

FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
December 10, 2013

Present:

Board: Charlie Watts, Strom Thacker, Ann Woodbury, Jonathan Reuman, Bobbie Sproat, Cathy Morocco, Maura Hess-Mahan, Michael Costello, Erin Splaine, Perry Montrose

Clerk: Lesley Sneddon

Guests: Jeannie Chaisson from Operations Council

Introductions and Check In

The Board members read the covenant and lit the candle. Bobbie Sproat provided the inspirational reading.

Approval of the Minutes

Strom moved that the November 12 minutes be accepted. They were approved unanimously. November minutes are posted, but Charlie suggested a mid-year message from the Board be put in the newsletter to strengthen communications, with a link to the minutes. Minutes are also posted on the bulletin board. **Bobbie and Charlie will draft a note to accompany posting of November minutes.**

New Members – none this month

Staff Reports

Perry reported a good lesson on the healthy babies program; the children working on the tree learned why they were collecting the presents and who they are for.

There was a successful bingo night last month.

COA class did a review of the year so far with highlights, including short videos of each candidate. Charlie provided the class pictures of the same class in fourth grade to integrate it with this mid-year review of their progress.

Plans for the Christmas Eve pageant are proceeding.

There is a gift drive for homebound FUSNites; let Perry know of others that should be on the list.

Perry attended a community meeting with different organizations in Newton regarding teen suicide prevention and mental health issues, focusing on prevention and education; Audrey Reuman also attended with Perry.

Perry invited youth members Michael and Maura to report on Youth Con planning. They reported that invitations have been extended to youth groups in the Mass Bay District, which comprises 55 congregations, to join the FUSN youth group at FUSN from Saturday overnight into Sunday morning, January 11-12. The theme of the conference is harmony (“Harmonicon”). There will be workshops, worship, and community building. Flyers and information on registration will be going out tomorrow. Erin and Bobbie noted the significance of this event, as it has been many years since a Con has been

hosted by FUSN The event is also one of the first to be organized in partnership with a new youth-oriented support team from the UUA and may be a model for future events.]

Erin expressed her appreciation for the congregation and staff, in particular, noting the success of the Holiday Fair as both a fundraiser and a great community-building event.

She noted that the staff will be very busy during the holiday season, and briefly reviewed the schedule. There will be three Christmas Eve services, and a Quaker style service on December 29. Matt Meyer will be back in January to do a drumming worship. Meghan arrives in Newton on Jan. 5; she'll be at the staff meeting that afternoon; then a potluck dinner that night.

Erin congratulated Perry on the success of the Thanksgiving intergenerational service.

There will be a human rights commission panel on civil rights on February 18 at the Newton Free Library; two ministers from Myrtle Baptist and Setti Warren will be on the panel. Erin will be the fourth panelist. This will provide FUSN an opportunity to make a bigger footprint in the community.

Office space report: Perry, Beth and Rebecca have been working with Laurel Farnsworth to reconfigure office space to accommodate Meghan. Beth's office will be reconfigured to accommodate Rebecca, and repainted next week. Meghan will move into what has been Rebecca's (and formerly Kristin's) office, which will also be repainted. Furniture will come after Meghan arrives, so she can participate in the choice. Erin discussed the problem of adding a new staff member with the limited parking in our small lot; they are working towards a solution. She also noted that the entire staff except for Fran parks elsewhere on Sundays, to allow folks with limited mobility easier access.

Events to welcome Meghan: on Jan. 12 Erin and Meghan will share the service, followed by cake at coffee hour, and an opportunity for quiet conversation with Meghan in the Alliance Room. Jan. 26 will be Meghan's first solo service. There will be a leadership potluck with Meghan at FUSN on Jan 21 or 23. Plans are to include the Board, Operations Council, RE Council, Social Action Council task leaders, Annual Budget Drive committee. Jon wrote about Meghan's impending arrival in the last newsletter. Bobbie and Erin also talked about preparing list-serve reminders about Megan's arrival.

Other notes

Charlie observed the impressive performance of Music Sunday and congratulated the musicians and choir.

Erin mentioned that the UUA is in the process of restating its pension plan, which will likely require a vote. Implications: minor structural changes about what employees can contribute; also alters the formula for fair compensation congregations. There will be a meeting of the Personnel Policy Committee on Friday morning to discuss this and other topics. Karen Davis will put together a summary for the Board, which will vote in February.

Fellowship Dinner update: Bobbie is still trying to recruit a chair for the dinner but has not yet succeeded. Bobbie reports that they are continuing to add potential recruits to the list.

Annual Budget Drive: Finance Committee and Operations Council are requesting the Board's priorities for the coming year. In preparation for discussion, Charlie prepared a draft of priorities, and noted that

the Board will need to go into more depth at the planning meeting in January. Discussion ensued regarding a staffing model, balanced budget, and decrease dependence on endowment. Timetable had been previously voted on to step down the endowment drawdown, but the first reduction has not happened yet. There needs to be a plan to implement the step-down. Another discussion point was to explore the possibility of integrating resources from capital campaign to the endowment. Erin noted that this is a common practice to widen net of a capital campaign. There was also a brief discussion about budgeting to start a capital campaign. These funds would initially come from the endowment, but will be paid back from the funds raised in the campaign, so as not to impact the operating budget.

Erin noted that our goal is not only to grow membership but also to grow the depth of membership, and that this is a growth plan rather than staffing model. We want to support the current staffing model, but it is a moving target. We need a plan to close the gap between the target of 420 pledging households and our current number of 350. Although these points were prepared for finance committee, they can also aid the ABD chairs in editing the giving guide. **To be continued. Charlie will edit the draft and send to Operations Council, with plans to discuss further in January meeting.**

Ministerial Review Committee – Cathy and Ann: reported on the status of approval for nominees. Three of the five members are in place; Elli Crocker Morse is chair. Ann held conference call with Sue Bartlett, since there is some deviation from the original contract, including a) Board members will act in advisory capacity only; b) Erin declines to be involved in selection of members; c) whether Operations Council will be advisory role or membership on the committee. Susan Bartlett supports the inclusion of an OC member on the committee, which is consistent with the original contract. The current number of nominees is 41, drawn from recommendations by the Board and from Elli. High priority criteria for additional members include a) younger people with children in RE program; b) another male; c) skills in listening, documenting, analyzing, summarizing, communicating. Erin included other criteria to increase diversity. Elli will make calls to people on the short list; additional suggestions should be sent to Cathy and Ann by tomorrow. Elli will inform the Board on her progress prior to Christmas. Cathy noted that there should be more communication to the congregation about the role of the Committee on Ministry.

Conflict Resolution – Jon and Charlie had some preliminary discussions. Jon noted that considerable work had been done on the policy and implementation plan, and he would like to continue to put the plan in place. Jon will discuss next steps with Dwight Golann and report back.

January Strategic Planning Meeting – there was discussion about the need to clarify whether there will be one or two meetings. The Operations Council had plans to meet on January 4, but there is also a plan for the Operations Council to meet with the Board together with a UUA facilitator later in the month. Erin noted that the January 4 date will not allow for Megan's attendance, and that it is important that the Operations Council and the Board meet together to ensure they are on the same page. This is particularly important as FUSN solidifies the new governance structure.

Financial oversight committee – The charter has been updated by Strom but needs one last review and approval by the Operations Council and the Finance Committee before being formally approved by the Board. Once this is complete, we can assemble the actual committee. **Charlie will send the charter out for review.**

Opening words – there was discussion about how best to include a suggestion to silence cell phones without changing the welcoming message. Erin suggested an alternative: include this suggestion at the top [of the insert] in the order of service.

Review of assignments

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 PM.
Respectfully submitted,

Lesley Sneddon
Assistant Clerk