

School Committee Report to IYMC 2019

“There is no solution; seek it lovingly.”

~Socrates

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.” Another year has passed and we again find ourselves exhilarated, if exhausted. We are constantly amazed by the challenges and solutions that are experienced by the Scattergood community and the optimism that is present.

Much time and energy was invested in Outreach this year. Thomas and Ruth organized and attended two regional Alumni visits: one in the Washington D.C. area last October, and another in the Chicago area in April. The attendance at these gatherings has varied but alumni are happy to have the chance to visit in person, to hear about the school, and to talk about ways to keep alumni connected. We continue to search for an organizer to help create an Alumni Association---those who hear about it are excited by the concept but a core group is needed to launch this good idea. We continue to build relationships with Northern Yearly Meeting and Illinois Yearly Meeting with a focus on young constituents and Chicago area Friends. This fall we will welcome Illinois Yearly Meeting member Alex Lippet of Oak Park as a new member to the School Committee. He is excited about growing the awareness of Scattergood within the Chicago Friends community.

Scattergood has a scheduled maintenance checklist, but there are also the unscheduled immediate needs that arise. This winter the kitchen floor unexpectedly required replacement and a new floor was installed. The school has begun collecting bids for a new roof on the Main Building, and drilling a new well with a backup generator system are immediate future needs. Although there are other long-term maintenance issues that must be addressed, the school continues to keep the buildings and campus safe and functioning.

The state of Iowa has offered a six-year extension on the requirement of a sprinkler system for one dorm and a ten-year extension for the other dorm, with an initial cost estimate of around \$366,000. A project of this magnitude will require dedicated funding, so we are considering incorporating numerous projects into a campaign to overhaul the dorms which would include the sprinkler system and remodeling the bathrooms and showers to address both ventilation issues and our increased gender diversity.

We were informed last fall that plans are underway to add lanes to Interstate 80 within the next five years. This expansion warrants thoughtful consideration about how it will affect the campus. The bridge will be expanded or replaced, and the increased traffic volume may necessitate that a new wall be built on our southern border. Thomas has been in communication with the Department of Transportation. The Yearly Meeting Trustees may also want to be a part of the conversation to help identify our needs.

It was disappointing to hear the news that Grinnell College stepped back from the offer to fund a Gap/5th Year program. There is great need for this kind of opportunity and we are considering a search for grants. The Middle School initiative is still receiving attention, energy, and investment but progress is moving at a slower pace to ensure that the plans are well seasoned.

Last summer we approached the Yearly Meeting to introduce the idea of incurring debt to fund the aforementioned initiatives that could help expand our enrollment base. However, since these plans are not fully underway we were not able to acquire a loan for this year. The good news is that we had healthy Annual Fund contributions thanks to the help of many donors including a matching-fund bike ride across the country. This, along with a generous one-time donation, staff attrition, and the daily diligent efforts of staff to reduce costs, allowed the school to end the year with a reasonable cash flow situation and, surprisingly, a nearly balanced budget. We greatly appreciate the careful stewardship of our financial resources by Thomas and the business office.

In the upcoming year we will again increase funding for and focus on Admissions and Outreach. We are excited to have two strong new directors in both Admissions and Development with experience in marketing and communications.

The school continues to feel the debilitating strains of low enrollment. We hold this reality with care and discernment. It is clear that increasing the student body and tuition income is imperative to the continuation of the life of Scattergood. Year by year, we carefully tend all the questions that are involved.

In life at Scattergood there are daily grass fires to extinguish: fixing broken toilets, meeting with legislators, ordering refrigeration components, and 2:00 a.m. runs to the emergency room. At times it is easy to conclude that all of this is just a crazy venture. But every day also brings moments of joy, learning, and understanding, and both the joys and the struggles are filled with Divine Spirit and personal growth. Every year that the school remains open is a success as we accompany another group of young people to become more of themselves, to find their own voices, to be excited by learning, and to be present in this world as they carry with them the essence of Quaker spirit. Every single year matters. So we strive to continue on, one year at a time, as many years as we can, to serve this radiant mission of Love with what faithfulness we can muster. We're going to love this school into another year of existence.

On behalf of the School Committee,
Ruth Hampton, clerk