

**FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
OPERATIONS COUNCIL MINUTES
November 12, 2014
Alliance Room, 7:00 P.M.**

Present: Susan Bartlett, Rev Meghan Cefalu, Judy Curby, Laurel Farnsworth, Anne Hess-Mahan, Andrea Kelley, Rev Erin Splaine, Rowan Van Ness. Guest: Allison Costello, Youth Board Member.

~ 7:00-7:05 **Invocation / Chalice Lighting:** Laurel, "The Last Leaf," Harry Behn

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.

~ The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm.

~ **Approvals:** All

- August, September meeting minutes - Approved
- October minutes: Laurel would like to run them by Gail Smalley before approvals
- Zambia service/fundraiser November 23rd- Approved by email unanimously.

~ **Newton Cultural Alliance:** Laurel

The Managing Director of the Newton Cultural Alliance has asked FUSN (and is also asking Second Church) if we would like to join the NCA at the lowest level of annual membership, \$175. The reason this has come up now is that NCA compiles the five things to do column in the weekly Newton Tab. The fair is coming up on the same weekend that the NCA conducts the Annual Holiday Stroll -- a joint effort with the merchants in West Newton, Newton Centre, Newton Highlands and the Street in Chestnut Hill -- with NCA member musical and artistic organizations. If we join now, our two fairs can be one of the five things listed the week of the fair, and then we can submit other concerts, art shows, etc., throughout the year to be listed. There are 24 organizations in the NCA.

Discussion ensued about what the benefit would be - more traffic to FUSN for the holiday fair and potential increased sales; increased awareness of FUSN activities for this year; and greater awareness of FUSN, in general. We would transfer the cost from the Contingency line to the Communications budget line. Anne moved to join the NCA. Andrea seconded. Laurel abstained, as she is involved with NCA. Approved 4; 1 abstention.

~ **Staff update:** Erin, Meghan, Rowan

- **Rowan:** As reported, there are new families this year. The RE council is re-examining its mission wording on the website; it hasn't been updated in 5 years. RE circles are starting: Justice is functioning. Others are getting into gear, including Connections, Children's RE, Youth . Rowan went to a liberal RE educators conference in Atlantic, where she found energy, connections, and ideas. Concerns around safety in the RE context were also raised. The youth group is doing well, with typical attendance at 10-15 people.
- **Meghan:** About 50 people came to Fun Friday Night. Member Services talked about changing its name to reflect a broader scope. Congregational Engagement is under consideration.
There was some discussion about FUSN having opportunities to model discussing and accepting diversity.
- **Erin:** She spent time with kindergarteners. The Multi-cultural Ministry initiative had a session with an author, attended by about 90 people or so. This Thursday, the 3rd part of the diversity documentary will be shown. Rowan and she got Safe Congregation up and running with assistance from Ted Hess-Mahan and Ellen Metzger.

The budget drive team is as follows: Urban Larson agreed to chair if 2 others join. Experienced members David Morocco and Linda Rinearson will be on the committee . The hope is that Urban would continue next year, with new people to rotate in and out over 2 years.

The DLRE job description has been approved by Personnel Policy Committee and has been posted. Erin has been talking with Rowan about her potential involvement.

Erin said she needs 2 weeks off in January for a family health issue that involves a long recovery process. She will be available by Internet & phone during the first 2 weeks in January and then then back at FUSN.

~ **Reports on October and November Board of Trustees meetings:**

October: Anne. The BOT is involved in strategic planning, especially a vision statement. They also want to define goals. Anne asked they share these with the Ops Council, to help Ops focus on budget for the coming year. They would like to clarify when leadership should be attending various meetings, such as the recent interfaith tour of windows.

Becca Lozinsky is other youth rep to the Board and she suggested a children's campaign

around a “what FUSN means to you” slogan.

November: Judy. The BOT continued discussion about a potential FUSN slogan. Explorations included who is FUSN? If a character, what attributes would s/he have? Work is continuing on that.

The BOT also discussed budget priorities. They want to continue the current staffing structure; support multi-cultural activities; and reduce the draw on the endowment. Potentially add support for a Ministerial Intern later. They also want to find a way to provide support for improving/updating FUSN’s website. A question is whether funds designated for “support of the Wayside Pulpit and UUA pamphlets” can be used for publicity in its wider sense. The Board of Investment has information on the fund’s restrictions. Legal input may be needed on how to interpret the bequest in current times.

~ **Financial:** review year-to-date spending: Judy and All

Several issues were noted: (1) An apparent accounting error was made in funds paid for Rowan’s benefits. Fran had put her in the system in error, as the benefit is not actually in her contract.

(2) Laurel noted that the line for computer expenses seems high. It could be that expenses are being charged to different line items than budgeted for. They are wondering where the \$50/month for database service is being charged.

Laurel: A 5-year projection will be finished next month, for a complete report in January. The draft shows FUSN’s financial position improving, because a 4% increase in projected pledges was included, and it seems reasonable. It can’t be predicted what effect a capital campaign will have on the figures. Utilities are unpredictable and expected to go up if the winter is cold. Other building needs include a leak in the Sanctuary arch; funds designated for the memorial garden will go to repair this leak. It could be ceiling or flashing issues...to be diagnosed.

~ Review issue of **tables at coffee hour:** Susan

Some discussion occurred by email, concerning a table for Catie Curtis’ concert. It’s still to be decided who can set up a table and for what purpose. Laurel would like to see occasional coffee hours where there are no tables. Andrea suggested we use the Alliance Room during coffee hour. Judy is not concerned about having tables in coffee hour; it’s part of the milieu for connecting and letting people know about what’s going on. Cutting out tables could remove opportunities for sharing information. Anne said it’s currently difficult to maneuver around the Parish Hall during coffee hour. Rowan asks if people know that the Alliance Room is available, and maybe a note could be put in the order of service, newsletter, etc: If you’d like to enjoy a quiet coffee hour, go to Alliance Room. Erin said space in the order of service is limited due to additional information, such as social action activities and a domestic abuse hotline number. Should we add this to the Board Member welcome at start of service? Anne will text Madison;

Susan will discuss with Bobbie Sproat, Board Chair.

Susan still wishes to establish a policy regarding tables at coffee hour. For extra tables, a decision could be based on if there room on any given day and the connection to or affiliation with FUSN. Ops does need to approve any additional tables, beyond the usual set up. Andrea said it's important to have guidelines and criteria. Erin mentioned there was a newsletter article on this topic. Jeannie Chaisson's input will be welcome on this. Susan will talk with her.

~ **FUSN 2015 art show**

MaryLou Eshelman is looking ahead to next year's art show, usually in November. There was discussion of whether they could use the Parish Hall on Sunday which would interfere with coffee hour. One idea was that it be Saturday only. A percent of funds raised goes FUSN. It's not clear how much that would be in dollars. Andrea feels the Parish Hall priority should be coffee hour; could the art be moved upstairs and/or to the Alliance Room. Judy says they could stay there all afternoon. Maybe set up in Headstart and Alliance Room for the whole time or have coffee hour upstairs and in the Alliance Room. Erin says she doesn't want this to happen until there's an elevator. Laurel suggests have a gala opening Friday night, with the art show open all day Saturday, with no Sunday show. It was said that if it isn't on Sunday, it doesn't include the whole FUSN community. Judy suggests sharing with the art show folks the parameters and options and let them decide. Laurel will write to MaryLou and Linda Rinearson about this.

~ Update on the **Catie Curtis concert**

The non-profit organization, Americans United, is the beneficiary of the funds collected. It has adequate insurance (\$2 million general liability + \$5 million umbrella + workers' compensation). Laurel said we need them to issue FUSN a policy for that night. Henry will do cleanup in time for Sunday morning service.

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

- **Communications Committee: Anne**

The committee met with Meghan & Susan to discuss the structure of communications committee. They identified projects they are working on, including FUSN's website. Constant Contact is up and running and will have live links. Systems need to be in place first, followed by tasks. Jud will continue doing FUSN's email lists. Nancy DuVergne-Smith says there's too much to do, and it's hard to get volunteers. She will continue to work on the newsletter, but the committee needs more volunteers. Maybe funds should be budgeted to pay for getting some of the tasks done. A few FUSNites apparently offered to do this, i.e., for small stipends. The committee is also updating the FUSN Yellow Pages. A new committee leader is also needed, like a project manager, even if that person is not handling specifics tasks. Laurel suggested working on a budget and a long-term vision, like she does for Buildings & Grounds.

- Social Action: CSA approves fundraisers under their purview. They have provided a list but without specific dates, except for Christmas and the Alternative Gift Fair. The Alzheimer's Walk was earlier this fall. Prisoner gift bags is current. Also to be scheduled are Stand High Stand United; UNICEF cards; and Guest at Your Table. One concern about GaYT, is that Karen Lein is doing it alone. Erin talking with Karen about this effort. Perhaps there could be an RE story about it. Also the boxes will be distributed in the orders of service this year, and checks can be mailed in/delivered for the amount each family collects, rather than collecting all the cash and having a marathon counting session.
- Joint Committee Chairs will meet November 22.

~ **Thank yous:** Pat Rohan for all the behind the scenes work on the Nov. 14-16 Next Steps Weekend with stewardship consultant Mark Ewert and the participants in the meetings that helped Mark gain an understanding of how FUSN views connection and stewardship.

~ The meeting adjourned at 9: pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Schwartz,
Assistant Clerk