



Date: October 12, 2011

Approved by E-mail vote, 11/06/2011

COUNCIL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Pat Rohan (Ch), Laurel Farnsworth, Alan Cody, Anne Hess-Mahan, Jeannie Chaisson, and Kim Shanks.
ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:	Mr. Barb Greve (Assistant Clerk: Bonnie McDonald)
UNABLE TO ATTEND:	Rev. Erin Splaine

1. OPENING WORDS

Kim read FUSN's Statement of Purpose:

"We come together in an open community that honors freedom of belief, to encourage spiritual growth in ourselves and our children, to share the wisdom of the many religious traditions, with reverence for the earth and in service to humanity."

2. SEPTEMBER OPS COUNCIL BOARD MINUTES

Motion: Approve September 14th Ops Council Meeting Minutes

Vote: Approved unanimously; 6-0.

3. RETREAT FOLLOW-UP

A. BOARD INCREASES OPS COUNCIL'S BUDGET LIMIT – UPDATE BY ALAN

Alan mentioned that the Board approved that the Operations ("Ops") Council could handle matters up to \$25,000; which would be for expenses. The Board still wants to be able to approve donations for various reasons. He also mentioned that the Board is in agreement that the Ops Council should be relatively unencumbered about carrying out budget related tasks, but that there should be a communicated 'vision' and a checklist/template.

It was discussed that maybe the Board could have "Five Big Things" on a checklist for budgetary discussions, so they do not have to go over every line item. There was consensus that the question should be raised to help make sure everyone is on the same page, which was: "Is the budget taking the congregation in a direction we want to go?"

B. BUDGET PROCESS – UPDATE BY PAT

Pat said that he met with Erin Splaine and Susan Bartlett and the Steering Committee; and it was mentioned that we need to come up with a written process for the budget. For example: *For the Finance Committee, who would do what and when?* (Same questions would apply for the Ops Council and the Board.)

It was discussed that the Board needs to continue to have a say in Personnel issues; and it was said that Erin might be talking to the Personnel Policy Committee soon. One goal is to have them tied into the budget process, and *earlier* in the process; and that the Finance Committee should not have to go to any meetings to get the Personnel Policy salary recommendations.

Pat mentioned that the Personnel Policy Committee used to report their recommendations earlier to the Board (*i.e.*, they would make their recommendations in March).

When someone inquired as to whether the Finance Committee should create a new timeline, Laurel stated the timeline for other items did work. For example, in December - long term projection, January - B&G, February - RE, March - Personnel, April - complete budget with all other committee requests to be able to make changes and vote in May.



C. INQUIRIES RE: FINANCE COMMITTEE PROCESS

There was an inquiry about whether the Finance Committee ever refuses any requests. Alan mentioned the Finance Committee rarely says no to requests, but would make recommendations based upon financial conditions or the Finance Committee would raise any big issues, if needed. He also said it would be wise for a Committee to submit a request early, if they have an ambitious budget item.

D. BUDGETARY/MEMBERSHIP CONCERNS AND ANNUAL BUDGET DRIVE

It was stated that there might be a flat level of membership and giving at the present time. The question came up: “ Pat mentioned he believes the Board is working on being on top of the question: “*Who do we want to be when we ‘grow up?’*”

Laurel mentioned it might be a good idea to have a Saturday morning leadership meeting about the annual Budget Drive issues.

Kim and others mentioned that it appeared the Membership Committee activities were definitely adding a new level of energy and opportunities. It was said that there appears to be much more activity, contributing to the sense that this is a welcoming place.

Barb wanted to remind folks to make an effort to invite people to Sandy Island and Ferry Beach.

E. TERM LIMIT SUGGESTIONS

Term limits were discussed, and there was some consensus that they are too short. It takes a while to get fully immersed into the Board and Ops Council responsibilities, and it may be detrimental to have people leaving these positions after just a couple of years. Pat mentioned there is nothing in the Bylaws to say you can't ‘*re-up*’ or re-run for the same position. Jeannie felt that if there was a concerted effort on behalf of both groups (Board and Ops) to make changes to the processes that would lead to more meaningful work, then maybe people would stay on longer.

F. MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS OF DISCUSSION RELATED TO THE RETREAT

Jeannie and others noticed a lot of willingness to work on improving Governance documents and processes.

Pat mentioned Laurel may want to attend the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO).

A question was asked about how to improve the Annual Budget Drive process; and it was mentioned that the Board of Trustees may be considering increasing their own pledges to show leadership. Another question came up about whether the Board wanted to take a leadership role in the Budget Drive this year. Laurel mentioned that Doug Zelinski, who moderated the October 1st Board/Ops Council Retreat, said we need to do things differently to ensure a successful campaign. Doug had told us at the Retreat that he had committed 5% of his income to a UU congregation he used to attend.

4. BRIEF UPDATE ON COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

A. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL – UPDATE BY BARB

Barb reported that Dr. M’ellen Kennedy - a co-founder of the UU Small Group Ministry Network will be coming to FUSN on October 30 to discuss Chalice Circles. It was suggested that we find a way to communicate this effectively to the congregation soon.

There was mention of the need to make sure FUSN is a ‘Safe Congregation.’ Pat mentioned that Erin is talking to a few folks about leading a committee to take on the project of establishing a Safe Congregation policy.

B. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE – UPDATE BY PAT

Pat said he attended a recent Membership Committee meeting and mentioned the upcoming Halloween Party on October 29th. There will also be a newcomers’ Potluck event on November 5th. The Membership Committee is actively working on the FUSN Print Directory, with photos.

Pat also mentioned that there was discussion about member retention.



C. COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE – UPDATE BY ANNE

- **Membership Directory Photos:** Anne said the Communications Committee is working closely with the Membership Committee on the new Directories. Photos for the directory will be taken on the following dates: 10/23, 10/30, and 11/6. Participants can pick up forms at the Membership table in Parish Hall after the Sunday Service or online. Anne mentioned she will be asking people if they want to be in the Online Directory, which will be password protected.
- **Website Upgrades:** Anne mentioned that there will be some upgrades made to the FUSN website, at no extra cost; and that they are in the process of reworking it.
- **FaceBook:** We need someone to spearhead FUSN's FaceBook page and upkeep. It definitely needs help.
- **Blog:** The blog project needs a leader. A blog template has been created, and it's ready for use. However, there should be some discussion about setting guidelines for content.
- **Newsletter:** The question was asked about if we want FUSN's Newsletter to go out to the public (e.g., on the FUSN website). Pat suggested we set up a time to discuss the following:
 - Should Newsletter go public or not?
 - Continue to mail it to everyone, or not?
 - Mailing frequency
 - Contents

Pat mentioned he may get Nancy DuVergne Smith to come to a meeting and talk about it.

D. WORSHIP COMMITTEE

It was reported that the Worship Committee met recently, and that Erin had mentioned (during that meeting) that she wanted the Committee to focus on more than just lay led services.

E. DIRECTOR OF LIFESPAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MINISTRIES SEARCH COMMITTEE – UPDATE BY BARB

Barb gave out copies of a postcard that will be used at meetings and conferences to help find a new Director of Lifespan Religious Education Ministries.

F. FINANCE COMMITTEE

A question came up about the Quarterly Bulletin/Report: Should it go out be web only, or should we mail it to the congregation? There is a big expenditure associated with mailing it, and the budget is tight.

Motion: Jeannie proposed we put the Quarterly Report on the website, and send a hard copy to those who ask for one. (Alan said we needed to inform the congregation.)

Vote: Approved unanimously; 6-0.

It was also mentioned that we need a more precise budget forecast.

G. BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE – UPDATE BY LAUREL

Laurel reported that the total funds spent of the repairs line items, which includes major maintenance, was at 28% last month. The total funds spent of the repairs line items without major maintenance was roughly 80% in September. We're already over budget in that second subcategory now. Once all the contracts in the major maintenance line item are finished, we will see the problem more clearly.



5. REVIEW FINANCE REPORTS

Alan went over the Finance spreadsheets, including:

- FUSN Monthly Budget Tracking
- FUSN Fiscal Year 2012 – Period Report to the Congregation (June 1 – Sept. 1, 2011)
- FUSN Operating Budget Summary (FY12)
- Treasurer's Report to the Operations Council (10/12/11)

Some discussion came up about what the Board of Trustees' high level questions should be, relating to FUSN's finances.

- **Is FUSN in control of its finances?** Alan mentioned we had some restricted accounts that were not being reported regularly, but Nancy Tobias brought them to his attention. They wrote off some items. Not a big deal, but we'll be watching out for this from now on.
- **Are we solvent?** Questions came up, such as "Do we have liquidity? Do our current assets stack up to our current liabilities?" Alan noted we have excellent liquidity for covering expenses.
- **How do we handle cash?** Alan said we handle cash okay, and have processes to make sure it is handed off to the right people. It was mentioned that, as an example, they do a good job handling cash at the Holiday Fair.

Alan observed that Nancy Tobias is very knowledgeable about QuickBooks software; and very valuable to FUSN. In her first year, she looked through our journal entries and found things that should have been posted to different accounts. She also has very good institutional memory.

6. ANNE BANCROFT ORDINATION

Barb said the Board voted to ordain Anne Bancroft at FUSN.

7. PLAYGROUND INCIDENTS AFTER SERVICES

There has been a general concern about the continuing safety of FUSN's children on the playground. Recently, a bullying incident was reported. It was quickly discussed and handled by FUSN Staff.

The question was raised about who is responsible for the kids in the playground after they get out of their religious education classes.

As a 'Safe Congregation,' we need to immediately deal with these issues and discuss our policies on how to keep our children safe. We may need to look at the sign-up forms to make sure it is clear that parents need to mind their children after classes and services. One idea was to include a sentence in the Order of Service with the same message.

It was also discussed that each child must be registered to continue attending the classes.

8. REPORT ON LOCAL AREA INITIATIVES: MIT PLACE-MAKING SURVEY

Barb said there is a team of five Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) students doing a survey on 'place making' in West Newton.¹ These are Masters level students studying Urban Development.

There are two upcoming meetings: One on 10/13 (9:00 a.m.) at Paddy's Pub on Elm Street, which will be with local business folks. The other meeting is on 10/20 in Newton City Hall (7:00 p.m.). Anne mentioned she would be attending the meeting at City Hall. Barb shared a flyer from the City of Newton Planning & Development Department (in conjunction with the MIT Department of Urban Studies & Planning). Title: *Envisioning West Newton Village and Washington Street [a student presentation], [a community conversation]*.

¹ *Place-making* has been described as a way to create a project or environment with unique characteristics that encourages social interaction and serves as a 'heart' of a community.



9. CATIE CURTIS HOUSE CONCERT

The Catie Curtis concert to benefit FUSN will be held on December 11th at 7:00 p.m., in the home of Carol Reichert and Jerry Shereda, in Newton.

There was discussion on the need to begin promoting it. Tickets will be \$40, and are limited to 60.

10. ALTERNATIVE HOLIDAY GIFT FAIR

The Alternative Holiday Gift Fair was approved by the Operations Council via E-mail.

11. APPRECIATION

The following people were nominated for 'Thank Yous' by the Ops Council:

- A. **VERN ELLIS** – *For his contributions to making the Ferry Beach event a success.*
- B. **RACHEL YEE** – *For her contributions to making the Ferry Beach event fun for families.*
- C. **JENNIFER LERNER, MINDY SCHARLIN, AND RACHEL YEE** – *For coordinating/organizing the Rosh Hashanah dinner.*

12. UPCOMING PROGRAMS

It was asked if anyone could attend the *Conflict and Competing Values* program by Doug Zelinski on 10/22 or other upcoming dates. Pat mentioned he would ask Barbara Bates from the Conflict Resolution Committee, as well.

13. UPCOMING MEETINGS & SCHEDULE

Operations Council Meetings are being held on the second Wednesday of each month. Next month's meeting is 11/9/11.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie McDonald, Assistant Clerk
November 7, 2011