

**[FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
March 4, 2014**

Present:

Board: Charlie Watts, Ann Woodbury, Jonathan Reuman, Cathy Morocco, Bobbie Sproat, Maura Hess-Mahan

Staff: Erin Splaine, Perry Montrose

Absent: Michael Costello, Meghan Cefalu, Strom Thacker

Clerk: Sheila Ardery

Guests: Susan Bartlett, Jud Leonard

Introductions and Check In

The Board members read the covenant and lit the candle. Ann provided the inspirational reading (which included a number of very funny jokes!).

Approval of the Minutes

Bobbie made a motion to approve the February minutes. They were passed unanimously.

Pro Bono Service

Foley Hoag is offering to provide pro bono legal services in the areas of copyright law. Julia Huston, an attorney at Foley Hoag facilitated this. The Board unanimously passed a resolution to contract for these pro-bono services and Charlie signed the letter of agreement.

Membership Database

Jud Leonard attended the meeting and reported that members of the database task force have talked to a number of churches about membership databases that are in use. The task force identified two that would meet FUSN needs. One is a free product called CRM and the other is a commercial product, ICON CMO. The committee felt that CRM would be good, but only if we had someone who could set it up, manage it, and provide tech support; otherwise FUSN should get the commercial product that comes with tech support. The task force recommends that FUSN choose ICON CMO, beginning by using the free two-week trial to see if it meets our needs and if the support is good. The cost of the system is \$550 a year for FUSN's size. There might be an additional start-up cost, which Jud will investigate. Jud and Peter Farago are willing to pilot the start up.

Board members asked about the security and availability of the data. Jud explained that the database is web based, and there are different permissions for data access. He also explained that the database will not contain information about personal conversations with ministers. It is a file for member information such as contact info, roles, activities, pledge information, etc., each with separate privacy settings. In the discussion of support, other churches have expressed satisfaction with the tech support of ICON CMO. There is sufficient funding for this endeavor in the office budget line for this fiscal year; of course, an allotment will need to be built in for years going forward.

Ann made a motion that the database task force pursue the ICON CMO. Cathy seconded and it was unanimously approved. The task force will report this effort to the Ops Council as well.

Staff Update

Perry reported that RE Council met and now has eight members plus staff. They discussed recruitment of teachers and other volunteers. RE support circles are meeting; most have met twice since the new year, and they are all starting activities. There are several one shot trials that are turning into monthly groups, such as the intergenerational book group. The Valentine's Day party was a big success with more than 50 attending. The Homebound project has 21 people who are getting a visit. There are 16 COA kids preparing for their graduation. The Youth Group did a great job with the Coffee House and the story telling in the following Sunday service. The Coffee House was well attended and the gross was several hundred dollars more than last year. Laura Bishop and Carol Reichert are interested in helping again next year.

Erin reported that there have been two pledge parties and 20% of the anticipated pledges have already been received.

Erin reported that she and Meghan are scheduled to hold a retreat in New Hampshire, specifically to discuss their ministry together. The facilitator's fee is \$600, and Erin is requesting that the BOT and the Ops Council each cover half of the fee. This amount is over Erin's professional expenses budget. Erin stated that in other church budgets there is a line for educational expenses, where this would belong, but FUSN doesn't have that budget line. Erin stated that she would like this retreat to be an annual event for Meghan and Erin. There was consensus that the Board would provide the funds requested.

FUSN Naming Inquiry

Charlie reported that he had a productive conversation with Allan Hartman who had proposed a resolution that was passed at the 2012 annual meeting directing the Society to study the possibility of changing our name to include Universalist in the primary title (and not simply in the tag line). During the discussion, Allan clarified that he was not interested in pursuing the issue if it is not of great interest to the rest of the congregation. Charlie framed the choice as either the Board declares unilaterally there is or is not sufficient interest, or we sponsor an open forum to gauge interest.

A discussion ensued as to what other churches do (or don't do); how we incorporate UU into our teaching, preaching; what it would take to officially change the name, etc.

Erin suggested that a RE course on what it means to be UU could carry the thread forward, so that the congregation could more intelligently discuss the possibility of a name change if it became apparent there was interest. Erin also noted that the letterhead has a tag line of "A Unitarian Universalist Congregation" under the name.

Ultimately, the Board agreed to proceed with an open discussion forum as a better way to judge the level of interest in this issue (and potentially identify next steps). Erin volunteered that the staff would help in setting the stage at the opening of the session so that participants have a shared understanding of the relevant history. Charlie agreed to drive the planning and help facilitate the overall discussion.

Ministry Review Committee

Cathy reported the background of the committee and how they have arrived at the current list of questions. Cathy passed out the report of the committee that included the newsletter article on the review and the questions for the staff and the congregation. Cathy asked that Board members provide their feedback on the questions to Ann and herself by 5 PM Wednesday night.

Capital Campaign Update

Charlie reported that the ad hoc planning committee met and interviewed two fundraising consultants recommended by Wayne Clark of UUA. The committee reported that working with the UUA would be more expensive than going with an independent fundraising consultant, but that there are meaningful benefits to using the UUA process, especially given that the goal will likely be in the \$1.5-2 million dollar range. The likely timetable would be to begin the process with a "Next Steps Weekend" in the Fall of 2014 and then complete the campaign in the Spring of 2016. The committee recommends that we go with the UUA consultants. In regard to the two UUA consultants offered, there is still more research to be done. Jonathan made a motion that we work with the UUA and begin to determine the appropriate timing of the campaign. It was unanimously approved.

Strategic Planning Retreat

Erin reported that, after extensive open ended conversations with staff regarding a designation of a qualified facilitator for the FUSN retreat, Erin met with the District Executive to pursue a resolution to the issue. Subsequently, John Gibb Millsbaugh has agreed that one of the senior staff of the district would facilitate our joint BOT-Ops Council retreat free of charge. April 5 will be the date of the retreat.

Personal

Charlie announced that he and his wife, Holly Haynes, are going to move to Rhode Island at the end of June. He expressed his sadness at moving away from FUSN and their gratitude for all that the congregation has meant for their entire family. They are moving to be nearer Holly's Mom and brother. They will likely attend James Ford's congregation, where Holly's Mom is a member and where Holly and Charlie were married.

In the interest of ending the meeting on a happier note, Bobbie announced that she and Jud will become grandparents in September.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Ardery

