

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

The meeting started at 7:05 pm.

Present: Jeannie Chaisson, Alan Cody, Laurel Farnsworth, Anne Hess-Mahan, Pat Rohan (Chair), Kim Shanks, Wendy Schwartz (Asst. Clerk)

Joined 7:30 (after RE pizza gathering): Erin Splaine, Perry Montrose

~ Opening Words/Snacks: Pat Rohan

7:05

Pat opened with a comment reminding the Council that *how* we accomplish our tasks and deal with each other is as important as *what* we accomplish. This sets the tone for love and respect as our guiding principles.

~ Operations Council Covenant - Read in unison:

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.

~ Review of spending to date

The Council had voted in the spring (2012) to spend all of this year's furniture budget to fix up Anne Watson Born's office. The money was committed before the end of the 2011-2012 fiscal year but paid for in fiscal year 2012-2013. Perry's office does not need additional furnishings.

~ E-mail approval of the Banner budget

\$500.00 was designated for a new general banner. The cost was approved by email. It is an overage, and those present agreed to assign this cost to the Membership Committee's budget. An idea was proposed to have a Marketing line-item in the next fiscal year budget. Alan pointed out that we need to have line numbers for items in the budget; i.e., there is not currently a line number for Marketing, so it would need to be created.

~ Alan Cody submitted his Treasurer's report to the Council, including Year End Statements of Fund Balances and the Financial Position for the period ended May 31, 2012. The statement was reviewed by those present. Alan said the Board has put in motion the steps to create an Audit Committee, which would consist of probably 2 members of the Board, and which would review FUSN financial matters. The Board agreed that the Committee should consist of only Board members.

~ Report on the Board Meeting – Alan/Erin

Alan and Erin reported on last night's Board meeting. Strom Thacker was elected as Vice-chair for this year, but he doesn't want to be Chair next year; Bruce Henderson said he would consider the Chair role for next year. Discussion at the Board meeting covered topics such as establishing priorities; visioning -- how we want to look 5 years from now; education and outreach; possibly an improved database, which might be expensive; By-Law changes; ministerial evaluation; capital campaign; discussion about the advantages/disadvantages of reducing the size of the Board.

The Ops Council discussed the issue of who would keep a database current, if it were to be set up. A database has been discussed numerous times in the past. Before creating it, we would need to be clear about what would be its purpose(s) and how it would be used. Other churches have such databases. Issues of confidentiality come into play, as well. A few uses of a database were mentioned, such as tracking skill sets, membership, RE, and following up with COA and losing kids between RE and COA.

Continuing with the report on the Board meeting: An emphasis on growth was discussed. An established list of values should be used for regular decision-making and activities. Spiritual leadership was also a priority, as were outreach to the community, leadership development, and financial accountability. Perry summed up the 5 main focal points: spiritual leadership; financial oversight; outreach; growth; and governance.

The Board had discussed additional topics, as well: establishing a committee to communicate any new governance structure to the congregation, including By-Laws changes, changes of board size, and lengths of positions. A schedule was proposed to decide any By-law changes by January and to vote in March, since the results would affect the Nominating Committee, whose main work occurs after that. At least 2 months would be needed to communicate with the congregation. Pat and Jeannie offered to work together to formulate this further.

~ Laurel reported that FUSN's candidacy as a Green Congregation has been approved by the UUA. It was noted that this 1st step took 3 years. Further steps are needed to finalize the status. To clarify: the candidacy has been approved but not the final designation.

~ Update of Committee Activities, including leadership and any empty chairs. Pat reviewed which committees have filled positions and which are empty. He pointed out that the online Leadership list needs to be updated, and he will follow up.

~ The Council discussed filling the slots created by Kristen Cleveland to involve more members Sunday mornings - greeters, ushers, chalice lighters, etc. The topic was left open for now.

~ In response to a question, Laurel discussed the role and activities of the Memorial Committee. It facilitates procedures, researches costs, talks with those interested in availing themselves of the use of the Memorial Wall for their own or a family member's ashes, etc.

~ Congregation members' awareness of the committees was discussed.

Should Council Fairs be reinstated? Should there be a "Committees" insert in the newsletter? Maybe feature a different committee, one at a time? A decision was not reached.

~ Youth Coffee House

Who will lead it this year? Should it be designated as a committee? An event (like the Services Auction, etc.)? A social action activity, because funds raised go to Communities Without Borders/Zambia? Pat will ask co-chair Barney Freiberg-Dale if it may be part of Social Action.

~ Lay Ministers

It was pointed out that the Orders of Service have the correct list of current Lay Ministers.

~ Planning has begun for Committee Chairs to get together with the Ops Council twice this year. Pat will ask the Chairs if Saturday, November 10 works for them for the first meeting.

~ Sue Skoler had suggested sending FUSN folks to NEW-TV for training. It costs \$100 for a non-profit to join. Some discussion. First, we should explore if we can create programs without paying, as well as if anyone at FUSN *wants* to get the training. This is tabled for a month or two, to see what outreach activities the Board would like to initiate and if this would be included.

~ Discussion: Recent emails invited FUSNites to sign up for Viridian green energy, to provide income /fundraising for CWB (Committees Without Borders). Pat asked if there were any concerns about soliciting for this. None were expressed. The topic was tabled.

~ Thank Yous include...

The Thursday morning Small Group Ministry for the new building signs.

Fran Clancy for the battery-powered spotlight which saved money vs. an expensive spotlight for the daily schedule board.

Gayle Smalley and chimers for summer chiming concerts.

Summer services people.

Anticipated thanks: Bob Persons for setting up e-stats throughout the building, which allow using a phone from *anywhere* to change thermostats in *any* room. Andrea Zatarain, who is in the process of creating a building map.

The meeting closed at approximately 9:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted, 10/9/12. Revised 10/17.

Wendy Schwartz