

FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
OPERATIONS COUNCIL MINUTES
January 14, 2015
Alliance Room, 7:00 P.M.

Present: Susan Bartlett, Jeannie Chaisson, Laurel Farnsworth, Andrea Kelley, Rowan Van Ness. Guest: Gregg DiBiasco, Board of Trustees.

~ 7:05 **Invocation / Chalice Lighting:** Susan

The reading was by William Henry Channing from the gray hymnal.

Covenant

As we, the members of this Council 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 Council; to uphold the democratic process; and to lead with goodwill and faith in the work we can accomplish together.

~ **Approvals:** All

- Minutes: October, November & December minutes approved as amended.

~ **Staff update:** Rowan

- Assistant RE Director Beth and Youth Coordinator Mandy are doing great jobs in their respective programs.
- The Christmas pageant had a high level of participation among youngsters. They are already planning to prepare additional costumes for next year. Julia Huston did a great job organizing and preparing for the pageant and will help with the costumes for next year.
- There will be a FUSN Fun Nite on January 23; Bill Duset is organizing. Rowan will be a staff presence.
- The RE council would like support and collaboration with the Ops Council. A few congregants complained because there were no Halloween and New Year's Eve parties. Rowan said this happened because no one stepped forward to plan them. After a planning meeting, conversations will be scheduled with the congregation over what events to include in scheduling, to clarify what the priorities are and that volunteers need to step forward. The goal is to foster energy and build relationships and connections at FUSN.
- The Youth Coffee House committee had its first planning meeting with the Youth Group.

- For the February 1st service, Coming Of Age candidates have planned the story for all ages, the opening hymn and an anthem. This is a new initiative and gives COA-ers more ownership and connection with the congregation. It's also a spiritual practice. Ops Members praised this initiative. Erin will preach that day on the sources of Unitarian Universalism.
- On January 25th, Rowan will be preaching her first sermon.
- The RE Council is developing a new concept: 1 to 1 relationship meetings for Council members, to share their interests and priorities for RE, build connections, foster community, engage people.
- Parents and the RE Council would also like more guidance about procedures from Ops. One concern is that a first grade boy has a major peanut allergy; it's touch-based. If someone touches a peanut and touches him, he could go into shock. The parent always carries an epi-pen. Do we ask for coffee hour and FUSN Fun Nites to be peanut free? Is this a policy or a cultural practice? People bring in food and snacks, so how do we manage it? His classroom should be peanut-free. Pine Village (renters) should be alerted to this, too.

The kids in that class should know not to touch peanuts and to wash hands well and regularly. Rowan has already asked the beadles to not put peanuts out and to keep an eye out for it. After Halloween, there was candy out during coffee hour and there was anxiety for the family; the child was sick on the way home. It was suggested to put something in the Order of Service inner page at least once, as well as in the Newsletter. Rowan will draft some copy for this.

Jeannie suggests also having a plastic sign on the coffee hour tables reminding people not to put nuts out. She also says that for events, the invitations should include a reminder not to bring nuts. Andrea will ask Ron Margolin if he uses peanut oil in any of his cooking for FUSN. Another suggestion was to check the Newton Schools website, since elementary schools are dealing with this issue already.

Tasks regarding above:

- Rowan will inform RE classes and FUSN Fun Nite organizers. She already talked to the beadles.
- Susan will buy two clear 8 ½ x 11 plastic stands for signs.
- Andrea will do Order of Service and Newsletter notices, as well as post on walls.

Laurel asked if we should keep an epi-pen around; Jeannie (a nurse) said no, because it's a prescription item and they also get outdated rapidly.

Gregg says he has 1 at his shop (Artitudes, down the street), because he has a severe bee sting allergy.

~ **Report on prior Board of Trustees meeting:** Jeannie

Erin went to last night's meeting.

Susan emailed Erin about what Ops can offer as help during this staff transition time.

Erin thanked the Board for her absence for 2 weeks due to the family medical issue.

There will be four guest ministers for rest of the year.

- A decision was made to keep funding in place for the Assistant Minister position for the 5-year planning process.
- We do not know yet if Pine Village or Dorshei Tzedek will renew for next year. They are supposed to let FUSN know by end of January.
- Cell tower income has a 5-year term; a renewal was signed in June. It automatically goes up 2% year.
- The Board voted to designate these positions as being non-congregant positions, i.e., may not be filled by Members or Friends of FUSN: Minister, Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Assistant Director of Lifespan Religious Education, Music Director, Administrator, Membership Coordinator, Organist, Youth Program Coordinator, Children's Choir Director, Paid Soloist, Accountant or Bookkeeper. This is an update to previous policy.
- Consultant Mark Ewert provided a lengthy report on leadership development. He said FUSN is "rich" in leadership people, and we need to get people connected to appropriate areas. He advised that older people are more willing to sit in meetings, and younger people prefer to move quickly; the challenge is to take this into account. He also noted the current strain on the community with staff transitions, as well as budget drive preparation.
Ways to encourage this integration: Perhaps a half-day class in 'finding your way at FUSN'; the new database will help; a newly designed website would also help. An option is to get people to self-motivate and self-nominate. Committee fairs have not been entirely successful in getting more people involved, so other avenues are needed. A leadership development committee is needed to serve as a pipeline, providing more connections to the larger congregation beyond the nominating committee.
- Have RE kids do "Who is FUSN?" pictures and statements.
- GA delegate selection should be made by March 1, so delegates can get the better price on registration and cheaper housing. The 2015 GA is in Portland, OR.
- Jim Frances provided language to add to FUSN bylaws on non-discrimination; he would like this to happen after the small group meetings, which are scheduled to discuss recent staff changes. He would like more inclusivity language. Dwight Golan offered to

train some people as facilitators for the small group discussions. The goal is listening to each other and not to come up with any reports or decisions. The Board suggested that the Worship Committee organize these meetings.

- A question arose about the costs of doing an intensive Strategic Planning weekend for the Board this spring. We need to check the contingency budget to see if funds are available. Council members discussed whether there's an essential need for such a weekend at this time. Perhaps this money should be used to support the annual budget drive.
- Gregg said the Board is still digesting consultant Mark Ewert's report.
- Jeannie moved to allocate \$1,000 from the contingency budget to support Annual Budget Drive consulting with Mark Ewert via phone and video conference. Passed unanimously.

~ **Financial:** Judy, Laurel, All

- Review of year-to-date spending. Susan had received the December report from Karen Bottar. If former year pledges come in at a good rate, there would be funds available for the Strategic Planning Process weekend.
- Laurel is projecting that we will have an overage in the utilities budget line.
- Long-range forecast: Laurel, who is on the Finance Committee, said that over the next 5 years, FUSN's structural deficit will decrease, assuming pledges grow by 4% annually and that expenses grow less than that. She also said that FUSN has not had a deficit in the past 3 years, since FUSN doesn't always spend all the amounts in all the line items.
- Laurel asked about filling Meghan's position: will it be for a Member Coordinator or Assistant Minister? They left the Assistant Minister salary in the budget for long-range planning purposes. Most costs are growing by 3%. They are also assuming no significant growth in most revenue categories, such as the Holiday Fair.

~ **Updates: Committee issues/reports:** All

- Communications and website - a few suggestions had been made for additional members.
- Board Of Investments: The Wayside Pulpit sign has been fixed. Judy Curby has asked the BOI to reimburse the operating budget for the costs of repair.
- Mandy will ask if the youth are willing to take over changing the signs.
- A suggestion was to put a quote at the top of the newsletter and call it "The Wayside

Pulpit” and use funds from the Wayside Pulpit account...probably not realistic, however.

- B&G: rental agreement update: Jeannie, Gayle and Andrea are still working on updating the language.
- Additional leadership is needed for the Social Action Committee.
- Youth Coffee House: Susan, Rowan, Mandy, Deb Minard and Carol Reichert have met for preliminary planning. It will be a combined RE and Social Action project for the Zambia project, Communities Without Borders. Safety concerns were mentioned. It was suggested to use one entrance versus two for the coffee house. One police officer has been hired in the past. Some discussion arose around whether one was enough; it was agreed that it was; no liquor is served and there have not been problems in the past. It helps give parents a sense of confidence that there is a police officer on site.
- An additional concern was about keeping people out of areas like the Sanctuary and the basement and how best to manage that. We cannot lock egress doors. The door to the tower is locked. The only way to restrict access is to have people at the access points. Perhaps recruit a few chaperones/parents to do that? Kids should not be entering through other doors, such as the exterior door to the Alliance Room and the door from the back parking lot entrance. Discussion continued about procedures for closing and locking up after activities or events and in the rental agreement. It was suggested that renters and planners be given a map that shows where all the doors are that need to be locked. Laurel has agreed to provide such a map. Only the Washington St. door that leads to the Parish Hall has a deadbolt lock. All the others have “panic bars,” which are easy to close. Laurel says doing the Parish Hall/Washington St. doors as “panic bars” would cost \$3,000.
- Andrea suggested that FUSN write a letter of support to the UU congregation in Moscow, Idaho. Recently, a young man there shot several people. A woman who was killed was the adoptive mother of the shooter and was a member of a UU congregation. Rev. Michelle Walsh had suggested that FUSN send a letter of condolence. Rowan says 5th through 7th graders in RE will be writing letters this Sunday. Andrea suggests we could do both.

~ **Thank yous:** All. No new ones for this month.

~ The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Schwartz,
Assistant Clerk

