

Minutes – April 20, 2011
Operations Council
First Unitarian Society in Newton

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

Also attending: Mr. Barb Greve and Rev. Erin Splaine. Jud Leonard, Karen Bottar, Bill Dusetz and Brian Gill attended part of the meeting.

- 1. Opening Words:** Kim read some inspiring words about building community by sharing the load. The group recited the covenant together.
- 2. Annual Budget Drive:** Jud Leonard, Co-Chair of the Budget Drive provided an update: The total number of pledges and the amount are both running ahead of this time last year. Nonetheless, Jud sees the pace of pledges starting to fall off, and he expressed a concern that the total amount may fall short. Jud noted that some have reduced their pledges and the group discussion considered the impact of the current strained economy. Jud explained that the biggest problem is getting in contact with households, i.e. getting phone calls returned. Kim asked how Council members could assist with the budget drive, and Jud indicated that it would be helpful to have help calling households that haven't pledged. Discussion also considered steps and methods for communicating the budget drive status to the congregation. Laurel noted the importance of communicating that we have not yet been able to make up for the discontinued RE fees.

- 3. Preliminary Budget:** Karen Bottar led a presentation concerning the Finance Committee's preliminary budget for the coming year. The committee intends to refine the budget upon receipt of additional information affecting a number of items, including salaries and benefits. At this point in development of the budget, it anticipates total expenses of \$800,607. The group's discussion touched on a range of budget matters, including the following:

Fundraisers: Holiday Fair and Trees: Finance Comm. doesn't expect much growth in income; thus, the budget reflects a 2% increase. Looking to the Winter Fundraiser, as we didn't hit the \$15K mark this year, the new budget anticipates \$14K.

Cell tower income: Although there is some concern that the income could be discontinued in the future, Laurel pointed out that we are in the middle of a 5-year contract cycle.

Endowment infusions: Pat recalled that we cut back during last year's budget process, taking about \$20K less than expected. Alan and Pat suggested that such funds still could be taken for the coming year.

Prior year surplus for operations/change in format: Pat pointed out that although it looks like income has decreased, that is due to a format change, which no longer classifies the prior year's surplus as income.

Utility expenses: It was noted that the budget continues a conservative approach. Although natural gas prices have been lower than budget, a harsh winter is always a possibility.

Hospitality expenses: Karen raised the possibility of reclassifying the item into the “Committee” category (instead of “Office”). There was a clear consensus in favor of the change. (Clerk’s note: See related discussion at item 7 below.)

Professional development: After Erin inquired about professional development for the Membership Coordinator, discussion ensued about the possibility of a pooled account. Erin expressed a preference for separate professional development accounts.

Community Ministry: A brief discussion noted the timing of the annual covenant process, which is expected to take place in September. There was a consensus that the stipend would be paid after the covenant is in place.

Search for RE Director: It was noted that the budget includes \$5K for search expenses.

JourneySongs: Finance Committee reps inquired whether the funding is best classified under “Music” or “Ministry.” The consensus was that it fits best in “Music” category.

UUA dues: It was noted that the amount (\$21,692) reflects a rate increase, from \$56 to \$58 per member.

Second Collection: The Finance team pointed out that it’s a wash, i.e. 100% of money collected is promptly distributed to charity, with no effect on the bottom line.

Chancel Committee: Jeannie asked about moving the item into “Ministry” category (instead of “Committees”), but Laurel pointed out that it is used for candles, oil and other supplies.

Canvass/Fellowship Dinner: Alan inquired whether the amount budgeted is adequate; the consensus around table felt it has been OK.

Other Income, Line 3550: Karen explained that this item shows no value because the information will be shown in another part of the budget. For the current year, this line forecasts \$3240 of “other income.”

Special Building Use Fees, Line 3240: This item is shown at \$28,840, down from \$31K for the current year. Laurel explained that we lost three tenants in Sept. 2010, and that we shouldn’t expect to hit the \$31K target for this year.

Misc. Contingency: Brian inquired about the background for this item, which was budgeted for the current year at \$15,271. Council members recalled that it was originally developed as a formula.

In the course of the budget discussion, the group also considered various aspects of the current financial status, Alan noted that the endowment money has yet to be drawn, explaining that it is never drawn until at least May, and even then it could be delayed further as part of the budget approval. A discussion arose about cash flow for this year, especially given reduced utility costs and deferral to next year of expenditures for organ improvements.

As for the current year’s pledge collections, it was noted that we “have a ways to go” to reach the target. Karen felt that based on payment patterns from prior years, we are likely to hit the budgeted goal of \$440,800. She noted that many households pay on a quarterly basis.

4. Committee Updates:

Buildings & Grounds: Laurel gave a follow-up on the roof leaks: It appears that it may be necessary to rebuild a wall. As a result, for the coming year it may be necessary to use Major Maintenance funds for masonry, instead of stained glass.

Communications: Anne noted that the online directory is moving forward, although the May 10 goal may be a bit optimistic. The Committee recently experimented with worship service audio recordings. Jeannie noted that we now have technology to record what comes through the microphone. Online posting involves three tasks: a) "taping," b) uploading, and c) securing permission to post. Laurel proposed that we think of this task on the same model now used in hiring youths for beadle work; thus, for the audio recordings, we could engage tech-savvy teens at an approximate rate of \$25 per week. Laurel proposed adding \$1,250 to the budget for worship Committee, tech support.

Worship: Jeannie noted that some committee members will be continuing, but that the overall group will be reconstituted. Pointing to the framework used for the recent lay-led service by the Board of Trustees, Jeannie noted that such a framework facilitates the preparation of lay-led services.

Religious Education: Kim reported that the RE Council is looking at feedback received in connection with the transition and search. The May meeting will look at the cost and time involved in Coming of Age. Kim stressed the importance of good communication and a deliberate approach in considering any adjustments to the COA program.

5. Report on Board of Trustees Meeting: Highlights from the recent meeting were noted:

- The Board has discussed language for the membership application card. In the course of the discussion, consideration was given to stipulating a pledge requirement for members, and the possibility of inserting a corollary provision in the by-laws.
- The Board has approved Wendy Berenson's request for a five-month leave of absence.
- With regard to the continuing discussion about moving to a program-size church, consideration was given to choosing that topic for a joint retreat of the Board and Ops Council.

6. Flags in Sanctuary: Anne reported on the input she had received after posting an inquiry on the business email list on March 16. A variety of ideas were received – installing a rainbow flag, earth flag, chalice flag, or a Massachusetts flag, and the suggestion to remove all flags. However, the majority favored the existing arrangement of a United States flag and a United Nations flag. Thus, Anne recommended moving forward to replace the flags on an in-kind basis.

Motion: Alan moved to accept Anne's recommendation; Kim seconded.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

7. New Hospitality Committee: Laurel explained that she has spoken with Fran Clancy, Ron Margolin and Mike Arnott, in an effort to establish a Hospitality

Committee. Under a new arrangement, coffee arrangements (spearheaded for many years by Mike), community breakfasts (run by Ron), and kitchen supplies (purchases are currently arranged by Fran) would all come within the charge of a new committee. Ron has agreed to serve as chair. Kim asked about the Fellowship Dinner, and Laurel replied that it would remain separate. It was recalled that there had been a Hospitality Committee until some years ago; when nobody was willing to serve as chair, the funding was moved to the budget for "Office."

Motion: Laurel moved to reconstitute the Hospitality Committee; Jeannie seconded.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

Motion: Laurel moved to approve Ron Margolin as Chair; Alan seconded.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

8. Parking lot signs: Laurel explained that the reserved parking spaces are sometimes used by tenants, members, and strangers. The need for further signs was considered. Erin expressed a desire for caution, in the spirit of remaining welcoming. Jeannie spoke in favor of a new sign identifying FUSN, which would direct visitors to the rear door. Laurel indicated that she would check out getting a banner.

9. Newsletter timing: By way of background, Pat noted that a member expressed disappointment at receiving a newsletter containing notices for events that already took place. Discussion noted that the newsletter is sent bulk non-profit rate, except for those who pay for first class stamps. Erin raised the possibility of changing the schedule from twice to once a month, noting that Fran Clancy recently had to go looking for newsletter content. Others noted that space has not always been available for newsletter items, especially for inserts. Laurel commented that there is a heavier demand for newsletter space in the autumn. A brief discussion ensued about the utility of hard copy (as opposed to electronic) newsletters. Council members agreed to continue the discussion at a subsequent meeting, both as to a) schedule and b) format (electronic/hard copy). Anne indicated that she will consult with the Communications Committee about newsletter issues.

10. Thank You's: Pat will take charge of a newsletter notice expressing appreciation to the Green Sanctuary Committee for the recent Earth Day service, and to the Children's RE Committee for children's activities provided in connection with the service.

11. Governance Subcommittee: Pat reported that he and Laurel recently put their heads together to consider the governance experiment, in preparation for discussion with the Governance Subcommittee. Laurel and Pat identified problems with the process for budget/money items, involving considerable duplication of effort. Pat feels that the budget responsibility should fall to one or the other – either Board or Council. Pat asked aloud: If the Council's charge does not include the budget, does FUSN need an Ops Council?

Alan spoke to the understandable expectation in any organization that its board have the obligations of fiduciary duty. He pointed out however that a by-law could assign financial stewardship to the Ops Council.

Pat noted his intent to report to the Subcommittee that something has to be done to remove duplication of effort or otherwise change the governance structure. Alan agreed that it is a real issue. Anne and Jeannie spoke in favor of "going to the source" for information rather than requiring information to be brought to both meetings. Alan mentioned his ongoing interest in the Board establishing an audit committee to act on its behalf, so that all trustees could rely on reports from such a committee.

Both Pat and Laurel expressed the sentiment that we are not ready for the bylaw amendments anticipated under the governance experiment.

12. Email votes noted: For the record, two email votes were noted:

- Minutes for March 16 meeting, Approved April 18, 2011.
- Adoption of Building Key Policy (copy attached) – Approved April 18, 2011.

Respectfully submitted,
Gayle Smalley, Assistant Clerk

Attachment: Building Key Policy

Building Key Policy, Approved by Operations Council, April 18, 2011

For the greatest possible building security, we try to keep the number of keys outstanding to a minimum. We have sub master keys for various tenant and auxiliary spaces that correspond to the uses we have contracted with them. The administrator keeps a list of keys and those tenants or individuals who have them. When the keys are no longer needed for a group that disbands or a lease that ends, those keys must be returned to the administrator.

EXTERIOR DOOR KEYS

We have one key for the historic main door of the Sanctuary which is kept by the Administrator and accessible to the Beadle and the bonded cleaning company.

The master exterior door key opens the rear door to the parking lot, the two side doors to the Narthex, the exterior door under the Tower to the classroom corridor, the exterior door on Washington St. to the Parish Hall and the side door to the yard from the Parish Hall.

This key is given to all FUSN staff, Pine Village staff, Dorshei Tzedek staff, the bonded cleaning company, various other renters according to our agreements with them and a very limited number of other FUSN congregants. If FUSN members are booking events for hours when staff are not present, it is the member's responsibility to sign out a key from the administrator and return it promptly after the event.

INTERIOR DOOR KEYS

The highest level of master key opens all doors in the building. The Fire Department, FUSN staff, the bonded cleaning company and a very limited number of FUSN congregants have this key. This key also opens all staff offices which are deemed to be private spaces belonging to those staff and not to be entered without agreement from and notification to those staff.

Submaster keys open all the classroom spaces with one submaster opening the offices and first floor classrooms for Pine Village Preschool and another opening all the basement classrooms and offices of Dorshei Tzedek Hebrew School.

The copy room is on another submaster key which is more widely available to FUSN members and Sunday school teachers.

The boiler room is on another submaster key distributed to members who can help maintain the heating and air conditioning systems.

The door to the Tower is on another submaster key available to the cell antenna tenant and chimers.

The Preservation closet is on another submaster key available to the members of that committee.

The kitchen cabinets and Alliance Room closet have various keys held by the Community breakfast committee and Alliance members. These keys are not mastered to the main master key but the administrator also keeps a copy.