

LIAISON MEETING BETWEEN PROPERTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
AND RETENTION TEAM

Minutes of liaison meeting held at 10.00 a.m. on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2008 in the Provincial Masonic Hall, 15 Rosemary Street Belfast.

Present

V.W. Brother J. Dickson

R.W. Brother J.L.F. Frazer

W. Brother B. Hood

W. Brother R. Wilson

Also in attendance V.W. Brother I. Gillespie (as note taker)

Apology

R.W. Brother J. Watson (who was invited by Provincial Grand Master to attend)

V.W. Brother Dickson welcomed and thanked everyone for attending and trusted we would have a useful meeting.

V.W. Brother Dickson had prepared a working agenda to assist in discussion.

The meeting was held at the request of R.W. Brother J.L. Frazer in his role as Chairman of the Provincial Grand Lodge Property Advisory Committee.

V.W. Brother Dickson presented a draft letter copy of which was largely as the Retention Team had issued to Provincial Grand Lodge but with two additional paragraphs. All agreed 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph was satisfactory although after discussion it was agreed the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph would be reworded as W. Brother Hood objected to the word acquisition stating brethren would read that as "sale". Retention Team to get a copy of the new agreed letter for their perusal before the letter is posted to Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate, and the Retention Team to receive confirmation when this letter has been posted.

R.W. Brother Frazer passed copies of the Title deeds to the Retention Team promising a further map to accompany it when it came to hand. R.W. Brother Frazer advised that in his opinion there was no need for Title deeds unless we sell and could probably get Title deeds organized in 12 months. W. Brother Wilson asked for a confirmed date when we could expect these. R.W. Brother Frazer to appraise.

Brother R Wilson advised that the Retention Team had been asked by the PGLBoGP to report directly to them.

All agreed on the procedures for presentation of options with R.W. Brother Frazer adding that at Board of General Purposes he would report on the Property Advisory Committee and then hand over to the Retention Team.

R.W. Brother Frazer gave answers to each of the questions (1-13) in the Retention Team's requirements dated 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

- 1 Confirmed the office size as existing with the added facility of a private office.

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- 2 Confirmed no requirement for a kitchen just tea making facilities.
- 3 Suggested Stanley room for Provincial Grand Master's office and V.W. Brother Dickson added that Shower/toilet facilities would be useful for the PGM's busy schedule.
- 4 Commented on storage and added that the records (minute books etc.) of Lodges who had closed should be sent to Molesworth Street, Dublin. Lodges still operating could have their records returned to them (or forwarded to Dublin). Any other items should be sorted and disposed of. Not a lot of further storage required, probably 3<sup>rd</sup> floor would suffice for Provincial Grand Lodge requirements (travelling trunk etc.).
- 5 Rt Wor Bro Frazer said we were not closing the hall and had commented same to J Lynch of DGRAC
- 6 Two rooms would be required for preparation for Provincial Grand Lodge meetings. W. Brother Wilson indicated that DGRAC are housed in Arthur Square as long as was required and R.W. Brother Frazer suggested that all disciplines could use Provincial Grand Lodge room whilst the hall remained open and he had conveyed this to DGRAC.
- 7 The museum was largely in the hands of R.W. Brother J.O. Dunlop but the present size would probably suffice, possibly the Roselands room. Regarding air conditioning the expense may not be justified. R.W. Brother J.O. Dunlop was invited to attend the Property Advisory Committee meetings.
- 8 R.W. Brother Frazer didn't think that Provincial Grand Lodge room lends itself for other uses and there has been little evidence of demand, having only been used a couple of times in the past number of years, he also expressed concerns about security if outside use was involved.
- 9 R.W. Brother Frazer again expressed concerns about security if museum items were in Provincial Grand Lodge room and thought these were better displayed in the Museum.
- 10 The number of meetings currently in the Provincial Grand Lodge Room were about twenty-five (including 2 PGL, 4 BoP, 9 CoI, 2 DGRAC, 1 Prince Masons)
- 11 R.W. Brother Frazer enquired of the Retention Team what their vision was for the future. W. Brother Hood agreed that with the information now received the Retention Team could move forward with their ideas,
- 12 As the existing boiler house may no longer be available then gas may be the preferable option.

V.W. Brother Dickson suggested that the Retention Team should now be able to put forward their ideas and W. Brother Hood indicated that they could now have discussions with the developer.

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R.W. BROTHER FRAZER EXPLAINED THAT THE FOREGOING VIEWS WERE HIS OWN PERSONAL VIEWS AS THE PROPERTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE HAD NOT HELD A MEETING BUT WAS SURE THEY WOULD ENDORSE THESE VIEWS AT THEIR NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR 1<sup>ST</sup> JULY.

R.W. Brother Frazer went on to read from a set of questions which the Retention Team had not sighted but since three were on the agenda these were answered and it was agreed that the Retention Team be forwarded the list of questions and they would reply in due course.

- Were we aware of the extent of demolition to the building proposed? W. Brother Hood answered by stating at this early stage we were not but as two international architect's, one from Norway and one from Manchester were involved, answers should be forthcoming. W. Brother Hood further asked for copies of the Right Of Way to the church car park and costs for loss of car park rental yield therefrom stating he may indeed be suggesting we enlarge our building in other areas. R.W. Brother Frazer agreed to provide same.
- Were we aware of street levels? W. Brother Hood advised he had sought OS maps but could not engage in any degree of accuracy on this subject suffice to say that we may look at entrance off the shopping centre as an alternative, nothing was in concrete.
- R.W. Brother Frazer sought if we knew of the street was private or public as he had concerns if it was private. W. Brother Hood advised we did not know but from what he saw, the street dimension was similar to Rosemary Street and it was unlikely the DOE would permit lands / property to be vested yet hand it over to a developer rather they would adopt it to DOE property and given the land mass between Royal Avenue and North Street it was in his opinion too great to avoid having another street serving this area.

R.W. Brother Frazer explained the Property Advisory Committee was set up following previous failure to sell, and that the Provincial Grand Master had chaired this committee up to 2006. He expanded on the original membership of the committee as T Coulter banker (who has tendered resignation given his position in Grand Council), Brian Canavan QS, A Steele Agent, B McCann Solicitor, D McClean Accountant, A Morrow Banker (who had retired once becoming asst treasurer) R.W. Brother Frazer also stated that it was likely that the membership of this committee could change in the near future because of the personal circumstances of some members.

R.W. Brother Frazer stated that if Property Advisory Committee had known about Ewarts new scheme they would have brought it to the attention of the BGP. The Retention Team confirmed W. Brother Alan Steele stated during their meeting prior to 12<sup>th</sup> May Board of General Purposes he had advanced viewing of model before public release. R.W. Brother Frazer advised he couldn't recall that and stated he was not aware of the street until notification by the Retention Team. W. Brother Wilson stated it was incredulous W. Brother Steele didn't know. W. Brother Wilson said he had hoped the Property Advisory Committee would have adopted it at an early opportunity prior to 12<sup>th</sup> May.

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R.W. Brother Frazer advised that the break-in and fire caused an increase in insurance premium, V.W. Brother Dickson announced this was now below £9K per annum.

R.W. Brother Frazer stated in answer to a question from W. Brother Wilson he was using and the Retention Team should use 2005 figures which he now accepted needed reworked. When asked what would have happened if the building were sold on 12<sup>th</sup> May, he replied it would have been brought back to Board of General Purposes later to agree where and when / cost etc to relocate. He confirmed no work had been done on that but agreed to assist V.W. Brother Murphy (treasurer) with speculative figures. V.W. Brother Dickson agreed that the Provincial Grand Treasurer would assist with any figures and projected costs.

R.W. Brother Frazer clarified the issue surrounding rates, historically the hall had been one rate, and then changed to 3 rates, Masonic, club and kitchen. W. Brother Wilson stated rates should have been applied to club footprint only the other areas being exempt. R.W. Brother Frazer advised that he has currently applied to the rating office to have the hall all under one rate but also advising he had sought exemption based upon historic monuments of buildings legislation.

The Retention Team were shown a plan with a hatched area covering the annex area Provincial Grand Master's suite and asked if they agreed this represented an area of demolition. W. Brother Hood agreed in part that it displayed an area with current plans that had the intention of some to be demolished but had no firm details as he still awaited ordinance survey plans which he had requested.

W. Brother Wilson enquired why R.W. Brother Frazer had met with Ewarts. R.W. Brother Frazer stated he knew Acheson well enough to ring him personally and arrange a meeting. He advised the Property Advisory Committee had been charged with selling the hall but he was happy with Provincial Grand Master's decision the Retention Team now take this forward. R.W. Brother Frazer advised that Nick Deeney was the previous person in charge of the former Dungloe Ewarts offer but he was familiar enough with the others. W. Brother Wilson said that Ewarts had been advised of the protocol with the Retention Team. W. Brother Wilson asked for all previous correspondence between Provincial Grand Lodge and Ewarts in the former offer. W. Brother Hood supported this as he sought it to assist him in composing his letters and couching his language in a more substantive way which agents would find more familiar. V.W. Brother Dickson agreed to this suggestion and R.W. Brother Frazer said he would do his best but didn't know what now existed on that subject adding since Mrs. Rodgers left, things were more difficult to find.

W. Brother Wilson asked for confirmation from R.W. Brother Frazer that it remained his and the Property Advisory Committee's opinion that the bidders were not part of the William Ewarts team or agent for it. R.W. Brother Frazer said this was a matter best suited to W. Brother Steele but as far as he could ascertain W. Brother Steele felt they were not acting for Ewarts as he knew them. R.W. Brother Frazer further advised that he and W. Brother Steele knew the bidders although the Property Advisory Committee, for reasons of commercial sensitivity did not. W. Brother Wilson suggested it would be wise to keep all bidders aware of

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the present situation as they may remain interested. R.W. Brother Frazer declined insisting only on the two who had made an offer. W. Brother Hood thought there was merit going back to all bidders because of new developments and advised he would feel more comfortable knowing who all bidders were given as he did not wish to inadvertently approach them, making Property Advisory Committee / Retention Team look incompetent. R.W. Brother Frazer undertook to ask W. Brother Steele. R.W. Brother Frazer suggested that the Property Advisory Committee may decide the property be taken off the market, W. Brother Hood agreed stating there was little further point in accumulating further costs for agents when we were unsure what to market.

V.W. Brother Dickson mentioned the gazette and R.W. Brother J.O. Dunlop. W. Brother Hood advised he had sent R.W. Brother J.O. Dunlop some articles suitable for publishing in the Gazette and given the importance of the matter the Retention Team expected an announcement in the Gazette. W. Brother Hood further expanded that as all secretaries got the announcement from Provincial Grand Lodge, this didn't mean all brethren knew the extent of it. A clear picture and presentation in the gazette would help all parties.

V.W. Brother Dickson closed the meeting following everyone's' agreement that it had been a worthwhile exercise and further meetings of this nature would assist when necessary.

V.W. Brother Dickson before leaving gave the Retention Team copies of Provincial Grand Lodge accounts stating he was happy for any request for information from V.W. Brother Murphy to be sent to V.W. Brother Gillespie.

*Agreed as a true record.*

*Rownie  
Richard  
J.O.*

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*Rownie  
Richard*



*LM 19/6/08 JS.*