

**FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
OPERATIONS COUNCIL MINUTES
February 11, 2015
Alliance Room, 7:00 P.M.**

Present: Jeannie Chaisson, Judy Curby, Laurel Farnsworth, Anne Hess-Mahan, Rev Erin Splaine, Rowan Van Ness. **Guests:** Linda Rinearson, David Morocco for Annual Budget Drive; Lesley Sneddon for the BOT.

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.

~ 7:00-7:05 **Invocation / Chalice Lighting:** Anne Hess-Mahan read "On a Tree Fallen Across The Road" by Robert Frost.

~ **Approvals:** All

- December minutes had previously been approved as amended.
- Because Susan and Andrea are not here tonight, we will not ask for approval of the January minutes until they have more time to review them.

~ **Staff updates**

Rowan:

February Acting DLRE Report

Safe Congregations

Peanut Allergies - Plastic "no nuts" signs have been made.

CRE

Special Sundays

Comp Religions

COA

COA Frozen Food (Raised over \$2500+)

COA Ecclesia Prep

Coordinating Team

Youth

Trip to ANTS for Project Bread

Kiva Account

Coffee House

Youth Service

Adult RE

Brochure out

Beyond UU

RE Council

- Teacher Recruitment -- RE council is gearing up for teacher recruitment. (How does this fit in with leadership development?)
- Communication questions
- Curriculum--OWL exploring: The Curriculum sub-group is exploring ages that OWL is offered to. What about 4-6th grades, etc? It is meant to be a life-span curriculum.
- Connections -- ways of following up with new families, found out that these efforts were successful; how to partner more with membership.
- Events--Met with Ops and Membership. Will plan a larger congregational meeting to get input on who wants to help in planning.

Erin:

She presided over a funeral, and snow was an issue. Tody's helped plow around FUSN for the event.

The DLRE search committee is active. There are 5 semi-finalists.

There were 50% more people at this year's Services Auction. And there were 250 people at the service the next day.

People are participating and still here.

This Sunday's service will be a "This I Believe" testimonials service: Kim Shanks and Ted Hess-Mahan.

~ **Annual Budget Drive:** David Morocco and Linda Rinearson

David:

The theme is "FUSN Matters."

There will be a pledging party Sunday, 2/22, at Linda Rinearson's for the party hosts. Most other pledge parties will be in March.

There will be a leadership party at Carol Reichert and Jerry Shereda's house on Saturday, 2/28. *[Note: for logistical reasons, this was later cancelled. -ws]*

The testimonial schedule is set up. Brian Gill gave his testimonial last Sunday, and his daughter video taped it, so it is available online.

Jonathan Lilienfeld, Barbara Deck and Sharon Susskind have provided quite a bit of support.

They hoped to have new pledge forms ready; would like to be able to announce on 2/28 that all FUSN leadership have already pledged.

They would like Ops support in two ways: that Ops Councilors get their own pledges in by 2/28 and that they also serve as stewards.

They will set up an Annual Budget Drive table at coffee hour.

Linda:

Shared the new write-up on Why We Give, written by Urban Larson. Laurel says it's disappointing that the article from the Boston Globe is incomplete; it was suggested to drop the hanging line and end it after the previous paragraph.

This year's goal is \$550,000, a 2.5% increase over last year's result (of +/- \$534,000).

Dana Hanson will also help with ABD.

~ **Financial:** Judy

Prior year pledges are coming in well, better than previous years.

~ **Report on prior Board of Trustees meeting:** Jeannie

The ABD information was also presented, same as David and Linda did here tonight. The long-term forecast was presented. Staff updates were shared. Leadership development and who they might be was discussed.

Erin added that the position recently vacated should be posted as Member Coordinator rather than Assistant Minister. Erin asked if Ops members had any thoughts about this. Judy appreciated Kristen Cleveland's attention to membership and noted that this will reduce the amount of assistance available to Erin.

Erin says there needs to be some time to evaluate before reinvesting in the Assistant Minister position.

Anne asked if lay ministers need help; and Erin said they are doing quite well.

Laurel referenced Karen Bottar's financials review for the end of January. She pointed out that this month will have bigger utility and plowing costs.

For this year's long-term forecast, increases were listed as 2.5% rather than 4%.

Jeannie said that Board Members have met with Mark Ewart again. Laurel said that there will be another in-depth meeting in the fall to help define a strategic plan for all aspects of FUSN; all of this prior to having a Cap Campaign.

Judy:

Conversation has continued about finding a replacement for Nancy Tobin. Judy is also trying to learn QuickBooks as a transition.

Efforts are being made to consolidate the two systems to integrate the new software. She's concerned that we are finding only what we are looking for vs. being sure to have all data consistent.

Erin said Denise Joseph is working on the Constant Contact database for FUSN.

Rowan is also involved in the database and said she is maintaining her own Excel spreadsheet for the time being. They hope to list what they want to do with the database and give that input to Peter Farago.

Judy expressed appreciation for Peter's responsiveness.

Lesley chimed in on the topic of leadership development on a range of issues, from how to run an effective meeting to larger, more comprehensive issues. The Nominating Committee needs additional help in finding new leaders.

Laurel discussed her memo concerning the major maintenance list and the B&G budget for FY16. She said there is a leak in the archway in the Sanctuary. The roofer didn't come until December and said he'd have to check it out in the spring.

She'd like to see if we could put a handicapped entrance on the Highland St. side, which slopes down toward Washington St. She suggested using the old path on the Memorial Garden to create a concrete ramp to the Highland St. door. She needs to find someone who could do this. A guesstimate cost is \$100,000. The stair system at that door would need to be completely rebuilt, with a power door. Erin supported this idea.

~ Additional Updates:

Laurel: There are no major issues.

B&G: The windows always need work.

She'd like to get regular salary increases for Henry, the cleaner FUSN contracts, built into the budget.

Pine Village is coming back next year. She anticipates replacing a classroom floor, which dates from the 1950s.

Erin said a member of the currently-inactive Women's Alliance called to say the Alliance has \$30k in the bank. She was seeking guidance as to what could be done with the funds. In the past, Alliance funds had gone to support the Ministerial Internship position. Since there is currently no intern, Laurel suggested they use some of the funds to paint the Alliance Room and the Ladies' Parlor. Rowan suggested they invest in a media set-up, as in the Children's Chapel. Discussion ensued about how such decisions should be made and who should make them. The chapel does not have exterior walls, but the Alliance Room does.

Erin said that some of the older members of the Women's Alliance are concerned about how to use those funds.

Laurel said it cost \$5k to put the media system in the Children's Chapel 5 years ago.

Erin said she and the Board chair are dealing with the issue of this account overall.

Laurel said a congregant approached her about fixing up the flower room. Laurel advised her to contact Jeannie, who oversees the chancel decoration sign-ups. The volunteer would like some budget and an ok to proceed. Jeannie would be happy to have someone take this on. Jeannie will contact the person to discuss.

~ **Communications:** Anne

The Communications Committee is still looking for a Chair.

~ **Snow:** All - discussion.

Erin decides if the building is open on Sunday mornings. How should the decision be made for other days/times?

Jeannie says that if there is a declared snow emergency, the building should be closed. What about other times? Erin asked if the building is closed, do renters get a refund? Laurel said no, unless it is a one-time event. If Newton Schools are closed, Dorshei Tsedek and Pine Village also are closed.

Laurel said we need to define who gets to decide and who communicates it? There should be a phone tree or text tree, so that enough people make the decision together. Currently, Erin talks with Fran and makes a recommendation; the message should then go out by the Ops Council.

Fran could send out an email to the business list and post on Facebook. Judy suggested we need some standard language. Laurel said she wouldn't mind posting these messages. Anne offers to be back-up. Not everyone checks email continuously. Maybe a procedure should be included in the Newsletter.

Jeannie proposed language, and the members revised, to send out by email to the Business List that FUSN staff would be responsible for making the decision about closing.

Jeannie moved that this language describe the procedure. Anne seconded.

Anne moved to authorize FUSN's senior minister or her/his designee to close the building when conditions warrant. Jeannie seconded. Passed unanimously.

Message from the Operations Council:

We want to remind the FUSN congregation and tenants that the Ops Council has authorized the Senior Minister to close the building when conditions warrant. The building may be closed during a City of Newton declared snow emergency or when on site conditions are unsafe. Please check the FUSN office phone message for updates at 617-527-3203.

~ **Schedule date for Committee Chairs Meeting in March:** All

Saturday, March 14, is the proposed date.

Laurel requested input on topics for the meeting no later than March 11, the date of the March Ops Council meeting.

~ Project Step request: Jeannie

Project Step is requesting use of FUSN for a concert next January. Erin said the calendar is not yet set up and that such requests fare best when coming through a committee, such as the Music Committee.

~ **Thank yous:** Pat Rohan and all who contributed to running the Services Auction.

~ The meeting adjourned at 9:06 pm, although informal discussion of snow removal equipment, salt, and sand continued.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Schwartz,
Assistant Clerk