

**FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON**  
**OPERATIONS COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**December 12, 2012**

Present: Jeannie Chaisson, Alan Cody, Anne Hess-Mahan, Laurel Farnsworth, Perry Montrose, Kim Shanks

- ~ The meeting was called to order by Laurel at 7:03 pm
- ~ Alan provided opening words.
- ~ Attendees read the covenant.

~ Treasurer's Update:

Alan reported a deposit of \$20K this week and a stable cash flow to date, this fiscal year. Prior year pledges are also coming in very high. Attendance at Sunday services is up, as well.

~ Committee chairs: Per Anne: Nancy DuVergne Smith, Pat, Anne and the rest of the committee, plus Bruce Henderson, will meet in January on communications outreach.

~ At the joint committee meeting, it was agreed that the FUSN website needs updating. The Communications Committee should consider putting in budget request for an outside consultant, with supporting documentation.

~ Adult RE: Alan - The committee is finalizing the spring catalogue. Lots of interest has been expressed in lifestyle issues, such as retirement, health, financial topics, etc. The next pilot course from the Mass Bible Society starts in April. Those who participated in the first one said it was interesting.

~ Perry: The first meeting of the high school parent support group was held. Eleven people came, and it went well. The group will continue to meet on the 2nd Sunday of each month.

~ Rebecca Hines put together a memorial observation on the death of John Sarvey for the youth; the youth created a card for Rachel, Elijah, and MeeJee. Rachel has been a Youth Group advisor.

~ Jeannie: The hat & mitten drive for the Mather School was quite successful last Sunday. The Youth Group helped in the effort.

~ Music Committee: The Katie Curtis and Mary Gauthier concert plans are moving forward. It will be open to the FUSN community for a nominal ticket price. Tickets will cover the cost of the musicians and equipment. It will be a FUSN event but not a fundraiser.

~ B&G: Laurel : The first draft of the B&G budget is due in January, so interested parties

should submit items if needed, such as furniture for RE Director's office. The cold temperature of the door in the baby room/stage is metal; cold is due to convection, not a draft. There was discussion about the door to the men's room outside the Parish Hall; it needs to be wheelchair accessible, so it must remain set up as is. Laurel would like to have the sofa and chairs in the Ladies' Parlor re-upholstered. It is more cost effective to re-upholster, rather than buy new, lower quality furniture.

~ Board Meeting report - Alan

The Board has deferred the discussion about getting a new Ops Council Chair; they indicated someone may come forward to volunteer.

The Board approved dropping 12 people from FUSN's member list, since they have not attended nor pledged in 2 years. FUSN pays \$70 per year to the UUA for each member, which is why this action is being considered. The individuals did not respond to contact requests, so it seems appropriate to remove them.

Bruce Henderson had prepared an assessment of membership numbers and distribution by longevity (what year they became members). Overall, membership is up since 2010. Budget priorities centered on a \$3500 information system, i.e. a data base. There was discussion about people who participate at FUSN but who aren't members and how to track whether individuals are members or not. Someone with experience on such a database is needed to help set up and use it. Perhaps a FUSN member could contribute expertise in this area.

There was continuing discussion of the Board's Vision. The goal is to minimize the Board's involvement in details of the budget, but rather to focus on defining and fulfilling FUSN's mission. The question was raised as to whether the Board's Vision should reflect Board members' vision or be more of a channeling of a full congregational vision.

By-Laws: The Board also discussed if Ops Council members should be elected by the congregation or chosen by the Board. A proposed By-law change would have them elected. Also raised was the question of whether FUSN should change the fiscal year to end June 30, rather than end of May. One reason is that there's been a pattern of spending money before new fiscal year begins. The change would eliminate this situation.

Another topic at the Board meeting was whether there should be term limits for Ops Council and Board of Investments members. The latter current members feel there should be. The Financial Oversight Committee is just getting going; it would have a stewardship, control function, rather than operational. It would coordinate all finance entities (Fran Clancy, Alan, the Investment Board, etc.) and summarize the information, to determine if all are adhering to policy. For example, if the investment policy is 80-20 equity/debt, is that what the Board of Investment is implementing.

Board member Lisa Gresser announced, after much reflection, her intention to resign from the Board. She prefers to offer her talents to FUSN in other ways. The Board discussed whether to let the position remain open, since the Board may be reduced in size if By-laws changes are approved -- including if the Ops Council would be elected and choose its own chair. Also, in proposed By-laws changes, the Ops Council would operate under the authority of the Board.

~ Board members also discussed the need for better orienting candidates and new officers.

~ Another topic the Board discussed was the lack of a policy for removal of a Board member, if such a need arises. Currently, FUSN has no provision for this. A policy is being considered. Often such policies have been based on lack of attendance, rather than including other reasons.

~ Parking issues update: Laurel: Concerning fewer street and bank lot options, Pat had indicated that he recommends doing nothing; Laurel agrees. Discussion ensued. One person should be the focal point on the issue. It was agreed (in Pat's absence!) that it should be Pat. It was agreed that the issue of the person who complained to FUSN about bank parking is the bank's problem. All expressed praise and appreciation for Ted Hess-Mahan's work as Newton Alderman regarding the street parking issues. It was noted that Second Church is also growing, and Dorshei is active, which will contribute to more parking congestion this year.

~ By-Law changes discussion: *De facto* selections are often the case, due to the nominating committee process; the slate includes only one nominee per slot. Occasionally, but rarely, elections are contested. If Ops Councillors are elected, there will be more visibility for the Ops Council. If elected, provision needs to be outlined in the By-Laws for filling any mid-term vacancies that occur. Per Laurel, perhaps it should be left to the Board's discretion? Laurel suggests there should be a provision for waiving term limits, if necessary, especially if continuity and/or special competence is needed. This also needs to be in the By-laws. So, recommended language for the By-laws includes: electing the Ops Council; provision for replacements; and waivers for term limits. Perhaps (all?) these should be at the Board's discretion.

~ Policy on requests and collection of goods. This year included an overwhelming number of requests, all for good causes. There were many lists of wanted items. While we have had regular requests for Healthy Baby, the Prison Project, hats & mittens for Mather, Urban Ministry gifts for teens, and Ecclesia Ministries, the requests for Sandy storm victims was additional. Discussion points: The Council for Social Action & RE handle such requests. Perhaps there could be a way to spread out such efforts, rather than having them all in the weeks before Christmas. A couple of congregation members have said is uncomfortable to be at coffee hour when so much is going on. With so many campaigns and causes, it gets too crowded. It was noted that Occupy Sandy is not an authorized charity. Does an organization need to be a 501(c)3 to be able to collect? Alan feels they should be, and there needs to be a policy on this.

Alan said checks have been issued through FUSN to charitable organizations in the past, but

some were not cashed in over a year and he had to follow up with those organizations. The Treasurer should follow up to see that FUSN checks to charitable organizations have been cashed. Laurel suggested there be one weekend per month with no tables at all in coffee hour. Also, non-designated Social Action groups should never make requests on the FUSN business email list. Another point was that there needs to be places to sit during coffee hour. It was agreed that collections should go through CSA and RE.

Perry pointed out that this “too much going on” issue has been an ongoing conversation this year, including Erin’s input. He says the sounds of FUSN should be like a symphony, rather than cacaphony.

Alan moved to accept the proposed policy on collecting food, clothing, and other items on FUSN property or through the use of the FUSN business email list. Jeannie seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Additional suggestion: Once a month there should be quiet time, with only a Membership table. at coffee hour.

~ Thank you’s: to Sheila Ardery and Bonnie McDonald for the Holiday Fair; Ted for parking issue efforts; (though appreciated, the Ops Council can’t thank its own members, i.e., Pat, for his efforts on parking); Sharon Sisskind, Lynn Holbein and Josie Green for the Alternative Gift Fair.

~ Alan moved to adjourn; Anne seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:43 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Wendy Schwartz  
1/26/13