

**The First Unitarian Society in Newton  
Meeting of the Board of Trustees  
September 8, 2015**

**PRESENT**

**Board:** Brian Burba, Vice-Chair; Gregg DiBiaso; Eric Haas; Julianna Lakomski, Youth; Becca Lozinsky, Youth; Cathy Morocco; Lesley Sneddon, Co-Chair; Bobbie Sproat, Co-Chair.

**Staff:** Erin Splaine, Minister; Rowan Van Ness, Director of Lifespan Religious Education

**Congregants:** Laurel Farnsworth, representing the Operations Council and Buildings & Grounds Committee

**Clerk:** Sue Skoler

**INVOCATION /CHALICE LIGHTING/COVENANT**

Brian lit the Chalice and offered an inspirational reading. Lesley led the group in reciting the Board Covenant.

**CHECK-IN** by all members present

**PROCEDURAL**

Lesley: Since we had an unusual number of visitors to our meetings last year and we were uncertain about procedure, we should develop one.

There was discussion on the various ways to invite input while keeping BOT meetings on time and on the agenda topics. Visitors are welcome, and should arrive on time to minimize disruption. It is important to balance the welcoming to visitors with our responsibility to keep the agenda moving and adhere to our time commitments. One proposal is to set aside a limited amount of time on each agenda for visitor comments and/or questions. The time set aside would be for all comments, regardless of the number of visitors.

Reinforce the suggestion that any congregant can discuss issues with individual BOT members at any time and ask to have their input taken to the full BOT.

Final proposal as approved: Invite comments at start and end of meeting, time permitting. Cap input at a total time of 10 minutes for all visitors. Ask if visitors have a specific issue, so that we can address it as appropriate and as needed. Remind congregation members that we value their input and that visitors are welcome.

## **STAFF UPDATES**

### **Rowan Van Ness, Director of Lifespan Religious Education**

- Planning an RE Council retreat for October 3rd. Inviting families to an open session in the afternoon, to share what they liked about RE and what could be changed. Plans are to discuss the Five Spokes, which include:
  - How does our program relate to our mission statement?;
  - How willing are we to make needed changes?
  - What is our capacity?
  - What is actually possible?
  
- Rowan is working to pull together a task force to study adult faith development.
- Dani, the new Youth Coordinator, has started her job.
- About 15 youth attended the recent Youth Teacher Training. We partnered for the first time with two other congregations for the youth training. So far 60 children and youth are registered for RE for the fall.
- RE Council and staff are developing a plan for CORI (criminal record checks).
- She has set up a Google Calendar that seems to be working well for all aspects of RE and Youth programs. The directors of the various youth and RE program components are the administrators for their layer of the Google Calendar.
- Hoping soon to hire a person to offer more music in RE classes and to direct the Family Choir. An existing budget line for a children's choir director will cover the cost of this hire.

### **Erin Splaine Minister**

One of her current tasks is to try to meet with those congregants who have indicated they are leaving the church. Also, she is concentrating on figuring out what are the things that she can do that will speak to the tenor of the past year.

She has a super busy schedule. The Multicultural group is up and running with many activities and events to offer. Erin has been in conversation with the senior minister at Myrtle Baptist Church, about some more organic ways the two congregations can work together on racial justice issues. She will be attending a major ministerial workshop in TN which she hopes will give her some better tools for coping with discord. One of her goals for this year to be less reactive.

Bobbie mentioned that she, Lesley and Erin have been talking with a UUA regional staff member, Doug Zelinski, in planning this year's BOT retreat.

## **BUILDING AND GROUNDS REPORT**

**Laurel Farnsworth**

1. We had a lot of roof damage last year because of the extreme winter. Laurel proposed repairing damage to masonry, and replacing the roof tiles in the small section of the roof over the offices wing. There are sufficient funds available, due in part to saving unspent funds in major maintenance budgets of past years, and the available funds exceed the amount required for the proposed contract.

A motion was made and seconded as follows:

Moved:

The Board of Trustees of the First Unitarian Society in Newton [FUSN] accepts and approves the contract with Joseph Gnazzo and Company of Union, CT., as presented by Laurel Farnsworth for roof and masonry work on the FUSN buildings. The total amount authorized for the work specified in the contract is \$144,300.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. Laurel also presented a contract for design work that has been in the works for a while, to make the front of the building handicapped accessible. It would include a paved path through the Memorial Garden along Highland Avenue, leading up to the Highland side door to the narthex. It would also involved replacing the granite landing outside that door with one large enough to accommodate a wheelchair, and adding automatic door openers to those doors.

A motion was made and seconded as follows:

Moved:

The Board of Trustees of the First Unitarian Society in Newton [FUSN] accepts and approves entering into a contract with LDa Architects LLP, to provide architectural services in connection with planning a new exterior landing and ramp design at the vestibule side door facing Highland Ave. The work is to be performed from May 15, 2015 to September 30, 2016, at a total projected cost of \$13,500, plus a Structural Engineering Allowance of \$5,500.

The motion passed unanimously.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

There are currently 5 Candidates for the Membership Coordinator position. The Search Committee will conduct phone interviews with all five, and follow up in-person interviews with the top candidates.

## BOT Minutes 9.8.15

Erin, Bobbie and Lesley are working to recruit for several positions, including two Annual Budget Drive team members, since Urban Larson has withdrawn from the team. The two recruits will join Saul Lookner, who has agreed to serve. We will also be looking for a new clerk, since Sue has determined that she cannot serve in this position this year.

Board and Minister will announce and hold an Open Conversation after the service on 9/20. Planning will occur at the Board retreat on Sept. 12.

A congregation member raised the issue of how FUSN might help in the Syrian refugee crisis. Erin said that the UUA and UUSC are actively looking into this and into the legal ramifications, and any action we take should await recommendations in the UUA's report.

### **BOT Retreat**

Some of the topics to be discussed include

- some discussion of the past year, for orientation of new Board members – exploring the perspective of both members who served on last year's Board and new members.
- What have we learned as a congregation?
- Transitioning into rebuilding community.
- Strategies for rebuilding community.
  - Cathy noted that building community cuts across all FUSN activities, including our proactive work on Welcoming Congregation renewal and on Multicultural Ministries.
- What do we want to focus on this year?
- What other ongoing responsibilities do we need to keep on top of?
- Neither Julianna nor Becca will be able to attend the retreat.
- Each attendee is asked to bring along an object that has meaning for you from any point of your life -- a personal talisman.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Sue F. Skoler, Clerk