

FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
OPERATIONS COUNCIL MINUTES
Wednesday, October 8, 2014
Alliance Room, 7:00 p.m.

Present: Susan Bartlett, Rev Meghan Cefalu, Jeannie Chaisson, Judy Curby, Laurel Farnsworth, Anne Hess-Mahan, Andrea Kelley, Rev Erin Splaine, Rowan Van Ness. Guests: Gayle Smalley, Esq. (rental agreements); Greg DiBiaso (Board rep.).

~ **The meeting** was called to order at 7:00 pm.

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.

~ **Invocation / Chalice Lighting:** Jeannie

~ **Approvals:** All

May minutes were approved as amended.

~ FUSN rental policies: Rental Agreement, Rentals to Political Candidates/Issues: Gayle Smalley

Gayle stressed the difference between FUSN events and third party events. She brought examples of non-profit rental agreements, such as from Lasell University and St. Paul's Church in Brookline. Gayle recommends that the Council review the rentals information page on St. Pauls' website. The renter must be clearly identified, whether an individual or an organization. Gayle passed around a sample 2-page agreement from Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company. Variables include, among others, whether there needs to be a police detail and whether alcohol will be served. Fran Clancy would still be the FUSN coordinator and signer of rental leases.

Only Fran and Laurel are authorized to make duplicate keys.

Insurance is a major concern. Gayle suggests \$1million liability for insurance purposes for rental events; this would be difficult to implement. It was asked if there could be options to waive it. An individual or organization is not likely to be able to get such coverage for a single event. One-day \$1 million riders are not readily available. Laurel pointed out that FUSN has been having a wide range of single event activities. As we do more and more of these, it puts

FUSN at greater risk. She suggests we need to get some policies (both insurance and procedures) in place. Gayle also suggested that the sponsoring organization might have coverage. Meghan said that in another state, it could be done. Laurel pointed out that Massachusetts insurance is more complicated. Gayle says she will call a local insurance agent to get a quote. Maybe it is also possible to revise FUSN's insurance coverage overall? In any case, it is a financial decision, and each rental situation is individual. The renter needs to get all necessary permits, such as regarding having liquor. Newton requires permits for most events, an "entertainment license."

Gayle added several standard terms and conditions to the sample agreement she had drafted and went over them, including: FUSN's standard safety precautions; names of mutual contacts in case of emergency; locking up; no sub-licenses; no parking; and no use of equipment, musical instruments, etc., unless specifically stated. The renter is responsible for any damage or breakage.

The sample document includes examples, which may or may not apply to all rentals.

Laurel pointed out that FUSN "should" have a building manager, which could also be the sexton. She said that such a position would cost \$90k, plus benefits. FUSN does not have the means to hire such a person. We currently contract out tasks and are not staffed for building supervision on a regular basis. For events like weddings, FUSN needs to have/pay staff to be here. A reliable person who is knowledgeable about the building needs to be available from setup to last person out. Laurel says most people don't want to work on an as-call basis. Erin thinks perhaps someone might want to do this to augment his/her income. Laurel says we tried this in the past and there were no takers. Wendy will privately suggest a name to Erin. Erin asks if there could be a team, such as a group, like the Lay Ministers or the Care Crew, to handle weddings. Suggested pay could be \$30/ hour.

Judy wonders if we should be doing these events, if not directly connected to our mission, given the complexities and potential liability concerns.

Laurel is worried that we are doing so many things, that we are putting ourselves at risk. She's especially concerned about setup and ladders.

Erin says some of these events were previously handled under music committee auspices; but for Catie Curtis's fundraising concerts, Catie said she would not ask for FUSN volunteers to assist.

Gayle pointed out that for one memorial service for a congregant, the family used lots of FUSN equipment and did not clean up. There was no official FUSN representative to oversee the event.

Greg wondered if FUSN could add a rider to our insurance policy to cover weekend events. Jeannie said that, for FUSN members, insurance isn't needed for weddings and funerals. Perhaps the rider could cover a certain number of events, rather than every week. Laurel

pointed out that FUSN is not an entertainment venue.

Andrea asked if we want to get more people to come to FUSN or if the goal is to bring in more money. Meghan said that once people come from outside, some return, get involved and become members.

Laurel said that some performers have limited schedule options, so having a set time that insurance covers FUSN isn't practical.

Andrea asked if the building is available for fundraisers for other organizations? She also added that a long document will deter renters. Meghan suggested revising the information on FUSN's wedding page. Weddings performed by a FUSN ministers are covered, as that is part of FUSN's mission.

Susan pointed out how complex this issue is overall. Those present agreed that Gayle should go forward with updating FUSN's rental agreement and some of the complexities will be addressed going forward. Judy asked if there are different varieties of St. Paul's rental agreements. Gayle said there are concert and non-concert versions. Judy asked if there should be different variations for different kinds of events.

Andrea and Jeannie agreed to review the rental agreement drafts with Gayle going forward. Erin asked if another FUSNite should sign such agreements, in addition to Fran.

Gratitude was expressed for Gayle's work on this! Gayle, Laurel and Andrea have all had some experience with events and rentals for the City of Newton.

Discussion continued about Tom Bean's request to hold a fundraiser at FUSN for the Kill the Casino ballot question. Laurel said Tom has agreed to pay the member rate, which is \$88.00, rather than requesting a waiver. Susan had asked Pat Rohan about political events and reported that it hadn't really come up before.

A question was raised about organizations that serve the community and what to charge them. Jeannie pointed out that we need to be careful about setting precedent. Holding a forum on gambling in Massachusetts is different from holding an event for one side of an issue.

It was mentioned that the UUA recommends *not* renting facilities to political candidates, although policies don't prohibit it. Rowan said the District of Columbia UUA supported having events on issues but not for candidates or parties.

Erin says we need to be cautious about what events we allow, as it sets precedent. Perhaps any member can rent the space for his/her issue, whatever it is, under the "big tent" concept; but not non-FUSNites. Tom Bean had said the Massachusetts legislature notes a difference between fundraising for an issue versus for a candidate or party. Discussion ensued.

Erin asked if we could say "no" to an "issue" fundraiser that is not consistent with FUSN's mission and values. Laurel suggested that, as a religious organization, we can discriminate. More discussion followed as to whether there should be limits on permissible topics.

Rowan said there are "social witness statements" on the UUA website that are "sanctioned"

issues and positions. The statements have been voted on and were provided by local congregations from around the country. This could be a tool to help in these decisions. Tom had said the UUA said there is nothing in this resource list about gambling.

Erin said we need to be all-in or all-out in terms of allowing issue- and topic-focused events. We just need to be consistent. She doesn't want politics in the Sanctuary or in Candles of Joy and Concern and rarely from the pulpit. She is more inclined to be all-in.

Andrea said fundraising events need to come before the Ops Council, so there is room for discussion on a case by case basis. Andrea is also inclined to be more "all-in."

Laurel asked for clarification that any time there is a fundraiser, there needs to be some rental payment. This was affirmed. **It can be reduced for non-profits but should not be rent-free.** Gayle provided an update by email [11/24, to the Assistant Clerk, CC to Susan and Laurel] that a landlord [FUSN] can be liable for injuries incurred by a guest of the renter.

Laurel moved to allow Tom Bean to rent FUSN at the member rate, for a rally and fundraising event in support of Ballot Question 3 (to repeal casino gambling). It was seconded and passed unanimously.

Andrea reported that David Morocco will take over following up on prior-year unpaid pledges, done previously for several years by Wendy Schwartz. Laurel said we are doing well in terms of pledges coming in, including current and past overdue amounts.

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

Rowan talked about the kickoff for Coming Of Age, children's RE, mentor training, parent orientation, and follow up to teacher orientation. COA youth reported enjoying their program and feeling better connected to FUSN. Five RE reps went to a RE-restart workshop. Sixty-two children were in RE on the first Sunday. She said it is typical for attendance to go down each week. This past Sunday, however, there were 82. In addition, RE circles are starting up. She'll be going to an RE conference next week, which will include multi-cultural RE efforts.

Meghan reported that 7-10 newcomers have been signing the register each week. She is looking at different ways to reach out to new people. She ran a New to UU retreat for 7 people, but it was on Yom Kippur. This New UU retreat happens twice per year. There's a good UU video for newcomers, which could perhaps be shown in the Children's Chapel. There's a newcomer pot luck on 10/18. She is contacting some people from last spring who may become new members on November 2.

Laurel proposed having a flat screen tv in the Alliance Room, for showing videos there.

Meghan continued: Dinners for Seven are being launched. Hosts will choose their own dates,

to happen before Thanksgiving.

Chalice Circles begin this week, and the effort to bring in new people will continue.

She passed around a sample of a Constant Contact version of the FUSN eNewsletter. It includes links to content on FUSN's website. Laurel asked if we are keeping the protocol that people's personal contact information is excluded from open-web pages and will only be viewable on sign-in pages.

Erin attended a staff workshop run by the district. Multi-cultural ministry work is in progress. Two people will work with Rowan, Meghan and Erin on multi-cultural work planning.

Attendance numbers are up on Sunday mornings, and she'd like to keep that momentum, as well as continuing care for those who have been here.

Those present noted appreciation for Erin's sermon topic on "Evil."

There will be a guest preacher this Sunday, while many FUSNites will be at Ferry Beach. Also this Sunday, the nursery will be available, but no RE for other kids.

~ **Report on October Board of Trustees meeting:** Since the meeting is next week, there is no report for tonight.

~ **Update Committee issues/reports:**

The Communications Committee needs a new Chair. Discussion suggested that the committee identify the various tasks and share the load. Anne will talk with Meghan about accomplishing this.

The Holiday Fair co-chair seat is still open. Several names were proposed. Co-chair Bonnie MacDonald had already had a meeting, and several people attended. People can sign up for tasks on both iVolunteer and at a table at Coffee Hour.

~ Susan brought up scheduling the bi-annual Ops-Committee Chairs meeting. Date TBD via email.

~ Annual Budget Drive Committee Updates: All

~ Financial Review year-to-date spending: All No issues

~ **Thank yous:** All the care crew people who provided help this month.

~ The meeting adjourned at 9: 06 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Schwartz,
Assistant Clerk