

To: BPC Session for consideration at February 24, 2024 meeting

From: Ron Grim

Subject: Report on Cemetery Project from Hank Levine, President, Bethesda Meeting House Foundation, with request for BPC Session approval of continuing previously proposed action plan.

Ron –

Following up on our conversation at the recent BMHF Board meeting, I am reaching out to you to report on recent developments and request that the Session approve the next steps in our exploration of the feasibility of restoring the Bethesda Presbyterian Church (BPC) Cemetery on Rockville Pike.

The grounds of the cemetery have been cleared of leaves, tree limbs and debris, and several dead trees have been removed. With that work completed, we are ready to proceed with the Ground Penetrating Radar survey. This non-intrusive survey will allow us to locate (and mark) all the graves in the cemetery – marked, unmarked, and lost. You can find a detailed description of the process

at <https://geomodel.com/applications/cemetery-and-grave-location/>

I am attaching a copy of GeoModel's proposal to do the survey. As previously discussed, BPC is not being asked to pay the cost – if the columbarium wall that we have discussed proves to be practical and is approved by the Session the cost will be recovered from sales of niches in that wall. If the project is not practicable, a donor has agreed to absorb the cost.

Whether or not we proceed with the columbarium wall and scatter garden, we want to follow up the GPR by mapping the graves identified, improving the grounds, and repairing broken/fallen monuments. We would also like to remove the deteriorated and unsightly metal fence that currently separates the Meeting House site and the cemetery. We are commissioning a detailed survey of the Meeting House site and will use the survey results to guide the placement of a more aesthetically pleasing border between the two properties.

To oversee all of this, I propose that we form a joint committee consisting of representatives of BPC and the BHS. The committee will be chaired by you and include an expert in cemetery conservation, an individual with experience in construction and historic conservation, and additional representatives of the Foundation and BPC.

To sum up, we ask that the session approve the following work:

- The GPR survey;
- The follow-on grave mapping, grounds improvement, and monument repair;
- Removal of the deteriorated fence between the BMH site and the cemetery; and
- Formation of a joint committee, chaired by you, to oversee the project.

I would be pleased to meet with you, or the Session, to answer any questions. Thank you for your interest in this important project.

Warm regards,
Hank

Hank Levine

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