

First Unitarian Society of Newton
OPERATIONS COUNCIL MINUTES
Wednesday, October 9, 2013
Alliance Room, 7:00 P.M.

Present: Susan Bartlett, Jeannie Chaisson, Alan Cody, Anne Hess-Mahan, Andrea Kelley, Laurel Farnsworth, DLRE Perry Montrose, Rev. Erin Splaine, and guests Strom Thacker from the FUSN Board and Bill Holland regarding a special chancel design project.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

❖ Invocation / Chalice Lighting - Laurel read a poem by May Sarton.

❖ 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: All

- Ops Council August minutes are posted.
- September minutes are still in the review stage.
- Gordon Moriarty was proposed as By-laws Committee chair. The Council voted and approved.

· Concert at FUSN, by Channing School:

A request for approval was made by email from Jenny Duvall and the Music and Membership committees to Sponsor a concert in the Sanctuary with reception on Friday, October 25, and collect donations to help defray expenses, such as heating costs.

The Channing School is a Unitarian school from the UK; 50 girls will sing with orchestral accompaniment. The request was approved by email on 9/26/13.

❖ Updates: Susan

Annual Budget Drive chairs will be Barbara Deck, Jonathan Lilienfeld and Sharon Sisskind.

Regarding Fellowship Dinner chairs, Erin raised the question of whether the current model is sustainable long term, due to the number of people who attend. The kitchen and other volunteer efforts may be at their maximum load.

Options may include having smaller parties or a tent outside. Erin will talk with the Annual Budget Drive chairs to discuss options.

❖ Staff Updates: Erin, Perry

The youth had a retreat and discussed what their year-long program would look like. They voted that their social action project will focus on education, to be refined.

COA is moving along and working well together. There were many comments about how successful this year's Thompson Island trip was, with especially good interrelationships. All teacher spots are filled, although one may need to be replaced. As mentioned last month, teachers will go year-round in an alternating pattern, rather than continuous through a semester. Seven RE Support circles help support the overall RE program: Curriculum, Connections (inter-generational, newcomers and long-term members), Events, Justice, Spirituality (Passover, Xmas pageant, etc. outside of Sunday services), Youth (COA and Youth), and Adult RE.

Perry will be at LREDA: Liberal Religious Educators Association next weekend in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Erin mentioned that Kristen Cleveland and her knowledge of the congregation is missed, and we will be eager to welcome Meghan Cefalu in January as the new Assistant Minister.

A new UU course begins on October 19, and Erin would like to have someone from the Ops Council be present.

Erin also mentioned that we might reconsider how we do summer services. Variables include the following: Should there be a ministerial and/or staff presence? Should we keep the start time the same as regular services? She mentioned that, even with revisions, Lay led services would still be a major part of the summer schedule. Alan suggests that it would be good to have Erin and/or Meghan do at least one each summer.

Erin will be away October 21-23 at a ministerial study group on Cape Cod.

❖ Report on BOT meeting: Andrea

Budge drive co-chairs were identified as Barbara Deck, Jonathan Lilienfeld, and Sharon Sisskind.

The Board discussed updating the ministerial evaluation process, which FUSN's ByLaws require every three years. It was also discussed what the scope of such an evaluation should be...Should it include just the minister? What should be the criteria? An evaluation needs to be completed by June 2014. A committee including one Ops Council member, one Board member, and three congregation members will comprise the committee to work on this. Anne indicates she is interested in being the Ops rep.

Two new couples were voted in as FUSN members at last night's Board meeting.

Strom added a few points about financial issues from last night's Board meeting. Alan mentioned that Kevin McCormack will need input from the Board in order to work on long range financial planning. Discussion ensued on last year's stewardship campaign, and that some of the funds pledged last year were one-time gifts and could not be counted on again this year.

❖ Financial: Alan

Review of year-to-date spending -- Alan pointed out that the Finance Committee reviews spending in detail. He said FUSN has positive net income at this time. However, this is before the extra costs associated with winter, such as heat and snow removal, have been incurred.

The first quarterly budget monitoring report will include September's numbers. The Finance Committee is considering issuing 3 reports per year rather than quarterly, since the summer is quiet.

The committee has completed annual salary verification (salary payments are in line with budget) and monthly bank cash tracking.

Alan pointed out that Dede Vittori helped draft finance policies for the Finance Committee.

❖ Property and liability insurance coverage: Laurel

The policy renews every November, and the property evaluation goes up 5% yearly, since FUSN was so undervalued in the past. Laurel also reported that current coverage is around \$14 million. This amount could not cover loss of the entire building but would be helpful in the event of limited damage. The building and contents are included in the coverage, as well as liability. The cost of the coverage goes up a bit each year and currently is about \$10,000. Laurel feels the coverage is acceptable.

❖ Update: Committee issues/reports: Susan

Susan requested input on how often committee liaisons should report to the Ops Council on what's happening with the committees in their "portfolios." Laurel pointed out that last year, Ops invited committee chairs to Ops meetings to share their updates. Anne suggests that each liaison can simply report if there's anything to mention, above and beyond business as usual. Each Ops Council member gave a brief report on their committees.

Laurel: B&G reports that the roof was repaired this summer, so the major maintenance allocation has been spent. Also, rainwater retention tanks are in. Two big tanks collect water, providing the capability of a sprinkler system to utilize the rainwater.

Two window contracts are not yet complete. An architect will prioritize how to deal with the window situation: one upper level window in the bell tower is gone on the Highland Street side and is now covered by wood. Other expenditures include some furniture reupholstering.

Laurel is working on getting offices re-arranged for Meghan's arrival. Beth and Rebecca will share a space, so Meghan will have her own office.

Also, Laurel would like to offer an option for congregants to purchase plants for FUSN's grounds as memorials and to repair the memorial garden and provide additional landscaping.

Alan points out that if FUSN is planning to have an intern in the future, this should be communicated to the Board as part of long-term planning.

Jeannie: As handled by email, the Music Committee accepted the offer of a free concert performed by the UK's Channing School. Jeannie also mentioned encouraging people to use FUSN's website to sign up for ushering. One suggestion was to have a separate Volunteer page. Jeannie suggests having it on the main page, so it is readily accessible. Andrea mentioned that some individuals have difficulty getting comfortable using FUSN's website. Jeannie said she now includes the link for signing up to usher in her email invites.

Perry talked about using iVolunteer for signups.

Jeannie showed a laminated sign she had made (approximately 2' x 3') to fit in the sawhorses, visible from the street, per previous Ops Council decisions to improve signage. Laurel mentions that in Newton you can put signs on a building but not have permanent free-standing signs. Because these are in the sawhorses, they are temporary so would be allowed.

Andrea asked if there are full lists of members of each of the committees. Such lists are likely kept by committee chairs but not in a central location.

Erin: Vern Ellis is the new Chalice Circle coordinator. Greg Sullivan is working on having sign-ups available online. There will also be opportunities to sign up at Ferry Beach and coffee hour. Brenda Roberts is doing a good amount of work organizing the circles. Circle facilitators meet with Erin; they are not a committee.

Erin asks if it might be appropriate at this time to separate Lay Ministers from organizing the Care Crew, due to rising numbers in the congregation. The Care Committee would be responsible for organizing help and could consult with a Lay Minister when needed. Jeannie points out the different skill sets for each function, so it makes sense to do this.

Susan asks if Ops should invite the Membership Committee to come to the November Ops meeting: Judy Zacek and Bill Duset.

❖ Semi-annual Ops + Committee Chairs meeting schedule: Susan
In the past it has been on Saturday mornings: November and February. Laurel suggests sending a save-the-date email for this. Susan will select a date.

❖ The Newton Cultural Alliance requests use of the Sanctuary: Laurel
NCA sponsors "The Stroll." The 25 Newton organizations that belong collaborate with the business community, which opens their shops to the arts. It's Dec, 13-15, and is designed to enhance arts awareness, shopping locally, and pairing business with the arts. Friday night will be in Chestnut Hill; Saturday in West Newton Square; Sunday in Newton Center. Laurel suggests FUSN's Sanctuary could host some music, 12-6 on Saturday.

Discussion included the fact that there are not a great many shopping venues in West Newton

Square and that in last year's Stroll, few people actually went inside the venue where music was being played. Heating costs also come into play.

Erin says she would like more information and details. She would like FUSN to be a good neighbor and support the NCA; and FUSN should be an inviting venue during the holiday season. But this needs to be weighed with the use of the Sanctuary as a sacred space.

Alan mentions that if it is okay'd, there should be FUSN information readily available to the public. Alan moves we approve use of the FUSN sanctuary for the NCA Stroll, subject to Erin's approval. Anne seconds. The motion was approved.

❖ Special chancel design: Jeannie

Bill Holland had sent a memo concerning a design project he and Meg would like to do for the chancel in January. Erin would make the decision, since it involves the Sanctuary. He'd like to build a structure of food cans, incorporating RE and food pantry ideas. He would want to invite people to contribute cans...up to 1,000 total. Erin indicated she thinks it's a great idea and would like to see how Ops could help implement it. It could be an open-to-the-community project, as well as intergenerational. Jeannie points out that there's lots of logistics to address (weight, color, etc.), as well as opportunities for families and COA to work together. Afterwards, the cans would go to the Food Pantry.

Comments were shared about the success and beauty of last year's design, composed of peace cranes, made by many volunteers under Bill's leadership.

Bill showed a potential design and added that there could be additional cans around the main design, as well. Bill and Meg will talk with Erin separately.

❖ Update - fundraising at FUSN: Susan, Jeannie

Discussion concerned what rules should be followed, as well as how to coordinate activities and schedules for Council on Social Action and RE fundraising projects, especially around the holidays.

Update - communications survey: Anne

❖ Thank yous: All

Erin would like to thank Brenda Roberts for her work on organizing Chalice Circles.

❖ The meeting adjourned at p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Schwartz, Assistant Clerk
10/27/13