

FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
OPERATIONS COUNCIL - MINUTES
Wednesday June 11, 2014
Alliance Room, 7:00 P.M.

~ The meeting was called to order at 7:05.

~ Present: Susan Bartlett, Chair, Jeannie Chaisson, Judy Curby, Laurel Farnsworth, Anne Hess-Mahan, Rev. Erin Splaine, Rev. Meghan Cefalu. Guest: Lynn Holbein, Council for Social Action.

~ Invocation / Chalice Lighting: Anne

~ Reading: from *Leaves of Grass*, Walt Whitman

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.

~ Elect Chair and Vice-Chair: All
Susan was re-selected as Ops Chair.
Laurel was re-selected as Vice-Chair.

~ Judy Curby was welcomed as FUSN's new Treasurer.

~ Approvals: All

- April Minutes – Laurel moved, Anne seconded... approved with changes.
- May minutes were discussed. Laurel
- George Batchelor's request to have a Pan Mass Challenge benefit concert at FUSN on June 28th was approved by email. Same cost as last year.
- B&G painting & carpet: Laurel

The painting budget is \$6k, to paint the office wing and Parish Hall limestone color. Plus, B&G will putty the wooded Alliance Room windows at a cost of \$6500. Laurel will make up the \$500 overage of this amount in some other line item out of the B&G budget. Windows not getting puttied include those on top of the stage and the upstairs windows; leaded glass is in wooded

frames. Jeannie moved to permit the painting line to be over by \$500; Anne seconded. Approved.

Laurel showed carpet color choices for the classroom and office halls for replacing the worn flooring. The rug type is quite long lasting. None of these were to be the final choice.

~ Fundraising at FUSN

- Catie Curtis requested Saturday, November 22nd, as a date for a benefit concert at FUSN. The benefiting organization is Americans United for Separation of Church and State (www.au.org). The concert is one in a series called, "Voices United Concerts". Last year, Catie brought in Holly Near to play a Voices United Concert at FUSN, and the night was a success, as both performance and fundraiser. Many AU members are Unitarians and Humanists.

Catie wrote, in part: As a FUSN member, I understand how much is going on at FUSN, and that by producing this event I am taking full responsibility for staffing, preparing and cleaning up after the event. I want to promise a couple of things specifically:

- I won't rely on staff or volunteers from FUSN. [I won't assume any FUSN participation, though FUSNites are welcome to participate.]
- I will communicate with FUSN folks to be sure that the event is mounted and taken down without imposing on or interfering with FUSN's flow.
- I hope to bring in an artist that the FUSN community would enjoy hearing in concert.

Discussion:

Catie says she has a budget to pay people for heavy lifting, to put the stage up and to set up and run lights and audio. Some of the breakdown will occur Saturday after the concert, such as removing the stage, to be sure the floor is clear by 8 am for Sunday morning service.

Lights and other items could be taken down after the Sunday service.

Catie agrees to be the "point" person for the entire event.

Laurel says the stage should go up on Friday, so any adjustments can be made Saturday. A list of bullet points would help. Laurel will add bullet points to Catie's list and circulate it among Ops members. This could become a standard document for renters using space for their events.

George's Pan Mass Challenge benefit concert request is simpler, so logistics will be, too. Laurel also points out that FUSN should be indemnified to avoid lawsuits if anyone is injured; performers and producers should have their own insurance. FUSN's insurance covers anything related to our mission. Any event that is not directly related to our mission adds additional risk. The building itself is covered in all cases.

Social Action schedule and fundraising-at-FUSN discussion: Lynn Holbein

Scheduling social action activities and fundraising should be done ahead of time to avoid crunches during the year, and should take the schedules of other FUSN entities into consideration. For example, RE does its own fundraising, and their and the Council for Social Action activities should not occur on the same day.

Coffee hour should be less frenetic. Efforts should be coordinated better, especially around the holidays, with less silo-ing of groups doing their own thing and not aware of others' projects.

Lynn acknowledged that this spring's T-shirt sales needed more advance vetting. She also acknowledged that, other times, there was donor fatigue around hurricane Sandy, for example. All agreed that no one should be approached for any fundraising requests during coffee hour. Numerous walks involve raising funds. Eight FUSNites walked in the Walk for Hunger. The Walk raised around \$8k, and Lynn raised her personal best, over \$5000. However, only a fraction of the funds contributed to the Walk actually came from FUSN members.

Lynn shared a chart of social action collections at FUSN during coffee hour. It shows month of the activity, how long it's been going on at FUSN, and a description of the event.

Laurel said the Ops Council just wants to be sure that all such activities are vetted through CSA. Everyone also agreed that FUSN and the Ops Council can respond to exceptional events or needs, regarding fundraising.

It was asked if prison gifts could be moved to the fall, so collections for other causes, such as gifts for Healthy Baby don't interfere during the holidays. Lynn pointed out that a church is available only for a 3-week period to store gifts for prisoners, so that's a consideration. Lynn agreed to explore an alternative storage option, since the size of the FUSN prison contributions is not huge. Laurel suggested maybe a nice-looking chest in the narthex would suffice.

Laurel suggests that Healthy Baby takes up a lot of space and that maybe that should be looked at. Others also pointed out that they may be confused by all the collections around the holidays...Healthy Baby? Stand High Stand United? Prison project? COA Ecclesia Ministries?

Jeannie described the big picture: We need to think about both scheduling and space issues, including tables, collections, chaos and cacophony. There are too many asks, even though all the causes may be good ones to support. And Laurel says there are also many asks from outside FUSN.

Laurel suggests having a monthly coffee hour with no tables at all...only coffee. Jeannie says we should think about having more seating, so people could sit down.

Lynn points out that using the Alliance Room for spill over tables is not a good choice, because fewer people go to that room.

Erin says we need a comprehensive plan for all activities, whether CSA, RE, COA, Coffee House, Youth programs, in other words, an integrated calendar for all.

Ecclesia scheduling is determined by that organization, and they only offer 5 weekends a year. Jeannie says it's good to have this COA project after Thompson's Island but early in the year.

Laurel asks if we can have a branding effort for fundraising....a coordinated digest of social action, vs. separate and numerous asks. Erin asks if updates should be by category, such as social action, RE, etc.

Jeannie loves the new CSA logo.

Lynn points out that social action members have lots of ideas and it's a fine line to balance encouraging and discouraging initiatives. Social Action reported 27 projects in this year's Annual Report.

Erin points out that the communication element is something we've been looking at for over a year. How to better coordinate? Digests combine the messages but some projects need multiple requests in order to get volunteers (Women's Lunch Place, Newton Food Pantry, etc.).

Lynn points out the difficulty of trying to minimize this overload, such as calling individuals and telling them they should not pursue a project.

Erin says these elements all need consideration: scheduling, communication (frequency, method, content), and number of asks. She proposes a summit in the fall with leaders of relevant groups to coordinate.

Jeannie proposes brief updates, somewhat like a digest: this is what's coming up this month/this week. Laurel asks if maybe the Ops Council should put out such messages.

Staff update: Erin & Meghan

Erin mentioned that all teaching slots for next year are filled, except for 1 open slot. There is nothing new or exceptional to report.

Erin says there will be a celebration of Fran's 30th anniversary at FUSN on Water (Gathering) Sunday in the fall. She knows about it. We need to decide how to celebrate and what gift to give her.

Financial: Susan

- Susan summarized this year's budget approval process. The Ops Council went to the Board meeting in May to offer a proposed budget. The process went well. The budget was approved at the Annual Meeting.

- Review of year-to-date spending: We need to discuss the process with the new Treasurer. Judy will also consult with Alan Cody, previous Treasurer, as needed.
- Also to be discussed: building use fees; increasing income from fees.

Next meeting; scheduling a retreat: All

Laurel suggests a short meeting in August to discuss plans for the coming year, including a barbecue at her house. Agreed. Date TBD.

The Board may be doing a multi-cultural training session in the fall, so a joint meeting should be held later.

Discussion about Capital Campaign: A decision needs to be made about if we should we go ahead with an advisor. This would mean a “Next Step” weekend with a consultant. First, we would meet with the consultant and decide if that person will be the advisor throughout the Cap Cam. It’s an assessment of whether we are ready to do a Cap Cam, i.e., have the capacity for fundraising. Susan says Charlie, Bobbie, Laurel and she will meet to make a decision about recommending one of the 2 people being considered as consultant, Mark Ewert or Barry Finkelstein.

Jeannie suggests we need to look at Sunday morning in a broader way, possibly making changes. Laurel says we should work on this across groups, including the interests of all, not just Ops, but also ministry, RE. Jeannie adds we could have a congregational meeting to discuss.

Meghan mentions having post-service discussions in the Alliance Room. This had been raised in the Chalice Circle dinner discussion. Judy suggests someone may be willing to coordinate such conversations.

Some discussion followed about rates FUSN members pay for renting space at FUSN. Judy points out that a FUSN rep needs to be in the building when outsiders rent space, since they don’t know their way around.

Thank yous: All

- Denise Bousquet for Sandy Island
- Jackie Rohan for Rebecca's ordination
- Ellie Crocker Morse for her work on the Ministerial Review.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Schwartz,
Assistant Clerk