



Highgate Newtown Community Association
People's Gospel Mission Hall Group
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Minutes of Meeting held at 66 Goddard Place, London N19 5GS
on Monday 25th February 2019 from 2.30pm to 3.35pm

Present: Gaye Mahoney, Mary Cane, Mary Fee, Michael Ellman, Sally Donati, Tamar Swade, Thanos Morphitis.

Minutes of Previous Meeting: An initial meeting was held to constitute this group (prior to Camden Council's Planning Meeting where HNCC was on the agenda), appointing MaryC, MaryF, Michael and Sally as Trustees: <http://hncc.co.uk/wp/2019/02/14/meeting-14th-february-2019/>

DISCUSSION

Thanos explained that despite the Hall's status of an Asset of Community Value (ACV), achieved by sufficient letters having been submitted, and announced at Camden's planning meeting on Thursday 14th February 2019, where a strong case had been made for its preservation, this did not prevent it being converted into two houses as in the redevelopment plan which had been approved - because it was deemed that the facilities it provides were being replicated in the new building: <http://hncc.co.uk/wp/2019/02/17/notes-of-planning-committee-meeting-14th-february-2019/>

In discussing this point it emerged that saving the Hall all rests on whether Camden is prepared to hold on to the property conversion and sale. Luke Joyce is responsible for implementing the scheme, there would be two contracts, one for demolition, one for construction. There is always the risk that they do one not the other, which causes a hiatus. They would need to make a political decision whether the council is going to give this group time to raise the money. It's a choice – they have planning permission, the only right would be that the building is put up for sale you can trigger a moratorium, and would have six weeks to put in an offer, but they are not obliged to put it up for sale before doing the planned conversion to the two town houses.

With reference to the damage already done to the wall of the property by the installation of brackets for punch bags, if the developers anticipate that the conversion will go ahead they will not be concerned about damage to the walls or floor, because even if they keep the main structure in place, they would be stripping back to the brickwork and installing new floors. Worse still, we needed to make sure that bulldozers would not inadvertently destroy the Hall – it had been known to happen.

Thanos suggested writing to Luke Joyce, but copying in senior people, there are people who want the scheme to go ahead, then local councillors who are keen to support local people and should press them to give us enough time. NB Demolition is the first part of the contract, they will be going out to tender, which would take a couple of months, during which time the FYA may be continuing to occupy the building, and the boxing classes may be part of that. Demolition will take some time, so it will be at least 6 months before they start building. Converting the Hall will be towards the end particularly as the builders will be using it as a base. So that could be 18 months away. This needs political will and officer will, but we can say it will take at least a year. Regarding **Costs**, the question was raised if will it cost any more to leave the houses until the end. Question is what the value of the property is. If the valuation is based on planning permission to develop the property for housing it would be more than if it's kept in its present form. There would

be building costs, which would be covered by the eventual sale, hopefully the £1.5m quoted is a net cost. There will be a period of rough estimates then the valuation will sharpen up. He felt there should be a role for Councillors to be part of the discussion.

According to **Section 106**, the developer has to give the Council a certain amount of money for community development in the area – we need to look up how much. The redevelopment scheme is showing a profit at the moment but if it looks profitable will they might put something towards preserving the Hall. From various conversations with the Centre Manager and the Chair of Trustees, it was clear that HNCC Trustees are not interested in supporting preservation of the Hall – they don't want the competition, but the hope was that if we look as if our campaign looks like it's going somewhere they would want to be working in tandem with it – establishing a spirit of partnership.

On **Ownership**, in recent years the site has belonged to Camden, HNCC have always been tenants, they ran the youth club but handed it over to the council due to lack of staff. Gaye wondered if there's a covenant on the building. In the case of the Library, Thanos said that they did find there was a covenant, but in this case have not so far been able to find anything. Michael would try the Land Registry. Tamar suggested asking the Coutts family, Michael thought they might have a PR person, and Sally would look on Coutts website: <https://www.coutts.com/about/our-history.html>. Thanos said that although the land was given by Coutts, as it was a church hall used by a particular congregation by a particular church, they may have sold it to the Council.

ACTION

1. However, on the practicalities of the campaign, Thanos agreed to draft a **Letter to Luke Joyce**, which Sally would email on behalf of the Group, copying in key individuals, including Keir Starmer, MP. This would cover the above points and also express concern about the state of the Hall, where we had seen the brackets for the punch bags damaging the plaster, and with contractors going in, and using it as a base, asking if they could protect the fabric of the walls and floor so that they could hand it back in its current, rather than a damaged state. See copy of letter appended.
2. Michael suggested opening a **Bank Account** for the group, and would initially enquire from the Coop Bank as he thought they would provide a free account. Signatories would be: Sally, MaryC, MaryF, Michael. MaryC suggested transferring a small balance of about £50 from the account of a previous group who organised 55+ classes let by Sarah Harrison. The whole question of funding remained to be explored, and MaryF would try to find out about crowd funding,
3. **Membership and Trustees.** MaryF had kept a record of the membership of the group from its initial meeting, and proposed that as allowed in the constitution, Gaye and Tamar, be co-opted as Trustees and co-signatories. Tamar expressed misgivings about these formalities, but in discussion, Sally and Thanos explained that the Trustees have a coordinating role, individual people can focus on the tasks they are able to do, but when it comes to financial responsibility, the trustees have to take responsibility. This reassured Tamar, and both she and Gaye agreed to be co-opted as Trustees. The constitution also required roles to be established, which seemed to be: Chair (Sally), Treasurer (Michael), Secretary (MaryF).
4. **Access to the Hall:** Tamar had emailed Anna Wright about the possibility of having keys to show people round – and having meetings with a wider group of people to gain support for the campaign, and ensuring that it was not damaged (or accidentally knocked down). With the site closed we would need access from Winscombe Street. This is a delicate negotiation, which Tamar would pursue, and ask for help if needed. She had forwarded the relevant emails to those present.
5. **Minutes:** MaryF had been making notes, and will send draft minutes to all those present.

Application for the Community to Retain the People's Gospel Mission Hall, Winscombe Street as an Asset of Community Value

Monday, February 25th, 11:18pm:

From Sally Donati to: Luke.Joyce@camden.gov.uk, CC gavin.haynes@camden.gov.uk, anna.wright@camden.gov.uk, sian.berry@camden.gov.uk, oliver.lewis@camden.gov.uk, georgia.gould@camden.gov.uk, danny.beales@camden.gov.uk, keir.starmer.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Mr Joyce

I am writing to you on behalf of the Save the Gospel Mission Hall Group regarding the Council's plans to convert the People's Gospel Mission Hall in Winscombe Street into two town houses.

As you know, it was confirmed at the Planning Committee meeting on 14th February that the Council has designated the Mission Hall as an Asset of Community Value. We are aware that this designation does not, of itself, ensure that the Mission Hall will be preserved in its current form. Further, that the Council has the relevant planning permission and could proceed with its plans to convert the Mission Hall to housing without allowing the community the opportunity to raise the necessary funds to retain it.

We hope that this will not be the case and now wish to formally request that the Council provides the community with the opportunity to retain the Mission Hall. We understand that the building is not being put up for sale in its current form so the 6 month period for the community to bid for the property would not apply. However, should the Council agree to this proposal, we would request as much time as possible to raise the necessary funds to retain the Hall. We would ask that the timetable for the overall development allows for the conversion of the Mission Hall to be undertaken as late as possible i.e. towards the end of the relevant contract period thus allowing the maximum time for the community to raise the necessary funds.

We hope that the Council will agree to this proposal and, if successful, we would look forward to discussing the estimated 'value' of the Mission Hall with you in order to inform our fundraising effort.

One other point we would wish to raise with you is that there appears to be some significant damage being done to the walls and floor of the Mission Hall at present due to the current activities. We hope that the knowledge that the Mission Hall is part of a redevelopment plan is not leading to unnecessary damage to the building as is. We hope you will be able to raise this concern with the current users as our efforts will not be helped if the building is allowed to move into disrepair.

We look forward to hearing from you at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Sally Donati