

**Minutes – February 16, 2011  
Operations Council  
First Unitarian Society in Newton**

Members attending: Pat Rohan (Ch), Jeannie Chaisson, Alan Cody, Laurel Farnsworth, Anne Hess-Mahan, and Kim Shanks.

Also attending: Mr. Barb Greve; Quinn Mayville, Bob Persons; Kate Van Akin and Rose Yan (Ms Van Akin and Ms Yan are members of the Harvard Negotiation and Mediation Clinical Team).

**1. Opening Words:** Laurel read some inspiring words by Thoreau, and led the group in reciting its covenant together.

**2. Committee Updates:**

*Membership:* With regard to the search for a Membership Coordinator, Pat announced that interviews of 2 additional candidates are scheduled for this month.

*Services Auction:* Pat stated that although final numbers aren't in yet, the January 22 auction appears to have been a great success.

*Finance:* Alan stated that the committee has again reviewed the long-term projections and discussed growth of pledges vs. growth of expenses. The Finance Comm. would like to see the Board focus on member growth and retention. Laurel spoke about the document that Finance is preparing for the website, pointing out that it will show the projected deficit on a cumulative basis – over 5 years, it would be total more than \$400K.

Alan explained that Finance Comm. has chosen to tweak the budget format with regard to the prior year's surplus. The new format is intended to show, in a more dynamic manner, how such a surplus affects the positive side of the budget.

*Religious Education:* Kim spoke of the recent survey and congregational meetings regarding the search for a new R.E. Director. The group will meet shortly to review the input and discuss the next steps.

With regard to the Coming of Age program, a recent email prompted a discussion about the possibility of making it a 2-year program.

*Music:* Jeannie reported that there will be a Sunday collection in March for the music program.

*Worship:* Jeannie explained that lay-led services are in good shape for the remainder of the church year, with the Board of Trustees giving such a service in April.

Summer services have yet to be planned. Jeannie feels that a discussion item about summer plans will be ready for the March Ops Council meeting.

*Social Action:* Jeannie reported that the Social Action Task Force is ready to present a proposal at the March Board meeting.

*Green Sanctuary:* Laurel stated that the group will be checking with R.E. about plans for Earth Day. The ongoing assessments are coming together for application to UUA for Green Sanctuary Status.

*Building and Grounds:* Laurel reported that spreading of mulch will take place on May 7; this church yard job requires many volunteers. With regard to the work on the

organ, Laurel stated that the responses received from prospective vendors seem to suggest that we do architectural work first, in order to get prices for the organ work. She explained that the blower for the organ is located under the minister's office, but new technology will allow it to be moved.

On other B & G matters, Laurel noted a recent leak in the sanctuary. She is negotiating terms of a new lease with Congregation Dorshei Tzedek. She has sought information from Peter Smith about the UN flag. It seems that Bob Person may be able to help arrange an internet thermostat for the HVAC system.

*Memorial:* Laurel noted that the group met recently, and plans are underway for a service to dedicate the new plaque. As well, plans are in the works for landscape changes, including new bluestone for the path, following a design provided by George Batchelor. Laurel has written to Rev. Splaine and Anne Watson-Born about keeping the Memorial Wall area tidy and unobstructed. Unfortunately, music stands and chairs have been piled there from time to time, which makes it difficult for visitors.

*Communications:* Anne reported that the group plans to launch an online directory this spring. In response to an inquiry about security, Anne replied that the directory would be both password-protected and "opt-in." Also in the works is a blog, with a goal to have committees post news to the blog. With regard to the existing Facebook page, the committee encourages spiritual postings (Laurel suggested the "Asking the Questions" group as a likely source). With regard to podcasts of sermons, the committee feels it is desirable, but seeks the leadership of the Worship Comm. Initial discussions suggest that it may be suitable to engage a beadle-type staff member to run the equipment used for audio taping the sermons.

**3. Report on Trustees' Meeting:** The following items were discussed in the prior week's meeting of the Trustees:

The Board of Investment made a report to the Board – fortunately, the status of investments has improved since the recession. A discussion arose concerning the Board of Investment autonomy.

Bill Dusetz made a presentation about the Planned Giving Committee. The group seeks records of commitments that have been made in the past.

Members of the Committee on Ministry have been selected – Margaret Ruttenberg, Kate Mason, Liz Marshall, Bill Horne, and Brian Gill.

Social Action Task Force – An update and discussion took place. Attention was given to identifying who can speak externally on behalf of the Society. Alan indicated that there seems to be agreement that those persons with an established/authorized mission can speak within those confines.

"Assistant DRE" – A new title has been approved for the position held by Wendy Berenson. Previously the title had been "Assistant to the DRE."

**4. Monthly Budget Tracking:** Alan mentioned the change about the surplus (noted in the Finance Comm. report in item 2 above). Laurel commented that overall, expenditures are within the parameters for the budget.

Pat noted that Ch. Jonathan Lilienfeld had inquired about a \$250 item that appears to constitute a change in the budget. Alan consulted records and concluded that the item in fact had been adopted as part of the budget.

Alan noted that he will be meeting with Fran Clancy and Nancy Tobias later in the week with regard to accounting for restricted special accounts, and donated funds. It is Alan’s goal to increase the transparency of such accounts, which don’t show up on regular monthly budget report. As well, he seeks to close those accounts that are ready to be closed.

**5. Priorities for ‘10-’11:** With regard to the priorities established in September, each item was noted, and discussion took place, as follows:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Status/Comments</u>
a) New meeting structure	Done
b) Communications	“a work in progress”
c) Global Communications Strategy	“a work in progress”
d) Expedite/streamline budget process	It was noted that the Board’s role vis a vis the budget is tied to the current governance experiment. Alan indicated that he feels the Board should establish an Audit Committee. Laurel described the current situation as a set-up for conflict. The roles of both the Board and the Council in the budget operations create inefficiency. Pat recalled that preserving the Board’s traditional role was very deliberately chosen as part of the governance model.
e) Evaluate Operations Council Structure	Discussion considered the process for assessing the outcome of the current governance experiment. Barb mentioned the Mass. Bay District staff as a good resource for a neutral evaluator, and Pat indicated he would touch base with Doug Zelinski.
f) Re-create communication among committee chairs	One meeting held and planned a twice/year arrangement
g) Succession Planning for Ops Council	still ahead

**6. Flags in sanctuary:** The item will be taken up at the March meeting.

**7. Religious Education budget request:** A draft ‘11-’12 budget request totaling \$151,818 was discussed. It was noted that salaries and benefits set out in the one-page document reflect the figures for the current year, based on the assumption that the Personnel Committee will be providing recommendations.

The new line item for “Children’s RE Program,” established by vote at the January Ops Council meeting, appears in the budget request.

Discussion considered line 7350 “Operations,” which had included \$2.5K for a DLRE Search in the current year’s budget. A new line item shows \$5 for the upcoming year. Noting that he, in fact, had recommended \$5K last year, Barb spoke of travel expenses for the top two candidates, and paying moving expenses for the news employee. Pat asked for a written breakdown of the \$5K.

Alan asked Barb whether the proposed budget reflects the type of program improvements that Barb has spoken of. A discussion ensued about the cost to families for Coming of Age – about \$690. It was noted that the rates for Thompson Island keep increasing.

Laurel noted that the current year's budget of \$143,718 included the Zambia Coffee House (\$1,400) and Search Committee (\$2,500). She urged that the Zambia Coffee House be treated as part of the Social Action budget, and Pat agreed. A discussion considered the nature of the \$1400 item – whether it constitutes a donation. Alan noted that the new structure proposed for social action will bring new accounting needs.

The proposal includes \$2700 for two MacBook Pro laptops, with MS Office Suite. In response to questions, Barb explained that Wendy is using her own computer, and Barb is using one that was deemed not functional for Fran's use.

With regard to the increase of \$1600 for Coming of Age, Barb explained that it includes \$700 for Scholarship and \$900 for OWL Training. The budget also includes a \$1K increase for the DRE's Professional Development.

**8. Building Security:** Laurel explained that the sanctuary door (large ceremonial door to Washington Street) has been found unlocked on many occasions this year. A spirited discussion took place about a) re-keying the building; and b) establishing a policy governing distribution/custody of keys.

Noting that it has been more than 10 years since the building was re-keyed, Laurel recommended doing so this summer, perhaps August. She explained how the current arrangement includes not only a master key, but also "sub-masters" (for example, the "Teachers' Room and the Copy Room were "sub-mastered;" as well, Pine Village and Dorshei have sub-master keys). A master key must be available to the Fire Department (or they will force access).

A discussion ensued about re-keying the sanctuary door at an earlier date. Laurel agreed to bring a recommended policy governing distribution/custody of keys.

**9. Thank You's:** Pat will send a note to David Morocco thanking him for leading the Valentine Dance. Alan will send a note to Bill Duset for his work with planned giving, which Bill graciously volunteered to take on. Pat will place newsletter notices for both.

Respectfully submitted,

Gayle Smalley, Assistant Clerk