

FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON  
OPERATIONS COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday December 11, 2013  
Alliance Room, 7:00 P.M.

~ The meeting was called to order at 7:06 pm.

Present: Susan Bartlett, Laurel Farnsworth, Anne Hess-Mahan, Jeannie Chaisson, Perry Montrose, Alan Cody, Andrea Kelley. Jon Reuman, Board Representative.

~ Anne did a reading from Nelson Mandela

~ 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.

~ Invocation / Chalice Lighting: Anne

~ Approvals: All

- Approval was done by email to advance \$5,000 moving expenses to Meghan Cefalu. She will return any amount not used.
- By email, approved a bake sale to benefit NNHS family (Sexton Henry's daughter) by Hannah McInnes and Marika Belamarich, to take place in January.
- Discussion ensued about whether each such fundraising project should be approved by the Ops Council or by the Council for Social Action. One concern is to be sure to avoid anyone being solicited directly. Another is having too many solicitations. A bake sale, for example, is a free-choice option, so not intrusive. One-time fundraisers happen from time to time for major events, such as the hurricane in the Philippines.
- Alan suggests the bake sale should be handled as cash, rather than having the money go to Fran (Clancy-Administrator) and then her issuing a check to the intended recipient organization. Perry says these funds should be recorded, as a record of the fundraiser and of how much the congregation is raising for this and other causes. Jeannie asks if we can capture this information somehow, other than in FUSN accounts, so we do have a record.

Alan reminds us that some charitable organizations have not cashed checks written to them as a result of a fundraising effort. He also says that the Fidelity Charitable Fund has the same concern, as indicated in a non-profit finance seminar he attended this morning. Also FUSN has no control over what happens to the funds given away. The Occupy movement collected funds but was not an authorized 501(c)3. Anne: Is it more important to track actions that happen under FUSN's auspices? and is it advisable to both do this and keep the accounting out of budget matters? It was suggested that Social Action could track such projects. A separate account could be used for all such projects; funds that go in would have to be disbursed in the same year. Or FUSN could have a temporarily restricted account for such purposes. Susan suggests we just go ahead with this bake sale and keep track of fundraisers throughout the year.

~ Staff update: Perry

- Healthy Baby/Healthy Child project: A nurse came from the Boston Public Health Nurses Association to talk to RE kids about the project, so they'd gain an understanding of what the project is and what its goals are.

- A youth conference will be held at FUSN. It's a new collaboration and will include working with the Conference Advisory Team and a youth consultant. The theme is "HarmoniCon" -- a harmony and acceptance conference. Perry says the youth are excited about it. It will include at least one overnight. Planning workshops will be held.
- Coming of Age had a positive review. They considered their most memorable moments. Some also created iPhone videos.
- The monthly Friday party was a successful Bingo night.
- There was good attendance at the Family for Depression Awareness discussion.
- Perry attended a meeting regarding youth suicide in Newton. FUSN youth member, Audrey Reuman, went, as well.
- The Care for the Caregiver panel also went well, per Alan. He said there was a good turnout but they were disappointed it wasn't larger.
- The Christmas Pageant service is coming up and is in rehearsals.
- An RE circles meeting was held. They planned a homebound holiday project: providing baked goods and cards for people who can't get to FUSN.
- There will be a Carol Sing service on 12/22. and three Christmas Eve services at 5, 7, 11:30 p.m. Erin will lead a Quaker-style service on December 29<sup>th</sup>.
- Matt Meyer's drumming service will be on January 5th.
- On January 12th, Megan will be officially welcomed and celebrated at the service. She will be preaching on January 26th.
- In February, a Newton Forum will be held on civil rights. Mayor Warren and Erin are both panelists.

~ Plans for welcoming Meghan:

Laurel: She, Perry and Beth are working on the office rearrangement. The Teachers' Room will be painted and the ceiling fixed. It will have a two-person desk. Megan's office will be painted. The cost for painting 3 rooms, including Erin's office, is \$2400, plus \$900 for new plaster ceiling. The work will be done next week. Laurel says she will use some of the funds allocated for polyurethane for the Parish Hall floor, but may need additional funds. Costs for electric work will be additional -- to remove and put back the heat detector and light. Laurel says the additional money could come out of the operating budget, if it's not a harsh winter. If money is needed, she'll request taking the funds from the contingency line of the budget.

~ Report on the BOT meeting: Jeannie

- A plan for a joint Board-Ops retreat on developing a long-term strategic plan is under consideration and could possibly be held on January 25th or February 1st. A goal is to increase cross communication between Board and Ops reps. They are not sure if a facilitator is available.
- FUSN is still looking for someone to lead the Fellowship Dinner.
- The Ministerial Review group members will be announced in the next week or so.
- The Conflict Resolution policy project is still a work in progress.

~ Susan: Discussion ensued on whether Ops should also have its own strategic meeting. She wonders if some of the Ops issues would come up in the joint meeting...or if Ops should have a separate meeting later. Laurel feels that it might be a bit late for such an Ops-only meeting, since we are halfway through the year. She suggests having a meeting over the summer, when the Ops members change. Anne says that if Ops wants to discuss its own issues or processes, that would be a reason to have it. She asks for clarification on a reason for having an Ops strategic meeting. Alan says it's more critical for the Board to have a strategic meeting. Andrea says an orientation would be helpful for new people, perhaps a joint retreat in the summer. She's not sure it's needed now, although it would be fun. Alan also feels it might not be needed, as everyone has many time demands on them. The attempt to schedule the meeting earlier in the year didn't come through due to schedule conflicts. Susan says we should go ahead with planning for a joint strategic meeting. If

Ops needs a separate strategic meeting after that, it could be decided at that time. There was general agreement on this plan.

~ Alan provided a brief, draft outline of strategic priorities for collective consideration. He refers to the Finance Committee looking at long-term projections. He anticipates the need to make up for income that came in last year but that will not be available this year. The potential for a shortfall needs to be monitored and plans considered on how to deal with it. He says special focus should be given to this. Not only would FUSN need to make up for lost funds, but an increase in the amount collected is also necessary. A presentation could be made beforehand, open to anyone who wishes to come, not just Ops and BOT. Susan says such a presentation is planned for January.

~ Financials review: Alan: He and Laurel were not able to attend the last Fin Com meeting, but Alan says he's not aware of any major issues. There will be a bigger, year-end review of Fund Balances and the Statement of Financial Position. It will come out in February, after accounts are reconciled.

Credit card collections at the Holiday Fair Silent Auction were initiated this year. Holiday Fair chair Sheila Artery said 6 people paid by credit card. Alan says the process needs to be controlled, such as having a limited number of people authorized to handle this.

Susan contacted Fran Clancy, who said we seem to be on track for current year pledges, and that 52% of pledges have been collected, an appropriate amount for this time of year.

~ Update: Committee reports: All

External communications protocol: Andrea has not yet received any publicity requests from committees. Andrea mentioned the committee chairs meeting at which she volunteered to be the conduit and disperse external publications written by others. Some members of the communication committee felt that committees could do this on their own, via links on the FUSN web site. Andrea (?) hopes that Megan will take on oversight of external communications. Material intended for external publication need to be vetted. There was a consensus that external links should be taken down from FUSN's website until Megan comes or until items are vetted before going public. There needs to be a central process, rather than individuals or committees sending out material under FUSN's name.

Andrea says the Membership Committee has no issues at this time.

Laurel: B&G continues to explore solar options. She has spoken with several vendors. One said FUSN is too small (9 panels vs. the typical 100 panels). Another provider is too new to be able to meet FUSN solar power needs. One option is a power-purchasing agreement. Someone owns the panels and sells cheaper electricity to the buyer. The owner would get the tax credits, and it need not be a 501(c)3. The estimated cost is \$36,000, with a \$12,000 credit in the first year. Utility savings would cover the expense over 10-12 years. A pool of private investors could provide funding, but attorney fees would eat up any utility savings. At this time, there do not appear to be any obvious options for going solar, but Laurel will keep talking with people. FUSN gets 75% sunlight. A tax credit for 80% sunlight expires 12/31/13. Laurel says the reason to do it would be to be "green," rather than primarily for cost savings. Jeannie points out that the technology is changing and prospects may be better in a few years.

A new industrial refrigerator was purchased today to replace the one that recently failed. Help will be needed to unload it from the truck and install it when it comes next week. The cost was around \$2500. Ron will let Laurel know when it will be coming, with a 2-hour window. She'll send out a request for help unloading to the FUSN list at that time.

~ Annual Budget Drive: Susan says that Jonathan Lilienfeld, Barbara Deck and Sharon Sisskind will likely come to the next Ops meeting. They are requesting Ops Council pledges before the general campaign begins, as a means of having “pledge leaders.” Alan points out that the goal is 100% participation. Further discussion ensued, especially concerning whether dollar amounts or percentages of increases be made public.

Laurel suggests that a challenge grant is a good option, but doing it too often may decrease its effectiveness. Susan will get further clarification from Jonathan. Jeannie says that leadership should not be equated with wealth, and not everyone can increase their amount. We don't want to discourage people from being leaders if their financial situation is limited. Jonathan Reuman points out that non-profit organizations with *outside* board members are trending toward expecting them to donate.

~ Update: Fundraising projects, aside from FUSN's main ones: Susan suggests that this will require a longer discussion. Social Action is working on this issue, as well. Fundraising tables at coffee hour should be part of the discussion. Jeannie said she would be happy to continue to be involved in this issue. Regular Sunday tables include RE, Membership, the Council for Social Action, and people who simply wish to sit down during coffee hour. Adding two or three tables each Sunday might work, and these “extracurricular” fundraising groups may be asked to share a table.

~ Alternative Gift Fair: Alan points out that this event creates additional administrative work and also takes up a lot of space, as outside organizations come in. Sharon sent a sample layout for tables for the Fair. One option would be to use the Head Start room next year. Andrea suggests reviewing events after they are held, to evaluate how the layouts worked.

~ Coffee hour: The group discussed the possibility of using the Alliance room for quiet conversation. But it could be awkward to invite people to go there. On the other hand, if the space is designated, people would start using it.

~ The Council on Social Action might attend the January Ops Council meeting. Susan asked Jeannie if we should hold off on this. She thinks January will be quite busy and maybe March would be a better date for this. CSA would like to do some new outreach and get more input, as well.

~ Thank yous: All

Sheila and Bonnie for leading the Holiday Fair. Laurel and Jeannie noted that clean up was an issue and should be handled better next year. Over four days, 240 people helped with the fair, excluding home preparation, musicians, baking, etc. Laurel suggests hiring help for cleanup next year. Jeannie suggests looking at how much the fair makes and how much it would cost to hire some youth to help. Anne suggests having COA kids do this, but they need clear direction and oversight. Perhaps mentors could participate with them. Perhaps a crew captain would be helpful. Laurel points out that some of set up needs to be done while kids are in school (put up tables for Friday night set up). Tables also need to be taken down in time for Sunday activities. This year there were not enough volunteers.

~ The meeting adjourned at 9:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Wendy Schwartz,  
Assistant Clerk