

Council of Conferences Report 2019

Fall Meeting, Oct. 13, 2018

South Church

292 State Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801

Meeting was called to order at 10:30 am by Bob Clay, appointed to facilitate by Board of Directors. Bob serves as the business manager for Lifespan Religious Education Conference and is a member of Star Island Corporation. 17 delegates and friends in attendance, including Joe Watts and Peter Squires.

Joe Watts gave a summary for the 2018 season. The 2018 overall was great with lots of changes but keeping the same spirit. Ongoing projects have included updating spaces in Oceanic Hotel, including painting and carpet in halls, structural improvements in tower section including the lobby store and the new propane fireplace, bathroom access in Lawrence, new storage sheds at the dock in Portsmouth, the Shack renovations including new room interiors with storage, expanded deck facing west and bathrooms. A new pump station was installed because the old one was damaged during a storm in March 2018. It was funded from grants from UUA and UCC. There are ongoing improvements in accessibility, including the chapel path extended to Newton, chairs with arms available in the dining hall, canes in lobby, railings in multiple locations. The Green Gosport Initiative is ongoing with the solar array and system, chickens, and composting.

Financial updates: permanent endowment is strong. We lost 250-300 bed nights in September because the weather prevented travel to and from the Island. Several conferences were full with bed nights in 2018 were just over 20,000 (including Pel guests) compared to 17,800 in 2011. The island evaluations received from conferees were up 17% from 2017, 97% rated Pels interactions as excellent/good, 93% rated island as good value (increase 1%), 98% rated their overall experience as excellent/good.

Staffing: Ally Miner is now the Community Relations Manager, Emma Ouellet is the new Administrative Assistant.

Marketing and Outreach are ongoing with TV, advertising in printed materials, and community presentations. SIC is working collaboratively with selected conferences, forming joint marketing teams for 2019 and beyond. A "family festival" week is being planned with SI United Church of Christ and Star Gathering II week, in an attempt to accommodate those people who cannot get into a conference of choice as well as people new to the island.

The Annual Fund is close to its goal. Room rates will most likely increase between 0-4% for next year and bed night goal should be around 20,500. SIC is asking all present to promote working end-of-season. SIC continues to focus on Pelican compensation, including wages, housing, food service and activities/community.

Meetings were held during most conferences on the alcohol safety and use. Details of any policy changes will be presented at the chairs and registrars meeting in January.

Annual Fund volunteers are needed for every conference and greatly appreciated for work done. The Brookfield/Rutledge Marine Lab project is more involved due to extensive structural deterioration. The goal is to retain some parts for historical record. This, along with the new waste water treatment project, must be completed by the start of the 2019 season. The new treatment plant will significantly reduce

energy consumption on-island with the goal for substantial reuse of treated effluent by 2020. This is a pilot program for NH and is the first of its type in New England.

Starry Night: November 17, 2018, Silent auction/fund-raising event at the Discover Portsmouth Center. Dr. Erik Cordes, deep-sea ecologist and professor at Temple University, SIC member, will be speaking about the recent discovery of a deep-sea coral reef off South Carolina's coast.

Beloved Community Project is ongoing with a focus on anti-racism and becoming a more welcoming community. Training was given to all island staff. SIC hosted a group of 10 theologians to focus on this topic and a brochure will be made.

Peter Squires lead a discussion of fundraising for capital projects. The current projects include the new wastewater treatment plant and the Brookfield/Rutledge Marine Lab renovation. It is his hope that contributions to capital projects provide the conferee a sense of ownership of Star.

Joe Watts, explained the process for setting bed nights/conference filling goals. SIC uses historical data to help determine conference fill goals (#of people registering) for conferences. A full conference is easy: 280 (sometimes more); for smaller conferences, the number is a prediction of what could be reached, and all conferences sharing the island must be considered. All this is stated in the letter of understanding the conference leadership receives each winter, and if a conference would like to discuss its goal prior to it being finalized, it is encouraged to reach out to SIC. For smaller conferences, last minute registration can be a challenge-an attempt is made to set goals high and then fill in with retreaters. It helps now that registration is online but we still need to urge all to register early.

Spring Meeting, May 4, 2019
First Congregational Church of Holliston
725 Washington Street, Holliston, MA 01746

Roll call and introduction of Delegates

Joe Watts greeted the Council of Conferences and gave a short preview of the Star Island season. He stated that people are "Happy". He wants everyone to encourage and promote End of Season employment and volunteering. There are 2 new conferences for the 2019 season: Star Union occurring during IRIS and Family Festival during Star Gathering II. Joe gave an update regarding the Green Gosport Initiative (the Island's sustainability program), the Beloved Community Project (the SIC's work to make a more inclusive and intentional community-a brochure was published and distributed), and SEA Star (the Island's educational programming for elementary and middle school classes and service projects for high school and recreational groups) Joe stressed again and again the difference and impact Star is making in our larger community.

Discussion: What is the purpose and future of the Council of Conferences?

- To share ideas and best practices among the various conferences that meet on Star Island;
- To provide advice to the Star Island Board, when requested;
- To study issues and make recommendations to the full Star Island Board at their request;
- To have members that are receptive and open to ideas, have perspective and vision, are familiar with the Star Island, can give the necessary time, and think in terms of Star Island citizenship.

Possible future topics may include:

1. Physical accessibility - improvements the island has made, other improvements needed, what disability issues have not been addressed?
2. Engaging young adults - what is working for your conferences, what activities are well attended, new ideas?
3. Outreach to communities to drive attendance to conferences - social media, mailings, other ideas?

The last order of business was the election of Board Members.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Gresser