

FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
May 14, 2013

Present:

Board: Strom Thacker, Ann Woodbury, Charlie Watts, Jonathan Reuman, Margaret Costello, Bruce Henderson, Alan Cody. **Absent:** Conrad Buys, Carl Metzger

Staff: Erin Splaine, Perry Montrose

Guests: Laurel Farnsworth and Pat Rohan

Clerk: Sheila Ardery

Strom Thacker provided the inspirational reading after the Board read the covenant and Gordon lit the chalice.

Administrative Issues

There was an email that went out to FUSN promote a dance that seemed to emphasize alcohol consumption. Jonathan felt that it wasn't the message that we want to send. Margaret stated that also there should be some caution on the use of alcohol at FUSN-connected events. Jonathan observed that, unlike the annual dinner, it is uncontrolled as there is no guest list and the amount of alcohol is not controlled. There is a question of liability if someone gets in an accident. There is no contract for members' activities so the liability would be on FUSN. Gordon asked Jonathan to ask that future dance notices be changed to reflect this concern.

The Mayor's breakfast is May 29th and Bruce wanted to encourage FUSN to get a table and fill it to provide visibility to FUSN at this large community event. He noted that a few years ago Jackie Colby was honored for her volunteer community work with the Mayor's Lifetime Service Award, and FUSN did not appear to have any significant visible presence.

Laurel reported that the Pine Village lease is up for renewal and negotiations are underway. PV is looking at another space in Newton but there are build-out and zoning issues. PV will be here at least for another year but may move after that lease is up if they can overcome the zoning issues. If PV leaves, it will be hard to replace them, but Laurel thinks that we could find a tenant but not at the level that PV pays right now. PV would have to give notice by January 2014 so that we can have a new tenant by the following September.

The April 9th meeting minutes were approved unanimously without comment.

Repair of the Organ

Pat introduced the topic of repairing the organ. Laurel stated that the organ is over a hundred years old, has been a problem for years, and continues to deteriorate. There are many parts that need to be replaced. It is not able to be fully used at this point and that affects the music that is chosen. Laurel hopes that the next capital campaign will include the repair, but that is down the road at least a few years. The cost to fully renovate the organ is in the neighborhood of \$500K to \$750K. Ann Watson Born got a price of \$35-\$75K to make essential fixes in the near term. It had been hoped that the B&G reserve fund could have been used for that purpose but the flat roof required that money for next year. The question was raised as to whether there were other sources of funding for the interim repair, such as a withdrawal/loan from the endowment. Also, longer term, would the congregation support a total

rehab of the organ in the next capital campaign? It was the sense of the Board to not spend any more money to repair the organ until the capital campaign is developed and congregational support for such an organ overhaul was assessed. It was recommended that the congregation be provided with information about the history and importance of the organ to prepare them for this decision in the future.

Pledge Drive

Bruce reported that 335 people pledged for a total of \$554,045, 2.5% over last year's total. There were 37 new pledges averaging \$800. On the other hand, 44 people who pledged last year did not pledge this year. The average pledge is up to \$1,654 from \$1,554 last year. There was a discussion on how we can better meet the needs of members of the congregation in helping them feel more connected to the community and willing to support it through pledging. A follow up survey to the pledge drive is planned. Jonathan and Charlie will implement the survey.

Annual Budget

Gordon presented a preliminary draft of the annual budget. Alan said that the Finance Committee and Ops Council are reviewing it at a meeting this week, and they are concentrating on keeping costs under control. A key component of the budget is the proposed assistant minister position. From a staffing perspective, Erin stated that the Staff is planning for two alternatives, with a membership coordinator and with an assistant minister. Each of these options has different ramifications in terms of who performs what administrative functions and the scope of those functions. That planning effort is an attempt to manage the expectations of what staff can accomplish. Erin made the point that the current staff is being pushed past a sustainable capacity. Alan suggested that we need to look at our priorities and how we do things without even looking at the assistant minister position. There are many activities that are going on that tax the time and abilities of the staff, and there needs to be a judgment on priorities among these activities.

Erin reported that the assistant minister search committee has been interviewing several very good candidates, one of whom is very exciting. The prime candidate and the search committee have had several conversations, and the candidate is planning to come to Newton to be interviewed in person.

Gordon requested that the Board meet to review the final budget with the Ops Council and Finance Committee next Tuesday, May 21. Alan reminded the Board that there will need to be a vote to authorize the current Treasurer to act on behalf of the Society during the interim period from May 31, 2013 until the annual meeting, as well as a vote to authorize the annual housing allowance for our minister.

UUA Board and Administration

Erin reported that the Board and staff of the UUA are continuing a dispute involving metrics the Board wants to see achieved and the administration arguing that the Board's requests are unclear. The UUA has decided it cannot approve the 2014 budget in light of this dispute. The UUA board and administration have agreed to spend up to \$100,000 on a consultant to help the two sides resolve the issue this coming year. Meanwhile, it is noted that the UUA is selling its headquarters building at 25 Beacon Street and is laying off the equivalent of 10.5 staff members. FUSN is scheduled to make its quarterly payment to the UUA. Erin has asked the Board to consider its position on the matter at the

UUA level. The Board will investigate what other congregations are doing to express their disapproval of this situation.

Religious Education

The Coming of Age Ceremony was very well done and received. Perry and the participants were successful at creating a ceremony to honor the 20+ candidates in one service.

New Members

The following candidates for membership were identified:

Mark Leicester
Barbara and Urban Larson
Maria Shewmon
Mena and Sandra Mahaniah

Personal statements or member statements endorsing the candidates were not available by the time of the meeting, so the Board decided to defer voting on membership until such statements were available.

Executive Session

Executive session was called at approximately 9:30 p.m.

The Board adjourned the monthly meeting at approximately 11:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Ardery