

FUUSN Board of Trustees
Tuesday, October 10, 2017
Children's Chapel, 7:30 PM

Staff Erin Splaine, Minister Rowan VanNess, DLRE	Visitors Ted Hess-Mahan, Operations Barbara Bates
Board Catherine Morocco, Chair Eric Hass, Vice Chair - Absent Amalia Basch, Youth Brian Burba - Absent Josie Greene Chris Krebs Leah Lakowski, Youth Brooke Foucault Welles Clerk Kit Ryan	

Meeting Highlights

The Board identified ways to improve our communication with the congregation. To help prepare for the Finance Summit, the Board invited Barbara Bates to discuss FUUSN By-Laws and Policies related to the Board's financial role.

Invocation / Chalice Lighting/Reading Of The Board Covenant: 7:30pm

Staff Updates

Erin Splaine

- Dwight Golann, our Moderator, managed the Special Congregation meeting on October 1 well. He was clear that we are voting on the name change resolution and not voting on or discussing how we will spell and pronounce FUSN/FUUSN. Our difficult conversation training seems to have been effective.
- Ferry Beach registration was close to capacity. Vern Ellis has organized the retreat for 14 years. This year he had the assistance of Chris O'Donnell, who will take over the role. Attendance of young families has increased during Vern's leadership. This was the final year for which FUUSN has been guaranteed Columbus Day weekend for Ferry Beach. This year's retreat was a good opportunity for Erin to talk with people, listen, connect with congregants.
- Erin will be out of town next week for two days for the Ministers' Study Group which will include John Nichols, former FUSN interim and sabbatical minister. The topic is *My Age of Anxiety*, by Scott Stossel.
- We recently said good-bye to congregation member, David Svendsen, who died peacefully.

- Brooke reminded the group that Sunday is Paddy's Road Race, affecting roads and parking in the area. Sam will send out a notice to the list. Erin commented that Fran is running in the race.

Rowan VanNess

- The Board voted by email and again at the meeting to approve Dani Patrick as our next Youth Programs Coordinator. The Board is asked to note that Dani uses "they/their" pronouns. Dani will have their first office day Thursday, October 12. October 15th will be their first Sunday. Dani will be involved with Pizza & Principles and Coming of Age (COA).
- RE leaders are working on how to respond to all our Sunday school challenges, including special needs and inclusion. Staff members are problem solving and strategizing how to keep Religious Education (RE) inclusive and safe.
- The First Pizza & Principles event is coming up, designed as an intergenerational exploration and deepening of understanding of UU principles. Rowan hopes to get a good turnout.
- When Cathy noted that the 12-1:00 choir practice overlaps, Rowan offered that choir members could attend the earlier segment.

Procedural/Board Updates

- The Board voted unanimously to approve new member applications for Barbara Schmitt, Lynn Colangione, and Lauren Baskin.
- August minutes will be completed soon. Cathy and Eric are refining a new approach to sharing editing.
- At the Special Congregational Meeting on October 1, 111 members voted on the proposed change of the official name of our congregation to "the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Newton." Seventy-five members (67.54% of those attending) voted in favor of the resolution and 36 voted against it; the resolution was approved. Thirty-five congregants volunteered to represent FUUSN to the Newton/Brookline "cluster" of congregations working with the Refugee Immigration Ministry (RIM) to support families and individuals seeking asylum in the United States.
- Committee Chairs Meeting is scheduled for Saturdays, November 18 and March 10. All groups will send a representative and provide updates. Chris will represent the Board.
- The Board received "Thank you's" from Anne Watson Born for our gift certificate recognizing her ten years as choir director, Jacki Rohan and Allan Hartman for our support and nudging throughout the name change process, and Lynn Holbein for our active support of the RIM program.
- Mandy Beal's Ordination will be held on April 22nd. Mandy served as Youth Programs Coordinator three years ago. Erin commented that congregation ordains a minister. For FUUSN to take on this role, the Board needs to vote its approval. The chair of the ordination committee should meet with the Board to ask for Board sponsorship and discuss the estimated Board expenses (food, flowers, reception). A

Board member suggested that the ordination committee chair use the FUUSN List to inform the congregation.

- Board Covenant: Chris is drafting the new covenant based on work at the September 16 Board Retreat. He has been reviewing covenants received from other congregations and plans to send a draft by Sunday 15 October for the Board members to review. His criteria for the draft are that it evocative, directed to action, and congruent with UU principles.
- On Safe Congregations Brooke announced that Susan Bartlett and Jeannie Chaisson from the Operations Council have agreed to be on the Task Force. A next step is for Brooke and Erin to hold a planning meeting.
- On the Financial Summit, Erin plans to have agenda by Thursday. The Summit will hold lot of content and many ideas to think about. We need to balance the technical problems and solutions (What steps will support the Annual Budget Drive?) with the adaptive ones (Why do we do things? What are our values?) as we examine our financial concerns. Erin commented that money has a spiritual value in how it supports our activities, programs and plans. Chris hopes that we will frame stewardship more broadly, not just in terms of funds raised and managed, but how we tend to each other, how we instill gratitude, and plan for the future.
- Rowan asked how stewardship intersects with RE for adults, families, children? Cathy asked whether our Youth members can attend the Summit, or any portion. Amalia will be in Vermont, Leah may attend part if possible.

Generative

Discussion: How shall we communicate with the congregation? Brooke, Chris and all

Cathy commented that the Board has generated two ideas for communicating with the congregation: hold a covenant ceremony with the congregation as soon as we complete the covenant and hold a monthly drop-in conversation at coffee hour, with one or more Board members present to share our work and hear ideas. She invited the Board to generated more ideas.

Chris emphasized that communication with the congregation is central to having the congregation achieve their vision. Communication needs to be two-way--listening as well as telling. In talking with people at Coffee Hour he has heard the comments that Religious Education is not viewed as relevant to the congregation as a whole and that Board members are members of an "inner circle."

Members added several other suggestions and comments:

Thank individual members for special contributions.

Make Board minutes more accessible and visible. Post on the Business List?

Hold "Board office hours."

Hold one monthly Board meeting at an alternate time as a gesture to people who are unable to visit an evening meeting.

Use social media more fully, e.g. post Board meetings and goals and activities on one or more of the active FUUSN Facebook pages. Brooke agreed to do this update.

Conduct a "State of the Union" survey, not be just a "how are we doing" but an "appreciative inquiry" into what FUUSN members and friends find important and what we are doing well as a congregation.

Conduct "Town halls" with the congregation to foster communication.

Hold listening circles.

Have a Board member present at every pledge party.

As we communicate, we need to address not only what we are doing, but also why we are doing it. Include our values in our communications, and keep in mind both technical and adaptive questions.

The Board is opaque to the congregation. Clarify how the Board decides on priorities and how our priorities change over time.

Use the covenant ceremony as a venue for communicating our priorities.

Learn how people use and get information. Most of us use email and website announcements, yet we may not be reaching all of the congregation; for example, some older community members may not use these more high-tech media. Ask Fran about bulletin boards to post agendas, photographs of the Board and other leaders, including action shots. Erin is interested in transforming the hallway from Sanctuary to the Parish Hall to make it more welcoming and informative- ideas, activities, inspiration.

Strategic/Generative

Strategic/Generative

Legal and policy underpinnings of FUUSN's financial work: what should we know?

Barbara Bates and Josie Greene.

Josie and Barbara provided the Board via Dropbox more than ten governance and finance related documents over the past several weeks, both to prepare Board members for the [October 14th](#) Finance Summit and to provide further orientation on the By-laws and other underpinnings of the Board's role. Barbara also sent an email explaining that she is not a lawyer and this agenda item would NOT be covering legal anything. The handout showing the slides Barbara presented is available on request and will be archived.

Many of these documents represent work launched in 2008-2009 with the goal of transforming the Board so that it had time to focus on strategic issues by delegating many of its operational (day-to-day) responsibilities to an Operations Council. From that governance work, the Operations Council was formed to take charge of the day-to-day running of the society, and the Board's role was redefined as one of policy development and long-range visioning and planning.

Barbara invited members to share reactions to the set of documents and we heard:

"Congregational Priorities" is frequently mentioned and needs definition

The number of words is overwhelming

FUUSN has lot of parts. How do they work together?

The society is organized into a great many finance bodies.

Surprised at how many groups are involved in running FUUSN

RE is never mentioned.

Groups received a great deal of concrete direction in the policies.

Using a PowerPoint, Barbara discussed several big points with the Board. Without repeating the entire presentation, we include several of the points developed:

- Barbara reviewed the years of study that culminated in the present governance model and shared the objective the model had to meet. She emphasized that in 2009-10 former Boards used the Bylaws' statement of Purpose and Values as a proxy for the Congregational priorities they planned to develop. She also noted that a 2014 study reminded the Board that FUSN still lacked a real and compelling vision to guide its fundraising efforts.
- The Board needs to educate itself on external trends in church life and our larger society, as well as understanding the congregation's interests and wants.
- The Board's primary role is to channel what it learns into defining "Congregational Priorities" (what visionary endpoints, for whom, at what cost) so that these Congregational priorities (along with the limitations policies) can work as a focusing mechanism to align the efforts of the staff, the Ops Council, committees, and the entire congregation. Absent such priorities, the Board has a harder job in managing the tasks it has delegated to staff and volunteers.
- Congregational priorities need to include spiritual development.
- As the Board develops congregational priorities, it "transmits" them to the congregation.
- The Board needs to speak with one voice. No trustee can speak for the Board without a vote of the Board, not even the Chair.
- In communicating future directions, goals and vision, the Board has a role in identifying needed changes and promoting them in the Society. This is what is meant by "Generative" in the three aspects of the Board's governance role: fiduciary, strategic, and generative.
- The Trustees and Board of Investments each have a fiduciary role and serve as check and balance with one another. Tension can arise over the amount of independence the BOI and Board have from one another. How well does the Board communicate with the financial bodies to which it has delegated responsibility?
- The fiduciary role extends beyond finance: "...a fiduciary owes the duties of good faith and trust ... might be responsible for general well being..."
- The ultimate fiduciary responsibility lies with the Board.
- Unless the trustees are good at Dan Hotchkiss's top three tasks (delegating, controlling their own agenda, and partnering over priorities with the minister),

they will not be able to achieve the benefits designed to be achieved by the current governance model.

- Delegation includes oversight and accountability, bringing challenges of when and how much to question the recommendations of an expert to whom you have delegated a task. How can the Board improve its oversight role while avoiding micro-managing? In governance, what is the balance between micromanaging and taking a laissez-faire stance?
- The Board's priorities guide budget development.
- The Board's Congregational Priorities guide FUUSN's budget development. The Board's own priorities are not the same as the congregational priorities.
- The Board needs to understand the rationale for major budgetary categories, but doesn't need to quibble over line items since over 90% of the budget is staff and building oriented. It is not a particularly good use of Board time to manage committee line items.
- While the congregation has the authority to change Bylaws, the Board has the authority to develop and change policies.

The Trustees found the presentation to be provocative and a helpful start in understanding the Board's role in FUUSN's governance process.

Appreciations/Close 9:42PM.