

FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
January 8, 2013

Present:

Board: Gordon Moriarty, Ann Woodbury, Jonathan Reuman, Carl Metzger, Bruce Henderson, Alan Cody, Margaret Costello, Charlie Watts

Absent: Conrad Buys, Strom Thacker

Staff: Erin Splaine, Perry Montrose

Clerk: Sheila Ardery

Carl provided an inspirational reading after the Board read the covenant and Gordon lit the chalice.

Approval of the Minutes

The December 11, 2012 minutes were approved without comment.

New Member

Gordon asked for a motion to approve Alice H. Wolpert as a member after Erin recommended her and Gordon read a short bio. **Carl moved, Bruce seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously.**

Staff reports

RE Staff is recruiting teachers for the second half of the year. Preparations are being made for a Coming of Age visioning session in March. There will be a meeting with the seventh grade parents to consider doing neighboring church visits in the seventh grade year, so that they will be completed prior to the Coming of Age year. There is a High School parents' support group meeting on Sunday. Leadership Circles are starting to form, and a lot of people have expressed interest. In the Connection Circle, each grade contributed to a holiday gift bag for each of 13 or 14 homebound congregants. Circle members then delivered these when visiting with the recipients. It was so successful and well received that similar outreach efforts may be undertaken more than once a year. The adult RE catalog is being printed tomorrow.

Erin reported that a total of between 620 and 700 people attended the three Christmas services.

One of Erin's challenges is to try to move beyond responding to just the current issue and trying to do more pastoral care. To that end, Erin is going to institute a monthly lunch with soup and bread for long-time members and retirees to help them to be more connected to the congregation.

This Sunday is Association Sunday and we have a special guest, Sarah Lambert, Director of Ministries and Faith Development at UUA. Erin will be gone a week or so at the end of the month. She will be attending a bi-annual ministers association conference for workshops and seminars attended by about 700 attendees.

Gordon reflected on the Governance Committee report from 2008, which included interviews of nearby congregations, information that could be of use as we continue to focus on a longer term vision for FUSN. Another aspect of the report that he raised was the indication that at the time the report was prepared, there was confusion among the staff as to roles and responsibilities, as well as a lack of communication with, and oversight by, the Board of Trustees. He asked Erin what she thought about staff attitudes in this regard now. Erin feels that the staff works very well together and that they feel supported but not micromanaged. With improved definitions of work responsibility, she doesn't feel

that there is a problem now. Perry seconded that sentiment. Erin also said that the PPC and Committee on Ministry are open to having staff come to them if there is an issue with Erin. A “360” review of Erin’s ministry is being put into place for next year, whereby all staff will be asked to provide input on how things are going.

BOI Investment Policy and Operating Procedures

Gordon asked for a response to the BOI Policy and Procedures document that was disseminated before the meeting. Alan Cody made a couple of comments including a recommendation that it be noted under operating procedures that the BOI’s activities are conducted in accordance with FUSN’s financial policies.

Carl asked about the meaning of “budgeted operations support” under the heading “The target return.” Gordon will seek clarification. Alan commented that he felt that a draw from the endowment of 3% was too low. Others noted that the phased reduction in the endowment draw can be revisited in the future if need be. Gordon noted the preference among BOI members for term limits, while others noted that it might be difficult to find qualified members to serve on the BOI. Carl noted that Vanguard has cost-effective advisors for non-profits that could be given the proposed investment mix and undertake some of the tasks currently conducted by the BOI. Bruce asked how UU values are monitored in the portfolio and suggested that their impact on portfolio decisions be highlighted in BOI reports.

FY2013 Pledge Drive and FY2014 Budget Priorities

Bruce reported that pledges are coming in higher than budgeted for the time period. We are the equivalent of one pledge away from last year’s pledge goal. Last year, we aimed for 15% increase in the total amount pledged. Bruce led a discussion of the draft budget projection from the Finance Committee and his own, unofficial version of it. Bruce is recommending the Board establish a 10% growth goal for the budget drive for this year, versus the conservative 2% projected by the Finance Committee. Bruce also showed a simulation indicating that with 10% growth this year (followed by 4% in subsequent years), FUSN would need to grow the number of pledge units by about 12 net new ones each year in order to address projected operating deficits in future years. He noted that the Finance Committee is not expecting that the deficits projected will actually occur, but they are one scenario to be considered. He noted that this year’s pledge drive would aim to bring up the low-end pledges, raising FUSN’s overall average pledge (which fell last year). Alan noted we need to concentrate on membership growth as 10% is hard to get from current pledge units. Carl endorsed the 10% proposal and stated that it sends the right message to the congregation.

Jonathan noted that it took a long time for us to become a fair-paying congregation, and the UUA is changing the way “fair paying” is being defined. We need to keep that in mind in reviewing the budget, as it will affect personnel costs. Erin noted that the PPC is monitoring the change in definition. The fellowship dinner will be March 9th. **Alan made a motion that the 10% goal for the budget drive be approved. The motion was approved unanimously.**

Alan stated that the Board needs to inform the Ops Council and Finance Committee of the Board’s budget priorities as soon as possible. A discussion ensued as to the Board’s priorities, including: 1) funding for a membership database; 2) **the hiring of an assistant minister for pastoral care and membership engagement versus an intern minister versus a membership coordinator**; and 3) funding external communications.

With regard to 1), Gordon acknowledged the work of the database exploratory committee that recommended \$3500 for acquisition, customization and initial training, with the need for approximately \$2,500 in succeeding years for support services.

With regard to 2), there was an extensive discussion of the financial impact on the long term budget of an assistant minister as well as the potential benefits that could be realized from such an assistant minister. These benefits include leading the service a number (six or more?) of Sundays, helping to address more immediate pastoral issues so that longer term initiatives can be pursued, evidencing to new-comers that FUSN is a significant spiritual community that values the importance of training new ministers for our faith, **while at the same time providing the same services as a membership coordinator.**

With regard to 3), some expressed a desire to provide a few thousand dollars as a budget item for external communications. Others felt we were already striving to close our deficit spending gap and therefore more budget items were not appropriate. In the end, the consensus was that there should be an emphasis, on the part of the Ops Council, on refining the structure of the Communications Committee to include both internal and external communications responsibilities. Meanwhile, if money if believed needed for external communications, it could probably be found in existing line items.

Gordon made a motion to support the aspirational goals of purchasing a database for \$3500 and to support the hiring of an assistant minister of congregational engagement and pastoral care, pending definition of the cost of salary and benefits for such a candidate. The motion passed unanimously.

Board Development

Ann requested that we think about the role of members of the BOT and what does it mean when you have fewer members. Will it be diverse? Will there be a role for a generalist? Ann requested that the Leadership Development Committee be engaged in this discussion. What direction do we give the Nominating Committee? Should we have a mentoring system? This will be an agenda item for the next meeting.

Visioning

Jonathan passed out the grid of BOT members' priorities for core values and asked that people fill them out in the moment. Based upon that information, he and Charlie will provide the Board with a draft vision statement.

By-Laws

Alan mentioned that, under the definition of "Treasurer" in new Art. IX, "the treasurer may draw checks in any bank account of the Society assigned by the Treasurer" was unclear. Instead, it was recommended that the underlined be replaced with "... approved by the Board of Trustees." Alan also mentioned that we don't have a schedule of assets and it needs to be completed for a proper audit, a task that may be undertaken at some point in the future. Gordon noted that new Art. V, Section 9, requires a vote of at least four members of the Board for passage. That will work once the Board is at

six adult members and one youth member, but may not in the interim. This will be addressed changing the threshold to “a majority.”

Gordon requested a motion to approve the proposed by-law changes to be presented to the congregation for initial discussion on January 27th. Alan moved the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Ardery,
Clerk