

**FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
OPERATIONS COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
November 14, 2012**

Present: Pat Rohan, Kim Shanks, Laurel Farnsworth, Alan Cody, Erin Splaine, Barney Freiberg-Dale. Joined: Jeannie Chaisson, Perry Montrose, Anne Hess-Mahan.

The meeting convened at 7:03 p.m.

~ The covenant was read.

~ There was extensive discussion on policies for collection of goods for various groups, due to a recent, perhaps seasonal, number of requests. Barney represented the Council for Social Action. Issues include the numerous requests for clothing and goods that may be competing with each other; the collection boxes creating clutter, as well as being unattractive and a fire hazard (Laurel). Also discussed were requests for funds and goods for Occupy Sandy, an outgrowth of Occupy Boston, intending to help victims of the storm. Two people present acknowledged having given approval to various urgent requests for collections, without sharing those requests with the Ops Council.

Jeannie said 1) that the business list may be used only for FUSN-sponsored activities, so may not be used to solicit for groups or projects that have not been endorsed by our Social Action Council; and 2) that we need to ensure that even sponsored groups use the list sparingly - not a constant bombardment from any group.

The question of making checks out to FUSN for these collections was discussed. We need to be sure that funds are processed appropriately and consider whether CSA approved all such requests.

Pat said we need a gatekeeper and a clear policy. Perhaps such requests should come through CSA. Alan asked if limits would stifle spontaneity and generosity. Barney feels these activities help bring people into FUSN. Many CSA projects do involve collections: Mather School; Ecclesia Ministries; prison project; Healthy Baby; etc. Regular RE projects do not need approvals. Erin suggests that money decisions should stay with the Ops Council, since it's part of church functioning/operations. Perry agrees and said we should not put this responsibility on any one programmatic group. There was a consensus that the Council for Social Action should approve requests for collecting goods. It's an existing policy that RE handles their own activities, such as selling cookies, collecting gifts, etc. It was pointed out that collection boxes should not be in the narthex. Pat will draft a policy and circulate it. The newest request came from someone wanting to collect blankets and towels for Angel Memorial. Because of the many collections, the Council agreed to hold off on blankets/towels for now; we should reconsider and allow it to go forward after the holidays. Alan said we should encourage participation, but

collection requests should come to the Council for Social Action before acting. Alan will write an article for FUSNews on what we discussed here.

~ Barney had sent around a policy on Conflicts of Interest for FUSN social action programs. It has been approved by the CSA. The consensus was that all policies should be in one central location on FUSN's website. Alan moves to adopt the policy as written. Jeannie seconded. The policy was adopted as written.

~ Destination Imagination requested renting space at FUSN: Pat researched the group on the web. DI is a non-profit that designs problem solving activities for kids. Rachel Sarvey is requesting the whole building for an event for this group. Pat: This represents an opportunity to introduce Newton kids and families to FUSN. Rachel tentatively booked it with Fran Clancy for Saturday, January 5, 2013. Laurel said it's ok if it doesn't conflict with anything else. The standard charge is \$80 for a rental, but this is a low amount if they want the whole building. Laurel quoted the standard fee for the Parish Hall is \$300 for non-FUSNites; less for FUSN members. Laurel suggests a minimum discounted rate might be \$200 for the DI request. Standard rates are on FUSN's website. If paying standard rates for rental, no approval by the Ops Council is needed. AA pays \$80/month. Anne suggests establishing a standard "discount" rate, vs. deciding amounts with each request. The policy says a discounted rate should be standard but not how much it should be. Pat will check the rates for members of the congregation.

~ Another request was made to use FUSN's kitchen to cook Thanksgiving turkeys for the National Day of Mourning, a social justice event. Since the turkeys will then be driven to Plymouth, Jeannie suggests this is not a good idea: there would be no control over cooking, stuffing, use of the stove, temperature during transport, etc. In other words, there are significant health and safety issues. The consensus was to not approve.

~ Review of spending issues to date:

The \$3500 donation is still of unclear origin. Pat will find out from Fran where it came from. The \$1000 Karlson memorial gift will go into the operating budget.

Costs for a consultant for a capital campaign were discussed. \$25,000 was proposed as a placeholder for next year's budget. Someone commented that this seems high compared to FUSN's prior cap campaign, which was \$10,000.

~ The use of on-line services for payments to FUSN was discussed. Alan pointed out this has been brought up a number of times. One option is to use a 3rd party (e.g., PayPal). Bank of America could do it, which would result in some increase of work for Fran, though not a net increase overall. If B of A were used, bank fees would be charged. It is desirable that FUSN avoid having anyone's credit card numbers. Also, we need to keep FUSN accounts and web accounts separate. Jeannie says it is not permitted to require a payer to cover the cost of fees; you can ask if they wish to, i.e., make it voluntary. The central question is whether this would

help FUSN to raise money. Vern had said a request was made to pay online for Ferry Beach; that it would be easier for participants. Eventbrite.com is another option; an account can be set up for an individual event. Per Pat, research is needed; he is not opposed in principle to using web sites for payments,, but we need to know the costs, exposure, and risks involved. As the Communications Committee brought it up, perhaps we may invite them to do the research. Alan says Barney knows about this process and could be a resource.

~ Insurance Coverages, Laurel: Coverage has increased by 5% this November. Our building insurance value is just under \$12 million. Replacement cost is probably \$20 million. FUSN is raising its coverage by 5% each year to get closer to full replacement cost. Individuals who are involved at FUSN are covered by insurance.

~ Parking changes on Highland Ave: Anne says Greer Tan Swiston is initiating parking limitations on Highland Ave. to the Newton Traffic Council, based on resident concerns. It was suggested that FUSN needs to meet with her to provide input. Alan suggests a compromise, such as restricted parking except Sundays. Laurel suggests we request a striped crosswalk from FUSN's driveway, to make crossing the street safer. Pat and Alan will set up a meeting with Swiston.

~ Committee Activities update: No burning issues.

~ Board meeting report: Alan said the Community Minister covenant was approved. There was discussion over whether it's possible to elevate the status of the position and to form a support committee.

Also discussed was a follow up on the report of the Conflict Committee: It was good work but many questions remain; the Board will consider it and try to set a deadline for completion. In addition, a draft of a Disruptive Behavior Policy was reviewed; roles were suggested for the Ops Council as well as possible penalties. The meaning of "covenant" as a congregation was considered; and a statement of what we expect from each other, such as the reading at the start of Ops Council meetings, could be written, including a statement of understanding and how we relate to one another.

The Board also reviewed the financial oversight committee specs and what the Board can do to maintain a financial overview. It is important to distinguish between "oversight" and "meddling" in the Ops Council's execution of the budget.

The process for Bylaws meetings in March and ultimately requesting congregational approval was discussed. It was pointed out that we need to have at least one evening meeting to share information with the congregation.

Per Jeannie, governance issues need to be kept simple. Alan thinks the Treasurer should not be on the Board but rather should be on the Ops Council. Another governance proposal is that Ops and Board members may re-up, that is serve more than one term. However, the total

number of terms served should be limited.

~ Report on the joint meeting with Committee Chairs: Bruce Henderson had agreed to work on internal communications as well as external communications. Anne was asked to talk with the Communications Committee (Nancy DuVergne-Smith and Greg Sullivan) about keeping all information on the website up to date. Do they feel they need to hire a consultant and what would it cost? Goals include avoiding duplication and fragmentation; eliminating old, outdated information; and making paths clearer and simpler. Currently, the website feels like it has too many pages and it should be made more accessible, i.e., user-friendly. Also, the various individual groups and committees need reminders to keep their information up to date. It was asked if they do this individually or submit info. to a webmaster.

~ External Communications Committee: Bruce will work with the Communications Committee on this. We need to consolidate/coordinate Facebook, Newsletter, Orders of Service, Twitter, and Facebook messages. Too many portals create fragmented communication and the likelihood that not everyone gets all the necessary information.

~ Discussion of minutes and approvals process: The Assistant Clerk can send a link to non-Google-account Council members; but they won't be able to make comments. The benefit of Google Docs is having one central location for all comments that all can see. The consensus was to continue using both Google Docs and the email paste and attach methods for now.

~ Thank yous: None mentioned.

~ Anne Watson Born's request for a concert by Katie Curtis and Mary Gauthier for FUSN was discussed. The issue is that they get paid, with a guaranteed \$1200 total. Questions arose about food and beverages, and would it be a coffee house or concert only? No rental fee would be collected, and tickets would be sold. It was pointed out that Katie has done benefit concerts for FUSN. Laurel moved to guarantee the \$1200. Jeannie seconded. The motion was approved.

~ For the record:

Email approvals:

- Minutes for May, September, and October 2012 have been approved.
- To waive the rental fee for use of the Sanctuary by the Newton Cultural Alliance for a community meeting on the purchase of the Nathaniel Allen House.
- For Cheryl Lloyd to set up a support committee for the work of the Community Minister.
- To dedicate one regular Sunday collection each year to the Music Program, UUA on Association Sunday and the work of the Community Minister.
- Also, approved: Dedicate a regular collection on COA Sunday to the COA scholarship fund.
- Collection for Project Zambia and sale of goods on Sunday, November 25.
- To amend FUSN's policy on articles in the Order of Service and Newsletter. The general rule is that only FUSN-related events may be included in these publications. It was agreed that the Minister has the authority to grant exceptions to this policy.

- To dedicate this November 4th regular collection to the Central East Regional Group UUA Disaster Relief Fund. \$4000 was raised for this special aid initiative.

Meeting ended at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Schwartz
12/11/12. Revised 1/20/13.