

Meeting Minutes – Stevenson Unit Chapel Development Corporation
10:45AM Thursday, January 21, 2016
TDCJ Stevenson Unit, Cuero, Texas

The Stevenson Unit Chapel Development Corporation met on Thursday, January 21, 2016 at the Stevenson Unit Visitation Room

Those present included:

Gary Flessner
Mary Ann Flessner
Wayne Gonzales
Chaplain Michelle Griffin
Larry Krupala
Paul Morkovsky
John Ortmann
Les Rabke
Hermes Silva
Billy Stehling
Richard Van Wormer
Travis Wagner

The meeting was called to order by Paul Morkovsky at 10:50 am followed by an opening prayer by Chaplain Griffin.

Attendees briefly introduced themselves and described their individual Prison ministry involvement. During the introductions, Assistant Warden Frederick Merida welcomed those present and offered his assistance; however, he was not able to remain for the meeting.

Attendees had each been given a copy of the meeting agenda and previous meeting minutes. The minutes were then read by Les Rabke and corrections were presented and noted. The minutes were then approved as corrected.

Confused by the wording of one section of the minutes regarding the "Picture Fund", Chaplain Griffin then expounded upon the fund stating that it only included money collected from the Stevenson Unit. There was some brief discussion between the Chaplain and John Ortmann with regard to the size and limitation of the fund. Ortmann stated that the paperwork in the name of the Stevenson Chapel Development Corporation had been submitted to Warden Smith to get our name approved as a partial beneficiary of the fund, however, to date no further information was available as to the disposition of the application or what steps might remain for our approval.

Paul Morkovsky then described the purpose of the Annual Meeting and the Corporation's bylaws regarding the 3-year terms and re-election of officers. Since an "Association" existed originally and the officers of that group remained through the transition and restructuring of the current Corporation, he did not want a question to arise regarding the officers and the overlap in the dates when the two groups were formed. Officers for the Corporation consist of: President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Recorder. Paul stated that membership in the corporation is open to any individual interested in the Chapel, and that all persons at the meeting would be able to vote for the officers of the group. He encouraged all present to search for new members in order to get more individuals involved in the effort.

Richard Van Wormer then reported the balance of the Trust Texas Bank - Business Premier Now account in the name of Stevenson Chapel Development Corporation was currently \$2,259.21

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Chaplain Griffin then described a recent phone conversation she had with Mr. Frank Graham, President and CEO of Chapel of Hope Ministries of Dallas. After explaining to Mr. Graham the existence of the Corporation, his advice was that fundraising would be the next step in the process, and that he would be available as a resource for any questions that may arise during that phase. John Ortmann stated that he would contact Mr. Graham as needed to attain insight or suggestions that he might offer regarding the fundraising phase. Billy Stehling and John Ortmann then led a brief discussion regarding the possible formation of a Fundraising Committee within the Corporation to organize those undertakings. Chaplain Griffin encouraged the use of Chapel of Hope as a sound resource due to their prior experience in the area of prison chapel construction projects.

John Ortmann then reported on the Corporation website www.chapelfund.org which had been overhauled since the launch of the fundraising phase to make it more user-friendly for possible donors. At that point, those present viewed a video compiled by Alex Wilkins of KAVU-TV Newscenter 25 of Victoria regarding the need for a chapel at the Stevenson Unit. This video is currently linked on the updated website for individuals to view. Billy Stehling then commented on the significance of former Stevenson Offender, Jeffrey Rodriguez in the KAVU clip and suggested that the video would be an influential segment when used in conjunction with a pulpit talk or in presentations to possible donor organizations. Stehling and Ortmann then commented about a recent newspaper article by Jennifer Preyss that was published in the Saturday, December 19, 2015 edition of the Victoria Advocate. The article which publicized the Corporation's fundraising efforts used photos and comments by a current Stevenson offender.

Also with regard to the website, Ortmann discussed the addition of a "Testimonial" page which currently includes about a dozen statements and comments of various individuals describing the need for prison chapels and praising the efforts of the fundraisers. Such testimonials, Ortmann stated, add to the reputation of the Corporation. Ortmann then asked Wayne Gonzales to pursue a testimonial by Bishop Brendan Cahill, and asked others to add their own remarks to the page and to solicit acknowledgments from other. Gary Flessner stated that he would try to get a statement from the State Kairos representative to add to the page.

Ortmann then described his creation of a Facebook page, stating that the social media site will serve as a good communication tool to keep interested individuals up-to-date with the progress of the Corporation and its goal of building a Chapel. A link on the page will automatically connect a user to the chapelfund.org website. He reported that since its launch, the page had been viewed by 1600 individuals, 80 of which had visited the website.

Paul Morkovsky then discussed his internet search for possible donor organizations, such as "Go-fund-me". He stated that there is a multitude of donor organizations that might support our efforts, but he had been unable to identify a specific target for the Corporation to aim for. John Ortmann volunteered to put forth additional effort in locating possible opportunities.

After a general discussion of the qualifications of various individuals to serve as officers of the Corporation, nominations and the election of officers was attempted:

President – Paul nominated Billy Stehling, seconded by Richard Van Wormer, however, Billy declined the nomination.

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A period of further discussion was held during which those present agreed that there should be no bias with regard to the various religious affiliations represented at the meeting and that all preconceptions other than the development of a unified group under the same God and united for the same purpose, should be dismissed from the Corporation, especially during the current election process.

After the lengthy discussion, nominations and elections resumed with the following results - ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

President – Wayne Gonzales nominated Paul Morkovsky; seconded by Richard Van Wormer; with no other nominations, Paul Morkovsky was reelected by a unanimous voice vote – none opposed.

Vice President – Paul nominated Richard Van Wormer; seconded by Billy Stehling; with no other nominations, Richard Van Wormer was reelected by a unanimous voice vote – none opposed.

Recorder – Paul nominated Les Rabke; seconded by Richard Van Wormer; with no other nominations, Les Rabke was reelected by unanimous voice vote- none opposed.

Treasurer – John Ortmann nominated Larry Krupala, seconded by Travis Wagner; with no other nominations, Larry Krupala was elected to fill the office of treasurer by unanimous voice vote – none opposed.

Paul then asked for suggestions on how we might locate agencies to submit grant applications to. Billy Stehling then suggested the formation of a “Fundraising Committee” within the Corporation to pursue these type agencies. He stated that Larry Lancaster, who had experience in writing grant applications, may be available on a limited basis to help the efforts in this regard. Chaplain Griffin then suggested that Patrick Kennedy of the Cuero Development Corporation might be another source of assistance with these endeavors. Larry Krupala also stated that Freddie Solis of the DeWitt Medical Foundation had been successful in these type applications, and that he would attempt to contact Solis for his possible help in the application process. After discussion regarding the Fundraising Committee, Paul appointed Billy Stehling as Chairman and John Ortmann as Co-chairman of the committee, which will be open to any others who might wish to assist. Hermes Silva and Gary Flessner voiced their support of the committee. Ortmann then distributed copies of a “letter of inquiry” that he had recently mailed to a granting agency. The letter, which outlines the purpose and goal of the Corporation, is a basic tool used to see whether an agency is willing to receive an application. Unfortunately, a reply from the agency stated that our goals fell outside of their current scope of funding. Gary Flessner than prompted all in attendance to pray that God’s plan through this Corporation would be revealed and stated that success would be attained in His timing, not ours.

With the election of a new treasurer (Larry Krupala), discussion was held with regard to the need for a written Corporate Resolution to have his name added to the Trust Texas Bank Account signature card. Richard Van Wormer agreed to provide this document. The signature card shall then include the names of all four elected officers of the Corporation, with any check over \$500 requiring the signature of at least two officers.

Paul then requested that the address for the Corporation be changed from his personal “Shiner” address to the current Cuero Post Office Box. All in attendance were in agreement with this, and Paul was advised to go about the address change process with the various taxing entities.

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Chaplain Griffin then distributed copies of TDCJ Policy number 10.01 with regard to NEW CHAPEL CONSTRUCTION, showing that the naming of the chapel would fall under Texas law 37 TAC 155.21, and highly encouraged the Corporation to carefully examine the law before we make promises about naming the Stevenson Chapel Building. She also pointed out that the policy requires the Unit Chaplain to contact the TDCJ Capital Improvements Review Committee with any plans for *Capital Improvements by Donor Groups*. Paul stated that a gathering with a group from TDCJ Huntsville after the inception of the “Association” had taken place at the Stevenson Unit and that he felt the product of those discussions with regard to our intent should still stand. Chaplain Griffin was encouraged to follow the policy and to make the necessary contact with the Committee in Huntsville.

A brief discussion regarding the seating capacity of the chapel was heard with the answer to that question remaining open until we are farther along in the design phase.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:40 pm.

Approved _____
Paul Morkovsky - President