

**First Unitarian Society in Newton  
OPERATIONS COUNCIL MINUTES**

Wednesday, April 8, 2015

Alliance Room, 7:00 P.M.

Present: Susan Bartlett, Jeannie Chaisson, Judy Curby, Laurel Farnsworth, Anne Hesse-Mahan, Andrea Kelley, Rev. Erin Splaine, Rowan Van Ness. Guests: Jud Leonard for electronic communications; Karen Davis for Personnel Policy Committee; Jacki Rohan as Board representative.

The meeting was called to order at approximately 7 p.m.

**~ 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.

~ Invocation / Chalice Lighting: Susan

~ There was discussion around the sale of stuffed bears during coffee hour. The bears are made by a FUSN congregant, and funds are donated to FUSN. There was concern that this is a form of fundraising. It was decided that she could post pictures through the general email list and on the bulletin board to advertise her bear offerings. She would be welcome to also sell the bears at the Holiday Fair.

~ **Approvals:** All

- March Minutes were approved.

~ **Electronic communications:** Jud Leonard

Jud raised the issue of using the general FUSN email list to advertise private business. A particular congregant has been offering services on the email list, such as finances. Jud received questions about whether this was appropriate for the FUSN email list. He points out that several people advertise vacation houses, as well as things like carpentry work. It seems difficult to determine what is acceptable. Jeannie points out that others also offer requests and recommendations of all kinds, whether roofers, cleaners, dentists, etc. Judy says she just

doesn't click on an email she's not interested in and doesn't think it's a problem. Anne feels that FUSN recommendations should not be for the wider community. Andrea is not bothered by these kinds of emails; it's like a FUSN "Angie's List."

Rowan suggests that the business list could be a one-way communication, i.e., messages from FUSN to the FUSN community.

Jeannie asked if it would make sense to change the names of the lists. Jud said that most of the unwanted messages come from people who use "reply all," whether intentionally or by default setting. Currently, anyone on the general list also receives business list messages, but not vice-versa; if an email is sent to both lists, the recipient will only get one message. The message would only go to both lists separately if the sender sends 2 separate emails.

- Also discussed was use of the business list for other UU organizations, climate change activities, etc.

Laurel asked if messages, such as from the UUA, should be sent to either the business or general list. Jeannie suggested we could ask people if they want to receive such messages. Should climate forums go on the business list? The consensus was yes, even if it is a UUA event. Judy pointed out that we don't want to have too many posts, or people will overlook them. Items, such as UU Urban Ministry do go on the business list.

Laurel wondered if we should send a soft message that people not do self-promotion too often; issue a reminder, like a reminder about candles of joy and concern. Susan suggests maybe issue the reminder twice a year, as there are newcomers. General consensus seemed to be that it is okay to advertise private businesses, if it's not too many or too often. Jeannie said we could ask for feedback on this. There was general agreement that no major action is needed at this time, just the occasional reminders about not overdoing it.

~ **Facebook group** and who should be able to join: Erin has been reviewing requests to join FUSN's Facebook list. She asks people she doesn't know to say what their connection is to FUSN. If they don't reply, she blocks them from the list. In future, this will fall under the Membership Coordinator.

~ **FY16 Budget** - Personnel Policy Committee salary recommendations: Karen Davis Karen shared an overview sheet as well as a proposed FY'16 Salary and Benefits Budget. In the former, she provided comparisons with UUA salary ranges, as well as professional consensuses from several independent sources that anticipate increases in the overall economy will be 3%. She pointed out that not all employees are benefit-eligible. Karen then reviewed the proposed salaries, benefits and expenses for FY '16 chart.

~ **Next BOT meeting** is Tuesday April 14<sup>th</sup>: Andrea will attend as the Ops representative.

~ **Staff update:**

## Rowan: April Acting DLRE Report

This outline section was provided electronically by Rowan:

Youth Service

RE Council

- Fall Retreat Day
  - Intention to plan
- Justice Circle (share handout)
- Curriculum Circle
  - Moving towards mapping
  - Desire to clearly articulate goals for each age level
  - Combining next year's 4th and 5th grade classes as well as 6th & 7th grade classes.
  - OWL - 5th grade level, Adult level
- Adult RE
  - Discussions about vision, action, finding way forward
- Events
  - Passover Seder was huge success with over 70 people in attendance!
  - Easter Egg hunt seemed successful
- Teaching
  - About to gear up into recruiting mode
  - Teacher Training this Sunday 9-10 on Classroom Participation & Music

Training

- Administration as Leadership
  - CORI Background Checks
- Narrative 4 with Jamie Freed and Meg Holland

Minutes continued:

The Youth Service took place successfully. RE council and sub-circles are busy. They intend to have retreat day in the fall. The Justice Circle (RE+Social Action) has created a handout of upcoming family-friendly RE+Social Action opportunities. The Curriculum Circle is working on articulating goals for each grade level. A couple of classes will be combined based on actual attendance numbers. They are still working on expanding OWL for 5th grade (an 8-week program). The Passover Seder last Friday night had over 70 attendees. They are still gearing up for teacher recruitment. A teacher training is scheduled for this Sunday.

Rowan attended a training and wanted to share the need for doing background CORI checks for RE teachers, youth advisors and staff. Currently, FUSN does them for staff. Judy asked what the policy is if someone turns up as having questionable background. Erin said she and Ken Sawyer would look at the specifics and make a decision. Reports are held in a separate lockbox and kept for 3 years and then shredded. Costs for these checks will be included in the budget. Because of changes in the law, Erin said background checks will include mentors and the entire COA team, people in the nursery, Lay Ministers, and anyone who comes in contact with vulnerable populations.

Rowan also went to a training about sharing stories and hopes to find ways to incorporate this into RE. She said sharing stories helps develop empathy.

**Erin:** The staff team is going to a workshop in Sudbury tomorrow on issues around race and racism. This Saturday, the New to UU course will be held, including a tour of the building. She also mentioned the June 2017 joint European and Deutsche Unitarian conference. The FUSN choir will go and sing.

~ **Financial:** Judy, All:

- Review year-to-date spending: Laurel thinks we may be a little over the electricity budget. We are under in collecting special use fees. Collection of prior year pledges is going well, and other income has helped cover the loss of one group's building use fees.
- Hiring accounting support: Since Nancy Tobias is leaving, the budget for this needs to increase for her replacement. Laurel said she told the two candidates that if something needs to be changed in FUSN's accounting, they should tell FUSN, so it can be addressed and budgeted. Laurel moved to accept Judy's recommendation of the hire. Seconded and passed. The Board needs to vote and the Board Chair to sign the hire papers.
- The Financial Oversight Committee is looking at all financial policies at FUSN and trying to come up with a comprehensive picture. They recommend looking at the flow of FUSN's four data systems and determine the optimal place to store each type of information. They also recommend backup of Quickbooks accounting data; a pilot test of electronic pledge payments by automatic bank transfer; and how gifts and bequests to the endowment are recorded. Laurel expressed concern about how much time this would all take and asked if funds should be budgeted for a consultant. **Ops members will look at these recommendations in more depth before the next Ops meeting.**

~ The Ops budget review is May 13. Laurel asked if there will be an opportunity for a presentation to the congregation before the annual meeting, as was done last year, to allow more time for congregants to ask questions and review the numbers. It was agreed that this was a good idea. Laurel will talk to Karen Bottar about arranging.

~ Thank yous: All  
Seder organizers: Jennie Lerner and team.

~ No update yet on bank parking lot situation.

*N.B.: An email received after the meeting indicated that the bank would allow Sunday parking in their lot, only in non-bank designated spaces and not by the wall where the ATM is.*

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Wendy Schwartz,  
Assistant Clerk