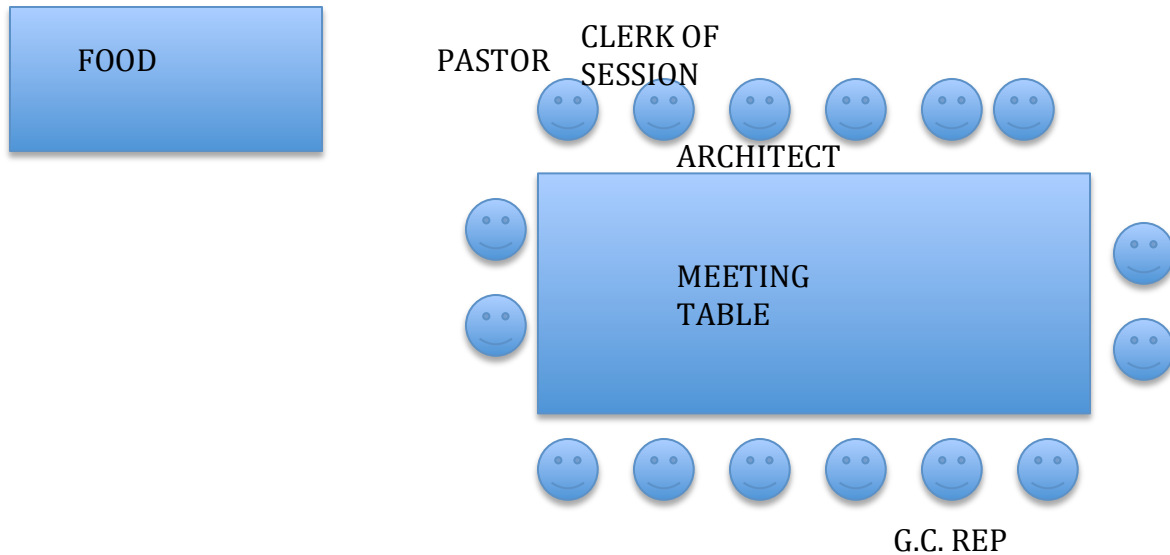


WATERS – Meeting Assignment 01252017

ROOM SETUP



BEFORE MEETING

I would describe this meeting as highly organized. As one of a series of scheduled, formal gatherings of a renovation project, dinner was built into the agenda. After a shared meal (subs, pizza, etc.), we began working through an agenda. The meal itself was a time of upbeat fellowship; this is a group that clearly has much (positive) history and familiarity. The architect and GC reps were included in the meal and conversation. A basket is left on the food table for a free will offering to offset the cost of the meal.

BEGINNING

The business portion of the meeting was opened by the Clerk of Session with prayer. This was clearly unusual – but not uncomfortable – for any G.C. reps in attendance. After prayer, the secretary read highlights from the last meeting's

minutes. The agenda was largely overseen by the architect; she also acted as intermediary between the church group and the builders.

DURING THE MEETING

This particular evening was largely used to discuss use of space in the proposed building project, as well as some security/building protection concerns. On behalf of the music director, the pastor raised concerns about construction dust damaging the historic pipe organ. The G.C. responded thoughtfully and appropriately. There was a brief conversation about budget/available finances. The pastor reminded the group that funding was another committee's concern; this group was tasked with accomplishing the best possible project (creation of new mission space) within the allotted budget. This line of discussion created some tension. A presumably more fiscally conservative committee member struggled to leave financial oversight to another group. While the conversation was resolved for the evening, it was not immediately clear that the congregant was satisfied with the responses he received.

IMPRESSIONS

Having attended a fair number of Session/committee meetings in past church roles, this meeting was a comparative joy. Even with occasional disagreements and resulting tensions, this group was clearly excited to be doing something new for mission. I believe everybody in attendance contributed at least a couple times; people stayed engaged and alert the entire time.

PROCESS

Decision-making was mainly by consensus. It was clear the group trusted that the pastor and a past, preliminary group had made wise selections of building professionals. Consequently, the architect and general contractor were treated as teammates or colleagues, rather than as outsiders or interlopers. When the group got “stuck” (never mired), the pastor and Clerk of Session were able to quickly move us along in positive directions.

OUTCOMES

This meeting raised more questions than it answered, which was partially by design. Uncertainty about use of space vs. city codes arose. They were assigned to the architect to research for the next scheduled meeting. The overall outcome was a sense of reasonable progress and ongoing fellowship.

INTERACTIONS

This group clearly shares deep affection and familiarity. Not only the pastor, but all members of the group worked to allow space for sharing opinions and ideas. People were careful not to speak over each other, dominate the floor, or otherwise act rudely.

CONFLICT

As mentioned earlier, tension was created over misunderstandings or misgivings about the financial oversight this group had vs. the finance committee. While I don't know that it would have occurred to me to divide responsibilities between two separate groups, I see the wisdom in that approach. The finance committee for the project managed both financial oversight and fundraising. This project

committee, however, was responsible for creating the product. That differentiation allowed for greater focus by each group.

MODERATOR

The Clerk of Session is a highly regarded member of that church's community. She was given complete control by the pastor and associate pastor. While clergy participated - and sometimes acted as facilitators - the Clerk was easily able to move the group along both productively and joyfully. By arriving with a tight agenda, and a stated time limit for each meeting, the Clerk often kept people on task by reminding us that we were bound by an agreed upon stopping time.

SYNOPSIS

The meeting I attended was one of a series of scheduled, standing meetings of this project group. Meeting dates were set a month in advance; initial meetings were weekly, then monthly, as work progressed and additional direction was less needed. Each meeting started with a half-hour dinner and fellowship time, followed by the business portion for an additional hour. Food was ordered ahead of the meeting; the table was set and ready prior to people arriving. The Clerk was fastidious about either ending on time. All of that planning and discipline set the tone for a collegial and productive work session.

The agenda, based on both ongoing and new items, was followed closely. When the architect was tempted to stray on tangents, the Clerk was careful to gently refocus the group. No new decisions were required that evening, other than to ask the architect to research some of the code issues that became evident during discussion. Although a permit-set of plans had been created some time prior, new questions about intended use of space forced the group to address the life safety implications of using the mission space for its originally intended purposes.

By design, the only follow up required by the group from this meeting is the next scheduled meeting. The building professionals were assigned various tasks that would allow new questions to be answered or addressed at the next gathering. I was proud of this group – especially of the Clerk – for the way they demonstrated respect and creativity. The result was a joyful, faithful interaction

between a faith community and secular vendors. It was a joy to me to have a project meeting both open and close in prayer; this kind of focus on mission and Maker would do my business world a lot of good.