

**The First Unitarian Society in Newton
Annual Meeting Minutes
Sunday, June 7, 2015**

FUSN Moderator Bill Horne called the meeting to order at 12:37 pm. and asked all members to sign in.

Rev. Erin Splaine led a moment of silence to open the meeting.

1. Minutes of the 2014 FUSN Annual Meeting were approved, after minor corrections: spelling of Eileen Kurkoski's name; deletion of clerk's italicized editorial remark.

Barbara Deck moved to approve. The motion was seconded. Passed unanimously.

2. Board Chair Bobbie Sproat addressed the meeting about the issues FUSN has faced this year, acknowledging the difficulties following the departure of the Assistant Minister. She asked that, as we move ahead into our next year together, we keep our core values of love, respect, justice, and beloved community at the center of everything we do: the way we treat each other, the way we make decisions, the way we welcome newcomers and each other, the way we approach our work in the larger world.

She then introduced the General Resolution on the warrant by setting it in the context of our 21-year-old initial certification as a Welcoming Congregation, and the vast changes since then in the world of LGBTQ and multicultural awareness and concerns. We are now called up on to renew that commitment, beginning with a thoughtful assessment of the knowledge, feelings, and needs of the entire congregation with respect to inclusion. We expect to have the support of UUA staff in the LGBTQ and Multicultural Programs in doing this work. As UUA's LGBTQ and Multicultural Programs Director, Annette Marquis told us quite emphatically, the renewal process following the assessment study will not be as useful or as meaningful if it can't include every member of FUSN in some capacity.

In moving that the Annual Meeting accept the following resolution, Bobbie said, the Board respectfully asks you today

- to support our plan as stated in the General Resolution on the Warrant,
- and to commit to healthy, open, and loving processes of engaging with each other, over the next year and into the future."

General Resolution submitted by the Board of Trustees:

We, the First Unitarian Society in Newton, have a long history of welcoming diversity in our midst. Having obtained certification by the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1994 as a Welcoming Congregation, we now believe it is time to renew our status and our commitment to inclusiveness. Accordingly, we urge the Board of Trustees and the Minister to repopulate our Welcoming Congregation Committee and charge it to pursue a congregation-wide

program of renewal of our knowledge, understanding, and dedication to be welcoming to all people, with guidance from the UUA's Welcoming Congregations program and staff.

Rev. Splaine commented on the process of moving forward with an Assessment Team. She mentioned that some individuals have expressed concern about the process of choosing the composition of the Team. The process is designed by representative(s) of the UUA. She also pointed out that numerous leadership positions have been done in a "quiet" way, including Lay Ministers, RE teachers, etc. She said she imagined the overall process will include a survey, small group meetings, FUSN committees' input, etc. She also pointed out that it is impossible to create a team that will represent *all* interest groups, whether issues of identity or otherwise.

Gail Smalley seconded the motion to approve the resolution.

Comments:

Judy Zacek spoke in support of resolution. She was part of the first planning group for a welcoming congregation, with Dennis Kennedy. She pointed out that several original members have moved or passed away. A lengthy UUA process was required to become officially certified as Welcoming. It was approved at an annual meeting. She said that rather than having a large group, a small planning group helped move the process forward. She said each member of the committee represents the congregation as a whole, rather than a particular point of view.

Carrie Vanderlaan said she attended the last two meetings discussing the LGBTQ issue. She went as a person with questions and does not take a stand. She has love and appreciation for all involved, including the group and the Board. She has questions about the Assessment Team and Coordinating Committee vs. Welcoming Congregation.

Marc Leicester moved to amend the proposed general resolution.

Original: "...Accordingly, we *urge*..."

Proposal: "Accordingly, we *charge* the Board of Trustees and the Minister with reactivating our Welcoming Congregation Committee. The Board of Trustees shall appoint the chair or co-chairs, and the committee shall be **open to all interested members of the congregation**. The committee shall pursue a congregation-wide program of renewal of our knowledge, understanding, and dedication to being welcoming to all people, with guidance from the UUA's Welcoming Congregations program and staff."

Margaret Zaleski seconded amendment.

Marc gave his reasons for the suggested changes. He wasn't aware there was an Assessment Team [ATeam] and Coordinating Committee [CC]. He was pleased, though, and is looking forward to growing and renewing FUSN as a Welcoming Congregation. He feels inclusiveness is essential. The resolution in the meeting warrant does not specify how many individuals would be on the CC. He feels all who want to should be able to participate as full members. He acknowledges concerns about the size of the committee. His amendment makes clear members

can't be denied the opportunity to be involved, due to a limit on the number of committee members. Challenges concerning the number of members can be handled by effective leadership and confidence in the process.

Marc quoted the UUA website:

A team should represent the diverse composition of the community, including personal identities, culture, race, etc. At least one youth should be included if possible. It is important not to expect lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer to provide all energy in leading the program. It is expected there will be LGBTQ members and supporters.

Rev. Splaine commented. That so many want to be involved is wonderful and she appreciates Marc's efforts. The numbers were provided by the UUA's Annette Marquis -- LGBTQ and Multicultural Programs Director: the ATeam is expected to be 5-6 members and the Coordinating Committee would have up to 10 members.

Jimmy Frances spoke in favor of the amendment to the resolution. Committees are selected by the BOT. The proposal is about the Welcoming Congregation Committee, not the ATeam or CC.

Bobbie said that the language chosen for the warrant and the resolution was written before they knew certain aspects of the UUA process, which include an ATeam and CC. The intention is to have a process that works.

Linda Morrison said it would be okay to have a large committee, which will then choose a steering committee. So we can have both wide involvement and an efficient process.

Jeanne Chaisson said FUSN has been a Welcoming Congregation for a long time, but no one is serving on the committee. Now it is surprising that so many people want to be on such a committee. She pointed out how difficult it can be to schedule meetings that all can attend and that an unwieldy size is unworkable. She favors the original motion.

Pat Rohan said he is opposed to the amendment. The BOT came up with the resolution after a great deal of work, and the members should respect and defer to what the leaders have done. He sees the proposal as an effort to drop the minister out of the selection process.

Ron Margolin asked, if we have an ATeam and a CC, what is the role of the Welcoming Congregation Committee itself? He says that more than 10-12 members deters getting things accomplished, although broad representation is necessary.

Lynn Holbein called the question. Seconded. A $\frac{2}{3}$ vote is required to call the question. A formal count of the votes was requested. In favor of calling the question: 108; opposed: 22. Passed. The vote on on Marc's amendment was then taken. In favor: 27. Opposed: 102.

Discussion returned to the main resolution.

Thom Theara proposed an addition to the end of BOT resolution: All meetings of the Welcoming Congregation Committee shall be announced in advance, shall be open to FUSN members to attend, and any minutes shall be made publicly available.

Barney Freiberg-Dale asked if such provision was already in place.

Thom said the purpose of the amendment is to maintain and promote openness at FUSN. There is concern at FUSN about things being done “in secret.” This amendment addresses that.

Louis Atamian expressed concern regarding the amendment. Does “attend” mean attendees would merely observe or also participate?

Jacki Rohan: Points out the current difficulty of finding someone willing to take on the slot as Clerk for FUSN and that taking minutes in small meetings is unrealistic.

Jon Lilienfeld pointed out that Board meetings are open. Observers are welcome but may not participate.

Bob MacWilliams asked what is the intent of Thom’s amendment on attendance?

Thom said it applies to the Welcoming Congregation Committee, since the ATeam and CC are new terms.

John Brennan: If members can attend the Welcoming Congregation meetings, if they are open for comments, they would never get through an agenda. Some boards allow a designated time slot for comments.

Barney Freiberg-Dale called the question. 93 voted in favor; 31 opposed.

A vote was then taken on Thom’s amendment: 87 for; 46 against. Passed.

Discussion returned once more to the main motion.

Judy Zacek moved to eliminate “repopulate our Welcoming Congregation Committee” from the original resolution and replace the second sentence of the resolution with the following:

Accordingly, we urge the Board of Trustees and the Minister to form an Assessment Team and Coordinating Committee and charge them to pursue a congregation-wide program of reactivation of our knowledge, understanding, and dedication to be welcoming to all people, with guidance from the UUA’s Welcoming Congregations program and staff.

Peter Farago seconded.

Judy says her intent is clarification. There is confusion regarding the new terms and Welcoming Congregation Committee.

Neil MacGaffey thought Judy's amendment would be moot if a Welcoming Congregation Committee would follow a UUA-defined process, that involved an "Assessment Team" and a separate group called a "Coordinating Committee."

Jim Frances asked if Judy's amendment changes the previously passed amendment. The moderator states that it does not.

Tim Wells said he understands "Welcoming Congregation" to be technical language regarding what the UUA has done and which is limited to sexual minorities. He wants to have a broader meaning of "welcoming."

Rev. Splaine said the process will strengthen and gird our work in multicultural ministry. The original UUA term was "gay and lesbian affairs." What is now called "the Multicultural Growth & Witness staff group" of the UUA identifies oppression and injustice and oversees programming to combat them.

Tim said "culture and race" means "ethnicity" in his mind. He said there is a wider variety of people to be included. He wants no specific designations and wants everybody included. He said "welcoming congregation" would be okay, if we could be more explicit and expansive about what that congregation encompasses. Rev. Splaine said that is the intent. Tim said that was satisfactory.

Nancy Stanton agreed and said that individuals with physical and mental disabilities should continue to be welcome. She wants to keep this as part of the covenant language in the services.

Jules Delamar wondered what the specific charges would be for the ATeam and CC. Does it include several issues and projects.

Rev. Splaine said these kinds of questions are exactly the conversations we need to pursue through the process. It should be open and expanded. The process starts today. It can't be finished today.

Judy Zacek called the question concerning her amendment. Calling the question passed. Then Judy's amendment was voted on and passed.

Jimmy Frances said he wants this newly voted language to be included in the resolution. He said the Bylaws say committees are appointed by the BOT.

Thom Theara said to take the last sentence of his amendment and change it to the new language.

Unanimously passed.

Additional comments on main motion:

All in favor: The resolution, as amended, passed unanimously.

3. The Nominating Committee presented the 2015-2016 slate of officers and representatives for the positions set forth in the By-Laws.

Neil Macgaffey spoke for the Nominating Committee. He said that when the invitation went out for nominations, the Committee received only 2 self-nominations.

First Unitarian Society in Newton / Proposed Slate of Candidates for 2015/16

Terms are one-year unless otherwise noted.

Board of Trustees / 2 three-year terms: Brian Burba and Eric Haas

(joining Greg Dibasio, Cathy Morocco, Lesley Sneddon, and Bobbie Sproat)

BoT Youth Trustees: Julianna Lakomski and Becca Lozinsky

Clerk : *no nominee*

Assistant Clerk/Clerk of Council: Wendy Schwartz

Operations Council /

1 two-year term for replacement of member who stepped down: John Brennan

1 three-year term: Jeannie Chaisson

(joining Susan Bartlett, Laurel Farnsworth, and Andrea Kelley; treasurer also meets with Ops Council)

Moderator: Bill Horne

Board of Investment (1 three-year term): Urban Larson

(joining Peter Farago and Brian Hicks)

Treasurer: Judy Curby

Assistant Treasurers: Faith Kreider and Karen Lein

Delegates to the Mass Bay District: Jules Delamar, Jim Matthiesen, and Naomi Olson

Delegates to the UU Urban Ministry: Judy Friedman and Josie Greene

Delegate to the UU Service Committee: Karen Lein

A motion to accept the slate was made and seconded.

John Brennan nominated Josie Greene from the floor as a candidate for the BOT. Seconded.

Bill Horne asked for consent to divide the list, to separate adult members of BOT from all other nominations in the slate.

It was asked if Josie had consented to be nominated. Josie said she had.

Bill asked for each of the three nominees to make brief statements.

Brian Burba: Karen Burns had asked if he would be a BOT member. He said he knows his way around, knows the budget. His goal is to represent everybody, including those you agree with and those you don't. He is "totally up for it." He said he feels it's ok to disagree and that we have some big issues this year. This process of nomination is also ok. He is delighted about the new committee & support from UUA.

Josie Greene: She appreciates the concern that nomination from floor creates. It is critical to be able to express disagreement. It is also critical to set a boundary when hurt. Expressing disagreement is ok and expressing that you want leaders to do something differently is appropriate. We want those who serve to serve as bridge builders, which is why she agreed to be nominated when asked. She hopes we can listen better to one another. If elected, she will gladly work toward these goals to work toward diversity and inclusion, while staying in relation with one another.

Eric Haas: He found a place in FUSN he values. He uses his energies to contribute service. For example, next Saturday is the last trip to food bank this year...if anyone wants to join! He has a son with special needs and is grateful his son is accepted here. He, too, has been upset at the events of this year. He is concerned about vehement and divisive emails. It seems everyone's upset, but about something different, which means we need to listen to each other and to not be so involved in presenting own point of view, because it may have no relevance to the other person.

Eric asked if it would be possible to include all 3 nominees on the BOT. Bill said, we would have to amend the ByLaws.

Supporting statements:

Ellie Crocker-Morse spoke about being on the nominating committee this year. It was a great deal of work. They did a reasoned, in-depth process. She says all three are outstanding candidates. She wished the Nominating Committee had known sooner of the additional options. She also said a lot of volunteers do work that is taken for granted. She thanked the committee members and all those who serve as FUSN volunteers.

Bill Dusetz expressed thanks to Ellie for her service and asked for recognition for the full committee, which included Neil, Ellie, Bob MacWilliams, and Karen Burns. Applause.

John {Brennan?} said he wished the congregation could have had the list of nominees earlier.

Neil MacGaffey spoke to the lateness of the announcement of the slate. He said they had three empty slots the week before the meeting. Rather than put out an incomplete list with the warrant, they decided to fill as many positions as they could. He agreed it would be good to include bios as standard operating procedure.

Allan Hartman said FUSN has had contested elections in the past. It's been divisive. He wished there were a way so there wouldn't be a loser. He said he had proposed contested elections many years ago, but it didn't work out. He said he trusts the Nominating Committee. All three candidates are qualified and he sees no difference among them. He said he wants to be inclusive, including of whoever is not elected.

Karen Burns reminded people that the Nominating Committee received only 2 self-nominations at the outset. It wasn't possible to get people lined up early enough in advance to include bios. She thinks Josie is fabulous and hopes she'll run next year. She believes Josie has the best intentions, but is afraid her candidacy is being offered more as punitive than as healing. She asks for votes for the original slate.

Barney Freiberg-Dale has the highest regard for all three candidates. Whichever nominee doesn't get elected does not mean s/he is a loser. There are plenty of opportunities to serve.

Susan Timberlake had a question for Brian. To her recollection, he spoke after Megan's disclosure from the pulpit in opposition to her non-traditional life-style. "Do you feel your views on non-traditional people and family structures have moderated, or will you still leave if such a person is hired?"

Brian responded: In November, the first meeting was to share feelings about the situation, and the group was told there are "no right or wrong feelings." He was careful to make "I" statements. He is not crazy about having a polyamorous minister. If FUSN were to do that, it is not a place he would want to be. He says he feels it's ok to feel that way, to have that wish for the ministry. There should be room enough to have that disagreement. Also, this is now a past event.

Going forward, he thinks the new process would be excellent, vs. trying to change ByLaws. He may continue to disagree with people. He would still pause if he were on a ministerial search committee, if a candidate were polyamorous. Still, we can work it out.

Jacki Rohan quoted a recent Wayside Pulpit message. "If we all think alike, we are not thinking at all." She feels there is enough diversity on the board. She's voting for Brian and Eric because of the hard work of the Nom. Com.

Carolyn Mapes: She is against the nomination of Brian Burba because of his stance on the issue of polyamory.

Lisa Carbone: She is sad to see polarization about who's being nominated to the board. There's much appreciation for everything everyone does for this community. It is unfortunate to get into hurt feelings again. She wants to respect differences.

Judy Zacek called the question. Seconded. Passed.

Paper ballots were distributed for voting on the slate. Ballots were folded and put into boxes.

Bill asked for a motion for the clerk to issue a single ballot for approval for the rest of the slate of nominees. Allan moved. Seconded. Unanimous approval.

Ballots were carried out for counting.

4. Treasurer Karen Bottar presented the Fiscal Year 2015 - 2016 ("FY16") budget, which was recommended by the Board of Trustees. Karen highlighted a couple of items. The budget includes a full time Member Coordinator position. Also it requests a change from a 4.5% back to a 5% draw from the endowment.

Comments:

Judy Zacek asked about projected deficits and pointed out that actual deficits were actually much less. So why are such deficits included?

Karen said the challenge is around this year's pledge drive. It didn't raise enough funds to cover the budget. Hence, the projected deficit.

Bruce Henderson pointed out that there is a missing page. Also, he, too is concerned about projected deficits. He worked with Brian Gill to see what numbers would look like longer term. The result means FUSN needs to raise funds by 4% if it is going to meet needs. These are not precise figures, but a general forecast.

Karen said the BOT does get a long-range 5-year forecast earlier in the fiscal year.

Allan Hartman said the problem is with the pledge drive results.

Jud Leonard moved that the budget be approved. Motion was seconded, and the budget passed.

5. Committee Reports

A thank you was offered to Anne Hess-Mahan for being on Operations Council, which she is now leaving.

Bobbie Sproat thanked the Operations Council, the Board and all others who serve FUSN.

6. There was no other business

Bill Horne adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth Comstock,
Clerk

Wendy Schwartz,
Assistant Clerk
