

Minute on a Fund for Returning Citizens Support for Patapsco Friends Meeting

A Fund for Returning Citizens Support is established as part of the General Budget.

The Returning Citizens Support Fund Committee is appointed to oversee disbursements from this fund to benefit former members of the South Mountain Fellowship, a group of prisoners who identify as Quaker and met at the Maryland Correctional Institute in Hagerstown.

It is expected that these limited funds will help to address immediate needs as people transition to their communities, such as purchasing bus passes or buying urgently needed clothing. Members of Patapsco Friends Meeting who are actively engaged in supporting former South Mountain Fellowship members may ask the Committee in advance for funds or may submit receipts to the Clerk of the Committee and request reimbursement. Alternatively, members may submit receipts and ask that they be credited as in-kind donations for tax purposes.

It is understood that needs for housing or health care, for example, will far exceed the meeting's resources, but the meeting may be able to help meet certain needs that are not addressed by other agencies that provide assistance. All those who work with returning citizens will be asked to be careful not to raise these citizens' expectations for financial support.

The fund will be budgeted at \$200 and will also accept contributions to meet the needs of returning citizens, which in some years may exceed that amount. Because this is a new activity, the fund is being established for a 2-year period, after which the committee and ministry participants will assess its utility and report to the meeting on whether or not it should be continued.

Responsibilities of the Returning Citizens Support Fund Committee:

Any two members of the Returning Citizens Support Fund Committee have the authority to disperse funds as requested by members of the meeting. If needs are identified that exceed the funding available but that the committee feels are appropriate for the meeting to address – for example, a short-term need for sober housing or a training program likely to lead to employment – the committee will publicize the need to the meeting community and request contributions dedicated to meeting that need.

Repayment of disbursements from the fund:

Typically, disbursements made from the fund are not expected to be repaid. However, it is possible that some needs may be met in the form of non-interest bearing loans (for example, a loan for an education or training expense that it is reasonable to expect can be repaid). If this is the case, after a disbursement has been made, it shall be the responsibility of the committee and the person requesting aid to establish a plan for repayment, as appropriate. If it is appropriate to have a repayment plan, the plan should be one that the returning citizen can in good faith agree to. Necessary and affordable aid should not be dependent on the likelihood of repayment.

Committee Members:

The committee shall have at least three members who are regular attenders at Patapsco Friends Meeting and who have participated in the meeting's prison ministry. Two members shall be appointed by the nominating committee in consultation with the prison ministry coordinator. One member shall be the Treasurer of the Meeting. The term shall be for 2 years.

After approval by the Meeting of the members of the committee, it will meet to select a clerk, review its purpose, and determine any other necessary business. All other meetings will be called on an as-needed basis.

The Committee shall report the amount of aid given and the number of people who have received aid to the Business Meeting at least once a year.