

**First Unitarian Society of Newton  
Board of Trustees  
October 11, 2011  
Alliance Room**

Present: Erin Splaine, Minister, Barb Greve, Consulting DLRE  
Board: Susan Bartlett, Conrad Buys, Alan Cody, Margaret Costello, Barney Freiberg-Dale, Bruce Henderson, Pamela McA’Nulty, Carl Metzger, Gordon Moriarty, Strom Thacker, Ann Woodbury

Meeting was called to order at 7:30pm

Barney provided a reading and light the chalice

**Invocation/Chalice Lighting**

**Covenant**

As we, the members of this Board and staff gather to serve this congregation in leadership, we commit to ourselves and to each other: to be present and prepared for the work of this meeting; to listen well and contribute respectfully; to balance both our short and long-term visions with fiscal responsibility; to support the decisions of the Board; to uphold the democratic process; and to lead with goodwill and faith in the work we can accomplish together.

**Administrivia (Susan)**

- Vote to Repair FUSN Bell was passed unanimously by email
- Sunday Morning duties for BOT members-if possible try to greet people as they come into church and then go up to read announcements. Erin is trying to have announcements start a bit earlier and kept to a minimum. Discussed the value of having board members outreach to visitors by introducing oneself, engaging them in conversation and showing them where they can get a name tag. The Membership committee also has a process and is involved in greeting new visitors and Kristen follows up with them.
- Financial Tutorial by Alan Cody and Karen Bottar to be provided in November

**Board of Investments report to Board (Eric Riak)**

Eric discussed the current economic environment for both U.S. corporations and consumers. Corporations are holding cash and not spending, unemployment is about 15-16% if one counts those who have stopped looking for jobs, skills don’t match the jobs that are open, and consumers are saving more, walking away from debt (i.e. mortgages) and not spending. And, Europe is going through what the US did a few years ago when our banks were defaulting on debts. In light of the environment and his firm’s feeling that it might take another 10 years for

things to get better Eric is recommending a more conservative approach to investing with more diversity and less risk. The board members agreed that it would be most helpful for the BOI to provide recommendations on guidelines for investing and a recommendation regarding annual withdrawals for operating expenses. Another meeting will then be set up to discuss the recommendations and Susan will clarify the reporting requirements for the BOI to the Board of Trustees.

### **Staffing Update (Erin and Barb)**

Erin wanted to remind everyone that there are members of the congregation that are hurting and to keep this in mind. She is trying to create more time to be reflective and to just sit and be in the Sunday Services.

Anne Bancroft's ordination is approaching and Anne and Erin talked about having it at FUSN as a wonderful moment of celebration and healing.

**Motion:** Strom moved to have the ordination for Ann Bancroft at FUSN on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2012 and Carl seconded

**Vote:** Approved unanimously

An ordination committee will be identified and start planning.

Barb reported there are 106 youth and children enrolled in the RE programs. Average attendance is in the mid 80's. There has been an increase in attendance at the Children's Chapel, which is now consistent with class attendance.

Barb and Erin will be attending the Liberal Religious Education Conference. They will be handing out postcards created by Barb and Marc Kaufman to advertise the DLRE position at FUSN. The R.E. Council will begin work on restructuring the Council to give people increased opportunities to work more on what they are passionate about and decrease the drain on volunteer efforts.

### **Finance Report to the Board (Alan Cody)**

Alan reminded the group that the Financial policies are on the FUSN website and they should be read prior to the financial tutorial in November.

The report he distributed—Year-End Statement of Fund Balances and Financial Position—reflected a consolidation of operations, BOI activity which he reconciles with the Fidelity statements, Capital Campaign monies, and money for Extended Programs i.e. Ferry Beach and Sandy Island.

As Alan presented the finance report he encouraged the members to ask the following questions.

- Are we in control of our money?
- Do we have confidence in the accounting?
- Do we have sufficient funds in the budget?
- What are our liabilities?
- Are we solvent?
- Do we have a lot of debt and if so, what?

Alan reports that there are good checks and balances in the process, which include himself, Fran and Nancy Tobias the bookkeeper who reviews all monthly transactions. He reported that checks require 2 signatures and one person handles the cash and another does the accounting. Barney complimented and thanked Alan for all he has done to improve the finance processes. Alan credited the other committee members and commented on the value having Nancy Tobias as the bookkeeper.

### **Retreat –feelings, wrap up, action items (Susan)**

After the retreat everyone agreed there is a need for guidelines regarding the functions of the Finance Committee, the Ops council and the BOT in relation to the budget. Carl thought it would be helpful for the Ops Council to come up with recommendations on the budget process and present them to the Board. Susan, Gordon, Pat and Laurel had met about issues that were getting in the way and will continue to meet.

Pam brought up that the Ops council has to go before the BOT currently for any expenditure over 5 thousand dollars. Feels this is too low a limit and ties their hands.

**Motion:** Pam moved to adjust the budget variance limit from 5 thousand to 25 thousand. Bruce seconded

**Vote:** All in favor, none opposed.

There was also discussion about how to create a “Culture of Giving” and Visioning. The goal of the budget is to fund FUSN’s Visions. The Board, with congregation input sets the vision and communicates their vision to the Operations Council who then responds. Vision includes where we want to be programmatically and where we want to be in terms of community outreach. Erin commented that the Board was in fact becoming a visionary Board.

Then discussed concept of “Open Questions” which was talked about at the retreat. What are the best ways to get input from the congregation? This would need further clarification in terms of how best to implement, what the board’s role would be and what questions would they want to focus on. More to follow on this.

Ann suggested that it would be helpful to her to have a separate meeting just to follow up on all the issues discussed at the retreat with flip charts and a moderator to look at everything, develop priorities and further clarify their vision. All agreed this was a great idea and Susan will get the report from Doug who facilitated the retreat to everyone so they can have the issues in front of them.

Regular Meeting adjourned at 9:50pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Wendy Atamian  
FUSN Board Clerk