Dempsey, Marian Warden, Colleen Heemeyer, Roger Leaf, Richard van Deusen, Phil Tom, Marc Greenberg, Ann Friedman, Myers Mermel, Rev. Cheryl Dudley, Taylor Aikin, Rev. Peter Cook, Victoria Barreca, Cornerstone Fund, Rev. Damaris Whittaker, Karen DiLossi, Nancy Pascal, Randall Toure, Day Edwards, David Aviles, Jocelynn Ricard, Mama Sama, John Kosky, Ira Schuman, Rev. Nori Rost, Dan Kaplan

1. **Welcome by Donna Schaper (15 mins)**
    - *Motion to open meeting (Members only): Motion passed unanimously*
    - *Motion to approve June minutes (Members only): Motion passed unanimously*
    - Welcome

2. **B&M update (Kate Toth - 5 mins)**
    - Membership Meetings
        - Content and locations.
        - Meetings will be hybrid moving forward.
        - Will be in touch before moving to in person meetings.
        - We will now be rotating meeting locations to underscore commitment to plurality, will be easy to get to from public transportation.
    - 501c3 update:
        - Now incorporated and submitted 501c3 application.
    - Membership Survey:
        - We will be sending this survey after this meeting, it's 10 questions and should take less than 5 minutes to complete.
        - This is to figure out what our membership wants from B&M moving forward - for meetings, events, etc.
        - Please complete it so that we can get your feedback.
    - Space Sharing Website:
        - Awarded grant from NYCT with Partners for Sacred Places to develop space sharing website for houses of faith to list their spaces for artists, non-profits and others to rent.
        - Just had our first focus group this week with artists and will be holding another with houses of faith tomorrow.
        - Expected to launch in the first quarter of 2022.

- We have also been sending monthly email updates - please let us know if there is anything you'd like to include in this.

3. **Case study: Avenue Church NYC (Rev. Beverly Dempsey, Senior Pastor and Chief Ecclesiastical Officer - 30 mins)**
   - Presentation by Rev. Dempsey
     - Joined Jan Hus 7 years ago, it was clear that they were headed towards bankruptcy. Mission centered church, offered lots of free and discounted space to the community and lots of community services (2014).
     - Space was being strained.
     - Tried a number of solutions such as investing in property, getting loans from the denomination, and more, but none were successful in reversing the financial strain. There were 17 active members at this point (2017).
     - Went to Trustees of Board at Presbytery to discuss the situation - said they needed to sell the building.
     - Began this process in January 2018, and it was expedient because had spent the past 3 year discerning. The first thing they did was find the best Land Use Law Firm that could deal with the myriad of issues they would have to undertake - including tenants and Landmarks. Reviewed proposals from commercial real estate firms. Kept urban outreach center guests and AA first in mind.
     - Turned Urban Outreach Center into 501c3, helped fundraising. Then were able to actively look for new location.
     - Team: KramerLevine and AddisonYoung. Relationship was what led to the sale - a nearby church who has a similar mission. This gave them the funds and confidence to look for a space.
     - Bought old factory building ("Old Soccer Building") and fully renovated it.
     - Remember that God is faithful and will provide.
     - Have many more participants now even with Covid.
   - Q&A
     - Sale proceeds versus cost of new project? 24 million sale, 4 million left.
     - Formal dedication? In the spring.
     - What happened to the old building? Renovating their building and their old building was purchased by Cornell Weill; went to Landmarks before sold to make sure plans would be approved.
     - Was your sale contingent upon their sale occurring? Yes - goes back to having great attorneys, so didn't have any concerns.

- How did you approach financial models / allocations? Thought would have 8 million left not 4 million, didn't understand what "white box" meant. Also were able to maintain work during Covid but that was an extra cost which never could have anticipated.
- How has the move affected membership? Huge rotation of people and change in membership, increase in membership.
- Work with the homeless community / food program has brought in volunteers and members.
- Different levels of building: each floor has designated purpose 20k feet. Basement is Urban Outreach Center. Main Level is Sanctuary and library. 2nd floor is Preschool. 3rd floor is Fullness Center (12 step groups) and terrace (for Center and Preschool). 4th floor is Mance (can also be used as a retreat house). Roof.
- How did you plan out these spaces? Ministries presented needs and worked with architect. Have a small membership so it was based on sense and strong common sense of mission. Also wanted tenants of old spaces to be comfortable.
- Still looking for nonprofit, mission centric tenants for large portions of the space.
- Hoping would get $55-$75/ sq ft, now talking with someone at $50.50 / sq ft.

4. **Resources: Applying for FEMA Aid, Lien Sales, Tax Exemptions (Jason Labate - 30 mins)**
    - Applying for FEMA Aid Post-Hurricane Ida
        - Public Assistance Grants for Houses of Worship and Private Non-Profits webinar: The webinar provides an overview of the public assistance grant process for Houses of Worship and Private Non-Profits (PNPs). This is provided bv FEMA Region 2 and FEMA's Individual and Community Preparedness Division.
            - All 5 boroughs eligible for public assistance except Manhattan. Manhattan is only eligible for SBA loans.
        - FEMA's dedicated page for disaster information and updates: 4615-DR-NY
            - Resources available for houses of faith can be found here.
        - Houses of faith must apply through the State: DHSES - Disaster Recovery Active Declarations (ny.gov)
        - Further questions, you can contact: NYS Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services, Public Assistance team, Joseph Collorafi (joseph.collorafi@dhses.ny.gov), or Peter Gudaitis, Executive Director and CEO, NY Disaster Interfaith Services, pgudaitis@nydis.org
    - Lien Sale List

        - FBOs in general (charitable, religious, or educational) that own real estate and operate that real estate for exempt purposes are exempt from real property tax; can also be exempt from water and sewer - separate application.
        - If an owner fails to meet those two requirements, or fails to submit an application / renewal, or fails to convince the City that they meet those requirements, they may lose their exemption. If water, sewer, or emergency repairs done by the City go unpaid for a period of time, they can become a tax on the property, which can become a lien on the property. The City monetizes these liens by selling these at a tax lien sale.
        - This linked lien sale list publishes all properties for sale at this lien sale so that owners at risk, and those affiliated with them who can advocate for them, can be aware.
        - Please review and share this list.
        - Thanks to Paula Segel and RootJustice for putting together this list.
    - 2021-22 non-for-profit tax exemption filing period now open
        - Exemption and renewal is available now. If you fail to file you will lose your exemption.
    - DOF tax exemption revocations
        - Seeing a new practice by Department of Finance that if there are Class 1 violations and/or vacate orders (partial/total), it makes a property eligible for tax exemption.
        - Question as to whether this is appropriate.
        - Please refer to Kate Toth if you know of anyone going through this.

5. **Closing (Donna Schaper - 10 mins)**
    - Member announcements
        - NYC Dance in Sacred Places still looking for houses of worship for space sharing - please reach out to Karen diLossi
    - Event: Tax Exemptions for Houses of Faith - **November 1st, 1pm** - Bricks and Mortals Event, co-sponsponsored with Muslim Community Network, Department of Finance and the NYC Center for Faith and Community Partnerships
        - Simultaneous Urdu interpretation
    - Next meeting: **December 8th**
        - We will be in touch in November with everyone to decide whether it will be virtual or hybrid
    - *Motion to close meeting (Members only): Motion passed unanimously*