

OPERATIONS COUNCIL MINUTES FINAL

Tuesday, September 15, 2020
Via Zoom online

Attending via Zoom: Susan Bartlett, Laurel Farnsworth, Jud Leonard, Karen Bottar, Sharon Sisskind, Eric Haas, Erin Splaine, Ted Hess-Mahan (BOT), Linda Ross (asst clerk);

Called to order 7:00 p.m.

Invocation/Chalice Lighting/Reading - Jud

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.

Approvals:

- By email, August 20, 2020 – Laurel received a quote of \$8,900 for the new fire alarm panel and requested a vote authorizing her to proceed. Tonight, Jud moved to authorize this purchase; Karen seconded; unanimous approval, motion passed.
- By email (information item) – Jud had purchased a new computer for Fran for \$500; she had already purchased the latest version of Quickbooks.
- August minutes - Karen moved to approve the minutes; Jud seconded the motion, unanimous approval, motion passed.

Staff Update - Erin

- Thrilled to have Regina Knabe with us. She and her family are currently in Albania, one of few countries that would grant a visa to U. S. passport holders, and hopefully will arrive soon.
- Good kick-off over the weekend.
- Ann Watson Borne continuing to do great work. Choir recently held “rehearsal” in a parking lot, using technology to record/link. Will need \$2-3,000 for equipment to do this recording in the future, and play during services.
- From Amanda – a question will be coming as to what will be allowed re in person events, but not on FUUSN grounds, for youth. Most present expressed their feeling that it would be OK; one person had some concerns re COVID. Erin will have Amanda send an email to the Ops Council with details. Examples of activities:
 - Mini-golf
 - Apple-picking
 - Apple cider pressing

Report on August BOT Meeting – Jud

- Amanda

- Regina being hired; she is pleased
- Programming
 - § Focus on Zoom
 - § Things to do off-line
 - § Work on anti-racism
 - § Adult faith development
- Erin
 - Conversations now up on Web
 - Working on pledge to end racism. There is a new curriculum being developed and we are waiting on that.
 - Brian Hicks and Bruce Kimball reported on the Legacy Circle appeal, enthusiastic board support
 - Discussed possible annual BOT retreat; hard to schedule
 - Long discussion of changing ourselves, e.g. re racism

Financial

- Review August expenditures – Karen
 - Pledges and prior year pledges are coming in more quickly than usual
 - Tenants - Pine Village has paid another installment
 - Expenditures – nothing out of the ordinary
 - August – net income about \$90,000 – good.
- Year End statements report – Karen
 - Question about what are pre-paid pledges – these are people who have paid their pledge ahead of when it is due.
 - Cash reserves are high due to PPP; some sent to the Board of Investments to hold/invest. This was done so that the amount is under the \$250,000 FDIC insurance limits.
- Thanking large donors, outside their pledges - Karen had sent draft of letter to members of Ops Council. She had received some edits and incorporated them. Letter will now be sent to large donors.
- Paying youth
 - Amanda had sent information on this topic to Susan
 - Some youth are interested in working in RE
 - Amanda wants to know if we can pay them; had been paid \$15/hr in the past. Inclination is to continue to pay the same amount.
- On-line platform for plate collections
 - Erin – she and Ann have been thinking about doing the plate collection after the service to avoid interruption
 - Sharon – use of Realm
 - We already have ability to do donations through Realm, just needs to be set up.
 - Small amount of work required of user

- Compared Realm's prices to others and Realm is the lowest
- Linda reported information about how the Arlington Street Church does these collections, from a telephone conversation with Liz Teixeira, their treasurer.
 - They are doing their collections via Breeze, a management system similar to Realm. This gives the advantage that all payments immediately go into their financial system, and can be tracked.
 - This new method of payment has increased their revenue significantly (to \$2000/week, before system \$500. Some of this amount is people paying their regular pledges).
 - Linda and Liz looked at Breeze and Realm online, and they seemed to offer similar functions.
 - ASC does have a "button" on their website front page; anyone can click on it and donate; they just fill in their information. Basically, it is the same as buying anything online.
 - For texting a donation – the person needs to enter a credit card number the first time only; after that needs to enter only the amount of donation.
 - They had used PayPal in the past, but their fees were higher. In addition, someone had to reconcile those donations manually.
 - There are fees associated with donations to their system; these will vary with the system and credit card. Currently theirs are 2.9% for credit cards; texts are 35 cents per text plus a percentage.
 - Sharon had determined fees for Realm; 35 cents per transaction 2.65% for credit cards, 0.9% for checks.
 - To get around the problem of people not knowing how to use the donation system, once someone signed up to use it, someone from a group of volunteers calls that person and walks them through how to set it up.
- Laurel moved to try to find a way to incorporate online donations into the service, Karen seconded, unanimous approval, motion passed.
- Sharon will take the lead and meet with Rosemary to figure out how to set up Realm for donations. Jud will participate in this meeting.
- Legacy Circle campaign update
 - BOT and Erin are fully supportive of the new campaign

Allen window – recommendation from RJM

- Erin – discussed the recommendation
- Discussion
 - Laurel – she can cover the window so that it cannot be seen
 - Should window be replaced – cost?
 - Can portion of window be replaced?
 - Laurel would prefer not to take window apart

- Erin – several steps:
 - § First is covering the image
 - § Second is what to do next, either as a congregation or via the Ops Council
 - § The theme for October is humility; she is planning to introduce this theme on September 27 and will discuss the window at that time. It is a teaching moment as to what we see and don't see as white people.
 - § There was a question about whether the window should be covered so that the congregation cannot see it during the discussion regarding it in the sermon. Erin feels that it should be covered as soon as possible and that she will describe it as best she can.
 - § There was a lengthy discussion of what is the best approach and why.
 - § Conclusion
 - Laurel will proceed with covering the window with plywood and painting it to blend in.
 - Erin will work with the RJM to develop wording for a plaque or poster to put on covered window as an explanation for the covering.

Update: Committee plans for the coming year; issues

- Website – communications committee
 - There will be a meeting on Thursday to discuss website management.
 - Laurel – having committee chairs update their own information is not working – suggests having Rosemary contact chairs and do updates.
 - Finance committee felt that having an updated website is very important in the COVID era.
- Christmas tree sales – Eric
 - He has had a discussion with the other “tree guys”.
 - He was thinking of ordering 200 trees – ½ of usual number - he is concerned that they will have trouble getting volunteers to sell. Most present thought that many people will want to buy trees, perhaps even more than normal.
 - Eric wanted to get approval before he goes further in the tree buying process.
 - Laurel – she had a follow-up meeting with Barbara Schmitt and Kit Ryan, and they thought that they could do wreaths and sell in the narthex.
 - Consensus was that FUUSN should sell trees and wreaths
- Committees' use of church Zoom accounts
 - Several committees have requested use of a Zoom account for meetings
 - As of now, first come, first served; will continue with that system.
 - Rosemary has a Zoom account that can be used in addition to Ops Council/ BOT account.
- Laurel – she normally has a concert by Lois Shapiro in her home; cannot do it this year due to Covid. She wants to know if they can hold in the Sanctuary with social distancing.

- Majority of OC members felt that this would not be acceptable.
- Outreach to congregation – Membership and lay ministers leading; Susan’s hope is that Ops Council members will help with calls/contacts to members.
- Virtual Ferry Beach – Sharon had done some work to see if this could be arranged. Denise agreed to try to do talent show, Amanda said that she would help. She has not heard back from Chris O’Donnell. She is not sure that it can happen because there is now a very short time frame. Erin will check in with Rosemary and see what she did for virtual Sandy Island.

Thank yous – none

Meeting adjourned 9:05 p.m.