

Minutes – March 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, Kristin Cleveland and Rev. Erin Splaine. Jud Leonard attended part of the meeting.

1. Welcome Kristin Cleveland: Upon calling the meeting to order, Pat introduced Kristin Cleveland, who has just begun as Coordinator of Member Support and Development.

2. Opening Words: Pat read a passage from "Serving with Grace" by Erik Walker Wikstrom, describing the spirituality that can be found in service; and Pat led the group in reciting its covenant together.

3. Staff computers: Jud Leonard joined the group for a discussion about improving the computer situation for staff. A computer is needed for Kristin's position. The computer now used by Barb was described as inadequate. Wendy Berenson has been using her own laptop to carry out her duties.

Jud described several possible approaches, characterizing a range of choices as tradeoffs between speed/convenience and cost. A brief discussion considered PC's but it was the sense of the group that the better approach would stick with Macintosh. Barb mentioned that it would be helpful to have one laptop to be able to plug into the equipment recently installed in the Children's Chapel.

Motion: Jeannie proposed spending \$2600 for 2 new computers, to be charged to Line 6671, Computer Expense, Other; Laurel seconded.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

4. Start-up expenses for Membership Coordinator: Kristin was asked whether she has noted any start-up costs. She replied that it would be helpful to have use of a digital camera, and a brief discussion ensued about asking members for such a donation. The Communications Committee's photographers were mentioned as well.

5. Committee Updates:

Membership: Pat announced that the big news was the hiring of Kristin.

Small Group Ministry: Pat noted that a discussion is underway about revitalizing the program; as part of that effort, Holly Zeeb will be meeting with Erin.

Finance: Alan noted that Brian Gill has sought budget requests from the committee chairs. Alan explained that the Finance Committee recently took a closer look at the Accumulated Operating Surplus. It turns out that it was underestimated, and that in fact we were "better than even" at the close of the prior fiscal year. Laurel provided a 5-page analysis of utility costs – electric, natural gas, and water/sewer. In particular, natural gas costs have fallen over the past five years, in part due our own conservation improvements.

Social Action: Jeannie reported that the Board approved the plan put forth by the Social Action Development Committee, and that the nomination process has begun for the Social Action Council.

Worship: Jeannie stated that changes are in the works, and that summer services will not be handled by the Worship Committee this year. A brief discussion ensued about the budget for summer services, currently funded at \$1000 in budget line 7140.

Green Sanctuary: Laurel announced that the group is going to start Eco Teams. A Newton-wide program has approached houses of worship; Dick and Lynn Bail are getting the training and they will take the lead.

6. Report on Board of Trustees Meeting: Jeannie reported on the following actions and discussions at the meeting last week:

- Approval of hiring Kristin Cleveland as Member Coordinator;
- An interesting and constructive discussion took place regarding the Trustees' impressions of the book, *Serving with Grace*;
- As a follow-up to the Ministerial Start-up, an ongoing discussion considers the implications of the transition from a Pastoral to Program-type church;
- The Board will lead the Worship Service in April;
- The Annual Meeting is scheduled for June 5;
- Trustees have agreed to contact non-pledging members as part of the Canvass.

7. Monthly Budget Tracking: The Council briefly discussed a report that had been provided in advance of the meeting by Karen Bottar, Finance Chair. Laurel commented that Buildings & Grounds is likely to run over budget for repairs. The \$5,000 cost of a new compressor, other unanticipated HVAC work and the furniture for the minister's office all play a role in this year's expenditures.

8. Expenses for diagnosing the roof leak: Laurel sought authority for Buildings & Grounds to expend \$2500 for an unanticipated cost for diagnosing a roof leak. She explained that the leak is showing up in the sanctuary and the Headstart Room. As the problem involves a gothic design feature (the roof butting into step flashing), Laurel expects to engage Judy Selwyn, a historic building expert who has done work for us in the past.

A related discussion arose about the "Roof Fund" that was intended to be set aside as part of the Capital Campaign a number of years ago. Although that fund would seem to be a suitable source for the current need, the Capital Campaign leadership has yet to make the funds available.

Motion: Jeannie moved to spend \$2500 from the contingency to be charged to roof repair for such work; Kim seconded.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

9. Flags: A discussion considered the various options for replacing the worn flags – Old Glory and the United Nations – that currently hang at the rear in the sanctuary. Options included replacing them in-kind, with different flags, or simply removing them altogether. Use of a UUA "Standing on the Side of Love" flag was mentioned. Anne volunteered to seek input from the FUSN community via the email "business list."

10. Expenses for the Youth Coffeehouse: By way of background for this item, beginning next year, the annual Youth Coffeehouse will no longer be considered part of Religious Education. Given that it serves as a fundraiser for educational opportunities in Zambia, there is interest in treating it as a social action program. In recent years the coffeehouse has been funded with a \$1,000 budget line item.

Concerns were expressed that the Council avoid straying outside its proper role, i.e. to not effectively dictate to Social Action Committee the decision to support a particular program. Given the traditional manner of funding the Social Action Committee, tied to a percentage of pledges, that committee traditionally does not submit budget requests in the manner required of other committees. Kim commented that the Youth Coffeehouse has been run in an autonomous manner in the past, and she favors continuing an approach that recognizes it as such.

Although it was noted that the Youth Coffeehouse has not been asked to repay the \$1000 in past years, substantial interest was expressed in providing only "seed money" in the future. The current issue is also affected by the transition to a new approach for social action. The new plan has been approved, but it will take a little time to get the new Social Action Council up and running. Alan brought up an arrangement that would use a zero budget line item, which would provide a framework for the group to seek the Council's approval for any expenditure. He also explained that approval could be given for an advance to cover expenses (perhaps \$1000), which would be repaid from the proceeds.

Motion: Laurel moved to add "Youth Coffeehouse" as a line item to the budget, with zero (0) funds; Anne seconded.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

11. JourneySongs: Jeannie explained that JourneySongs, a musical group that sings for the terminally ill, received \$500 in the current year's budget. Last year JourneySongs indicated an interest in forming into an independent non-profit group. However, after looking into the expenses and requirements associated with doing so, JourneySongs recently indicated that it prefers to continue its FUSN affiliation.

Discussion focused on a donation recently made in gratitude for JourneySong's services. Given that JourneySongs does not constitute an entity on its own, it has no way to accept the funds. Alan noted that it would be improper for the church to channel donations to separate groups. Further discussion clarified that JourneySongs will remain a FUSN program, not a separate group. Pat noted that donors can make FUSN the payee, with an understanding that JourneySongs is still subject to our budget process; however, the receipt of donations is one factor that can be considered in the budget process.

Pat stressed that he wants to commit to keeping the JourneySongs line in the budget. All members agreed that JourneySongs is doing good work.

12. Pine Village flyers and signage: Laurel provided the background: Pine Village Preschool is concerned that potential clients have difficulty finding the site and therefore has sought permission to install signs. A designer has provided illustrations of several options on behalf of Pine Village. Laurel explained that municipal rules

prohibit installation of free-standing signs (she noted that the free-standing signs in the front churchyard are "grandfathered"). Signs attached to fences and temporary signs are permissible. Laurel indicated that she would email the images of proposed signs to Ops Council members.

Motion: Alan moved to allow Pine Village to install a sign on the rear fence. Jeannie seconded.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

Part II: Laurel explained her interest in circulating, via FUSN's email "chat list," a flyer about Pine Village's summer camp program. Emphasizing that she would be acting in her personal capacity, she asked for feedback from the Council, seeking to avoid any misperception of her action as an official endorsement. The consensus was that there was no need for concern and that Laurel may proceed on her own.

13. Key Policy: Laurel circulated a draft policy governing the framework of master and submaster keys for interior and exterior doors as well as the distribution of keys to various parties, including staff, tenants, cleaning company and so on. Laurel suggested giving advance notice that the locks will be changed in September. She also noted that arrangements have been made with Sherman Lock to re-key the main sanctuary door.

Alan suggested that records be kept to reflect distribution of keys. Laurel indicated that she would finalize the policy and circulate it by email for a vote.

14. Operations Council Succession: Pat asked for a show of hands indicating a willingness to continue on the Council next year. A short discussion ensued about the benefits of bringing in new members.

15. Operations Council Budget: Pat asked for input about a budget for next year. For the current year, the Council has \$1500. The \$1240 that has been spent or obligated to date covers retreat facilitator, end of year ('09-'10) BBQ and district workshops. No additional funding needs were suggested by Council members.

Laurel brought up the Hospitality budget, which currently covers some kitchen supplies, but lacks a committee. Noting that the Community Breakfast Program is run separately, Laurel proposed a new arrangement whereby an integrated Hospitality budget would be used for BBQ, community breakfasts, as well as kitchen supplies. She indicated that she would look into it and report back.

16. Thank You's: Notes have been sent to Janet White and Wendy Atamian for their work on the Youth Coffeehouse. Looking forward, appreciation will be expressed to Bob Persons for noticing the need to replace the kitchen door knob and promptly taking charge of the task; and to Jonathan Lilienfeld and Barney Freiberg-Dale for creating and building safe and convenient equipment for hanging banners in the sanctuary, for the Coming of Age graduation service.

17. Email vote noted: For the record, it was noted that the Minutes for the February 16 meeting were approved by email vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Gayle Smalley, Assistant Clerk