

FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
January 14, 2014

Present:

Board: Charlie Watts, Ann Woodbury, Jonathan Reuman, Bobbie Sproat, Maura Hess-Mahan, Erin Splaine, Perry Montrose, Meghan Cefalu

Absent: Cathy Morocco, Michael Costello, Strom Thacker

Clerk: Sheila Ardery

Guests: Laurel Farnsworth, Kevin McCormick

Introductions and Check In

The Board members read the covenant and lit the candle. Charlie provided the inspirational reading. The members and guests introduced themselves to Meghan.

Approval of the Minutes

Jonathan made a motion to approve the December minutes. They were passed unanimously.

Financial Forecast (and Related Planning Discussions)

Kevin presented a spreadsheet with the five year forecast. There is a deficit projected for 2014 and the following four years. This can be partially offset by operating surpluses of previous years. It is also obvious that an increase in the number and total amount of pledges are needed to offset these projected deficits.

Laurel reported that these projected deficits are smaller than previous forecasts for 2014 and 2015. This is a result of increases in pledges in 2013 and 2014.

Laurel, Charlie, Bobbie and Susan Bartlett have interviewed several UUA fundraising consultants and have discussed the timing and preparation for a capital campaign. There is no firm timeline currently for this effort, although some time between 2015-17 is the likely target.

Charlie stated that the Ops Council and the BOT will be having a strategic planning meeting that may indicate new initiatives. Clearly, this will not be in next year's budget but Charlie suggested that an ongoing and close collaboration among the Board, the Operations Council, and the Finance committee will be critical to ensuring that the 5-year forecast remains in synch with the direction and vision of the congregation.

Kevin stated that the budget-to-actual so far this year is on track.

New Members – none this month

Staff Reports

Perry reported on the Homebound Holiday Project, with over 20 gift bags delivered to homebound FUSN people. The Christmas Eve pageant had 22 children participating and the attendance was good.

There was a New Years party from 5-8 pm with just over 40 people, children and adults, attending. The Youth held a District UU Youth Con at FUSN on Saturday-Sunday, Jan. 11-12. Just over 30 youth attended. Maura reported that it went well. The theme was acceptance and the name was HarmoniCon. Every detail was planned and executed by FUSN Youth. It was fun, meaningful, and moving. It was the first district youth event that had been held at FUSN in a very long time. This was a result of Rebecca's and Perry's effort to work more closely with the district. Charlie asked if this was going to be publicized at all. Perry agreed to put an article on the website and in the newsletter.

The RE Support Circle of Social Action met for the first time last week and thirteen people attended. The members discussed how RE and Social Action can coordinate and develop new ideas.

The OWL class had a gender orientation panel that included two younger panelists for the first time; it was seen as the best panel ever. It's a long-term goal to increase the grades for OWL. There is curriculum for kindergarten through adulthood.

Meghan reported that she attended several meetings and is getting settled. She reported that she and Erin are discussing potential programming. Erin noted that she has only been here 26 hours and has recognized that there is so much to do. Meghan will be attending a district ministers' meeting next week.

Erin reported again how well staff covered the absence of the membership coordinator in the fall and really stepped up to fill the gap. About 730 people attended the three Christmas Eve services. Erin will be attending the Mass Moral March on Feb 8th in Raleigh, North Carolina, something she is able to do because we now have two ministers. There may be as many as 10 FUSN members going as well.

Right before Christmas, Erin had lunch with the Rabbi of Dorshei Tzedek, Toba Spitzer, who is on sabbatical now. Erin and she are planning to have regular communication to find ways to plan events, especially as Dorshei Tzedek celebrates its upcoming 25th anniversary that will weave these two spiritual communities together.

Conflict Resolution

Jonathan started by reminding us why we care about this topic. We all have experiences that inform us that we need information and education on how to resolve conflict. Also, he read a passage from Raising the Roof that identified and defined conflict resolution as one of the nine competencies of a growing UU congregation.

He then passed out a report that identified seven components of the plan developed by the Conflicts Committee and presented in 2012. Jonathan recognized the tremendously valuable work of this committee. The committee provided a very comprehensive plan for addressing conflict in an organization. However, the implementation of such a comprehensive program for FUSN is daunting. Jonathan discussed the components with each of the committee members individually, to ask what would be scalable implementation options. Jonathan's report included an overall, directional summary of those conversations.

Erin reflected on what events preceded the establishment of the committee and their resulting comprehensive plan for conflict resolution. She recommended that we solicit the assistance of Dwight Golann to help us winnow down the procedures to a more manageable scale for this community. Charlie asked if there was a sense of the group that we ask Jon to form a new group to come up with some implementation recommendations. Jon requested that there be a statement from the Board that can be taken back to the Conflict Committee. Charlie stated that the goal of the group is to review the committee's recommendation and come up with processes for implementation. It was recognized that the members of the Conflict Committee considered their work completed when the plan was recommended to the BOT. The members understood that the next step was to constitute a new committee to review the plan and come up with recommendations for implementation.

The agreement at the conclusion of the discussion was that Jon would work initially with Erin to think about a potential team to take this forward and to discuss further the potential scope (e.g., process vs. covenant).

Other Updates and On-Going Work

Ministerial Review Committee –Ann reported that the committee is constituted. Ellie Crocker is the chair and Phil Davis, Jud Leonard, Anne Hess-Mahan, Alice Nichols and Sheila Ardery are members and the first meeting is January 26th. Cathy and Ann will attend.

Fellowship Dinner – While discussion is ongoing, given the crowded calendar in March and other issues, the group discussed the possibility of giving the Fellowship Dinner – as it has traditionally been constructed -- a hiatus for 2014. Bobbie and Charlie will discuss this issue further with the ABD to ensure all parties are comfortable with the approach.

January Joint BOT-Ops Council Strategic Planning Meeting - Charlie spoke with Doug Zelinski and went over what we are trying to do. Doug stated that the UUA has a group of peer consultants who have been trained and suggested that FUSN recruit a two-person team from this group to provide facilitation. This might not be adequate, as FUSN is trying to strategically move forward with a different type of structure. Erin will be going to a district meeting and will discuss this further with Doug. There will be more discussion and due diligence before we agree to this approach. The strategic meeting will not be held until at least February.

Rebecca Hinds is requesting that she be ordained at FUSN on the first of June. FUSN and the Lincoln congregation, where Rebecca has been an intern, will jointly sponsor her ordination. She is requesting that \$1250 be allocated to pay 50% of the ordination costs. The Lincoln congregation will cover the other 50%. Charlie asked for a motion to approve this request. Bobbie moved that we grant her request to have her ordination at FUSN and that we allocate the \$1250 for this event. The motion passed unanimously. Rebecca will put together an ordination committee comprised of both FUSN and Lincoln congregation members.

Legal Assistance: Charlie stated it looks like a new member and her law firm, Foley Hoag, have offered us some pro bono legal help, initially around music copyright issues. Charlie will circulate more information and ask for an e-mail vote on this item.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Ardery

Clerk