

FUSN OPERATIONS COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday January 8, 2014

Alliance Room, 7:00 P.M.

Present: Susan Bartlett, Rev. Megan Cefalu, Jeannie Chaisson, Alan Cody, Laurel Farnsworth, Anne Hess-Mahan, Andrea Kelley, Rev. Perry Montrose, Rev. Erin Splaine. Jonathan Lilienfeld and Sharon Sisskind, Annual Budget Drive representatives.

- ~ The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.
- ~ Andrea lit the chalice and shared a reading from Maya Angelou.

~ **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.

~ New Assistant Minister Rev. Megan Cefalu was warmly welcomed, and there was discussion about her getting settled in the area, especially since she came from California to New England winter.

~ Approvals: All

Anne moved and Alan seconded that the December minutes be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

~ Staff update: Perry, Erin

- Perry described preparation and delivery of holiday packages to FUSN congregants who are homebound.
- The Christmas Pageant was a successful part of the early service on Christmas Eve.
- A New Year's Eve party, from 5-8 pm, was organized for the "young and young at heart."
- The high school youth conference was held at FUSN this weekend. There were 50 people in the building, from 9am Saturday to 9:30 Sunday. The youth did the preparation.
- Other initiatives will be coming for the 2nd half of the year.

Erin reported on attendance for the Christmas Eve services: 235 were at the 5:30 pm service, which included the pageant; 217 attended the 7 pm service; and 300+ were there for the 11:30 pm. service. Music in the last service has increased over the years and is popular. Music included flutes in the balcony, duets and solos. Erin said they may move the

late service to 11:00 next year, due to its longer length.

On February 18th, a civil rights forum will be held at the Newton library. Participants will include Myrtle Baptist church pastors, Erin, and Mayor Warren of Newton, among others. It was suggested that FUSN voices could be part of a joint choir.

Erin will attend the Mass Moral March in Raleigh, North Carolina on Saturday, February 8th, with Judy Zacek, other FUSNites and UUs from all over to address such issues as,

- Economic sustainability, poverty
- Labor rights
- Fully-funded public education
- Health care and protecting Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security and the Affordable Care Act
- Disparities in the criminal justice system
- Voting rights and civil rights

~ Overview of Annual Budget Drive plans: ABD co-chairs Sharon and Jonathan.

Per Sharon: This year's slogan is "Thanks to you." [UU?]

The ABD committee (Jonathan, Sharon, and Barbara Deck) wants to continue the pledge party model of the past 2 years. So far, 20 people have offered to host. The first party, hosted by Josie Greene, will be February 28th, the Friday before the kickoff sermon. The committee will talk further with Erin about details.

Sharon provided an overview of ABD suggestions to date:

- Financial Objectives - To meet operations costs, we need to increase the budget by 5%. Another goal is to increase FUSN's financial sustainability, to invest in the resources we need to nurture and sustain the congregation. Alan suggested considering the wording of objectives. Rather than "financial objectives," maybe use language about engagement, growth, vitality, ministry, etc. (For example, in a business model, "share price" is less inspiring than focusing on great products, that is, what the customer gets).
- There will be a Giving Guide with adjusted income and suggested annual pledge amounts.
- Pie charts with sources of income and expenses forecast will also be provided.
- It will be pointed out that pledges are over 70% of FUSN's income.
- A major goal is obtaining 100% participation, regardless of the amounts.
- Another chart showed a sample of 50 UU nationwide congregations' average pledging. FUSN's average pledge of \$1554 is just below the middle in the survey. Laurel pointed out that communities vary in average income. The median pledge is \$900.

Sharon proposed that Ops Council members and others in leadership positions pledge early with some increase in their amounts over prior year pledging. She also suggested that leaders in the congregation talk up pledging and how much fun the parties were. Stewards can be more persuasive if they've already given and increased their own pledges.

Jonathan mentioned they are also seeking individuals willing to do testimonials during the drive.

They are also planning a potluck pledging party with a raffle for those who have already pledged, perhaps with a St. Patrick's Day theme of the pot of gold at end of the rainbow. Fiddlers and Irish step dancers could be included. Raffle prizes are TBD, such as Red Sox opening day tickets. Laurel suggests offering options like detailing your car, bathing your dog, cleaning your garage, organizing your home office or other tasks. She says that the raffle could be done as a Yankee Swap. Other prize options: maybe Marc Kaufman could do a UU tour, portraits, house photos, etc. It was suggested that the value is primarily in personal connections, which is more fun than money alone; the cost of the prizes is less a factor than intrinsic value and meaning. Laurel also said there could be two levels of prizes: big ticket items for those who pledge before a certain date and lesser prizes for those who pledge by a second deadline.

Also under consideration is a matching fund opportunity. Last year's matching pledge process was successful. The FinCom is assuming matching pledge income will not be available this year.

Jonathan will provide everyone the amount of their prior year pledge. Andrea suggested that pledge cards for Ops Council members be brought to the February meeting. She also offered to host a party.

Alan said that having stewards doing home visits after the pledge parties is a good plan, because stewards will have pledged before they request pledges from others.

Jonathan and Sharon said they'd like to get pledges in by March 16th, but will continue the process through mid-April. Of course, pledges are welcome anytime. Some may want to review their taxes before committing to their pledge amount.

~ Report on BOT meeting: There is no report this month, since the meeting isn't until next week. Laurel will attend.

~ Financial report: Alan

Year-to-date spending: Alan said Karen Bottar provides a monthly spreadsheet including two prior months in three categories: amounts budgeted, a forecast for the remainder of the year, and current income and expenses as percentages of the budget. So far, the budget is on track. Utilities, gas, and snow plowing are always variable, depending on weather.

Laurel pointed out a variance in the painting budget. The overage is due to painting three rooms and the ceiling in teachers' room. She requests \$4400 from the contingency budget for the additional cost.

There was brief discussion about whether there should be requests for funds for every line item that might be an overage. Alan moved and Jeannie seconded a motion to approve \$4400. It

passed unanimously.

Five-year forecast: Alan said the long-term forecast is conservative, out of caution. The “operating surplus” is for reserve. The deficit has declined. Three percent of endowment is drawn down yearly to help fund operations. The annual percentage draw from the endowment is being reduced a half percent a year -- from five percent to three percent -- over the five year forecast.

Laurel added that there has been progress in fiscal year net income, and that deficits have declined. She says Pine Village might not return as a renter. Currently, that provides \$43,000 in annual income. This amount would be difficult to replace.

Erin pointed out that other rental income is around \$30,000. She said there are more activities options, and summer weddings and other fees could be increased. A resource is the Boston Wedding Consortium. FUSN could explore these options for a larger rental income stream.

Laurel pointed out that if we do more weddings, we need to support them better. Erin said she is working with Gail Smalley on this. Andrea mentioned the concern about parking. Anne pointed out that Watertown Street is always an option for parking.

Alan cited Kevin McCormick’s work on the long-range review document.

Susan shared a list of standard Ops Council monthly tasks. January includes reviewing the B&G budget request. Laurel suggests moving this to February, since we don’t yet know if Pine Village will renew. Susan asks if there’s a need to move any other parts of the schedule. Laurel says it’s good to do it in pieces, so everything doesn’t wait until April. The B&G budget request could be in February; RE in March. A review of personnel issues and costs and committee requests could be done in April. Decisions can’t be made until after the ABD, but it helps to have the budget requests in advance for planning purposes.

Alan asked if the staff want to communicate anything to the committees about budget and planning. Erin said their expenditures should be explained by how the money ties in to the mission.

~ Update: Committee issues/reports: All

External communications: It was reported that Nancy pulled down the how-to-publicize information and links to outside targets for publicizing FUSN events. Anne updated Megan on the external communications issue...the desire for external communication for community-wide events but also having content oversight and vetting. Part of the issue is how FUSNites can get publicity for their projects and events.

FUSN has a Twitter account, but no one has taken on the task of running it.

Laurel suggested having a forum at FUSN about energy efficiency, as part of the Green Sanctuary accreditation.

Alan asked about the option to have advertising in the newsletter. Erin said she prefers to be the decider on that issue.

~ Outstanding issues:

- Use of the Alliance room for quieter coffee hour
- How to allocate tables in Parish Hall

~ Agenda items for February and beyond: Susan, All

~ Thank yous: All

~ The meeting was adjourned at pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Schwartz,
Assistant Clerk