

Meeting Minutes – Stevenson Unit Chapel Development Corporation

1:00PM Wednesday, October 28, 2015

TDCJ Stevenson Unit, Cuero, Texas

The Stevenson Unit Chapel Development Corporation met on Wednesday October 28, 2015 at the Stevenson Unit Visitation Room

Those present included:

Paul Morkovsky
Richard Van Wormer
Leslie Rabke
Billy Stehling
John Ortmann
Larry Krupala
Warden Jimmy Smith
Chaplain Michelle Griffin

The meeting was called to order by Paul Morkovsky at 1:03pm.

For the benefit of the Warden and Chaplain, attendees briefly introduced themselves and described their individual Prison ministry involvement and chapel corporation interest and outlook.

Attendees were each given copies of the previous meeting minutes as well as an information packet assembled by Chaplain Griffin.

With regard to the information packet, Warden Smith voiced his view that the floor plan number 4 that the Corporation had considered may be excessively optimistic. After tempering his judgment, he stated that whatever plan is eventually decided upon, a goal should be set and a dollar amount be firmly established. Paul explained that the 10,000 square foot floor plan had been previously considered as well as the inclusion of officers quarters outside the prison campus. Paul stated that the TDCJ had previously estimated that this floor plan would cost approximately \$1.6 Million, however, our consideration of the officer quarters and the additional sewer, power, and other utilities required at the campus would likely bring the overall total to \$2.5 million, which is where our original goal was set.

The Warden then presented the current TDCJ officer staffing challenges and theorized that the requirement for a staff member may only be a necessary for events that draw over 50 offenders. He stated that the chaplain and/or volunteers may be allowed to conduct smaller group sessions in the chapel without an officer present and therefore discouraged the group's consideration of the officer quarters. A brief discussion of the likely spot on the campus for the building to be located was held, although, any limitations set by the TDCJ with regard to the Stevenson campus would still have to be considered.

Chaplain Griffin indicated that the TDCJ estimates included costs for the utilities previously stated. She also suggested the floor plan include a kitchen area which will aid in cutting-down some of the bringing in of prepared meals during crusades and other events.

The Warden then proposed that the name of the corporation be added to an "Inmate Picture Fund" – which for approved organizations may generate between \$500 and \$1000 per month, which, he stated, could be used as seed money to get the corporation off the ground. Forms for getting our name approved for this fund will be emailed to John Ortmann to be filled out at a later date.

At that point in the meeting, the minutes for the previous meeting were read, amendments noted, approved as amended, and signed by Paul Morkovsky.

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Paul then stated that an annual meeting of the Corporation is required by law. The original “Association” was formed in November; however, the actual incorporation took place by Secretary of State approval on October 15, 2013. The officer terms are three years. To avoid any confusion between the former Association and the Corporation, officer should be elected at the next meeting in January. At a later point in the meeting, the group decided that emails would be circulated on or about December 18 for all to check their January calendars and decide upon a specific date for the annual meeting.

Paul reported that as of October 5, 2014, tax exemption from the State of Texas had been received after a lengthy ordeal with the Texas Comptroller’s office – so from that date the corporation is now approved for federal and state tax exemption status with no further roadblocks.

Donations to the Pay-Pal account were discussed and Billy Stehling distributed a copy of the thank-you stationery being used for donors. The bank account was discussed and after it was noted that the secondary Wells Fargo account had been dormant and closed, it was decided that after the meeting, the officers would gather at Trust Texas Bank to open a new bank account.

John Ortmann stated that with the ultimate receipt of tax exempt status, the primary focus of the corporation at this point should be fund-raising which would be accomplished primarily through getting the word spread through various media outlets. Billy Stehling stated that he will once again make contact with the Victoria Advocate and KAVU television to discuss a meeting time at the Stevenson Unit to prepare coverage of the corporation’s existence and intent. Ortmann also stated that contact had been made with two Victoria news magazines and that further discussions with the editors of those publications were being planned. Warden Smith noted that photographs and filming inside the Unit would primarily include Administrative Staff (himself and Chaplain Griffin), and that perhaps at some point in the future media coverage including offenders may be considered. The Warden volunteered to help when the various media groups are ready.

Regarding grant-writing, John Ortmann stated that he has contacts at various church organizations that he will get in touch with to obtain possible help for compiling grant applications. He also stated that he has been in contact with the Ministerial Alliance at several other areas (Calhoun Alliance, Kingdom Alliance, Jackson County) and has given them the notice of our corporation and its intent. Chaplain Griffin added that she is a member of the Cuero Area Ministerial Alliance (CAMAL) and will make our needs known at an upcoming meeting of that group.

Chaplain Griffin then reported that she has been in contact with “Chapel of Hope” whose mission is to provide the organization and infrastructure for donors, volunteers and advocates to build chapels inside Texas prisons, and that through several phone calls and emails, their President, Mr. Frank Graham, has been made aware of her desire to have a chapel constructed at the Stevenson Unit. She stated that, with the permission of the Corporation, she will continue to pursue a relationship between the Stevenson Unit and Chapel of Hope.

Chaplain Griffin and John Ortmann presented some minor changes to the “thank-you” letter. Ortmann was also instructed to make the change on the website regarding the Post Office Box to 792 in lieu of the current incorrectly posted 972.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45PM

Approved _____
Paul Morkovsky - Chairman