

**FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY IN NEWTON
OPERATIONS COUNCIL MINUTES**

Wednesday September 9, 2015

Alliance Room, 7:00 P.M.

Present: Susan Bartlett, Jeannie Chaisson, Judy Curby, Laurel Farnsworth, Rev. Erin Splaine (after prior meeting), Dir. RE Rowan Van Ness. Guests: Julianna Lakomski (Board youth member).

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 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** Judy did a reading from the gray hymnal.

~ **Approvals:** All

- Catie Curtis requested reduced rent for a fundraising concert. Her cost was \$500 last year. Laurel moved to approve and pointed out we need to get a certificate of insurance for this event. This year will be \$500 for rent plus \$125 for cleaning costs. Jeannie seconded. Passed unanimously.
- A goal is to complete the rental agreements this year.
- Member services committee: Laurel moved that Pat Rohan & Rachel Viscomi be co-chairs of the Membership Committee. Jeannie seconded. Unanimous approval.

Discussion about committee chairs: 3 committee chairs must be approved by the Board. Other committee chairs may be approved by the Council.

The current music chair will be away from FUSN for a while, so we need a new music committee chair.

- Minutes from June Ops Council meeting were approved.

~ **Staff update**

Rowan said Dani (Danielle) Negus is the new Youth Programs Coordinator. Rowan has had discussions with others about how to better integrate youth into other aspects of FUSN life, such as being aides in RE. Rowan created a youth teacher model. 18 youth applied. Rowan and 9 youth FUSNites attended a multi-congregational meeting about youth in UU congregations. There are 2 new youth teacher mentors: Dana Hanson and Lisa Carboni. A youth retreat will be held September 19 and 20, and an ice-cream social will be held tomorrow night.

An RE retreat is scheduled for October 3rd, the same date as the Ops Council retreat.

The Adult Faith Formation Task Force is in development. It arose out of discussion with RE Committee members Kim Shanks, Jackie James and Alice Wood, to address the need for more leadership. Alice will focus her efforts on the lending library. Jackie will keep the RE committee going for now. A task force will collect information over the year, and a report will provide recommendations about how to do Adult RE in the future. Under consideration is to move away from a catalog format, which is work intensive; maybe a more flexible approach would work well.

Teacher training is under way. RE is also pursuing avenues for bringing more music into RE and we could hire someone to help, if it's the right person.

Now on the website: there's a new page under the RE tab. Lifespan Religious Education has several calendars online, including children's activities, multi-generational events, meeting schedules, etc.

Erin talked about how much is already happening at FUSN, even though the first service is this coming Sunday.

The Membership Coordinator position search is underway and making progress.

Erin is working with the Board on what her goals for the year will be. She will focus on setting reasonable expectations for herself and for the congregation.

She also spoke about the need to address last year's concerns -- that it is important to acknowledge it and look at how to set a tone going forward.

Erin will attend a 2-day workshop, November 17-19, in Tennessee, "Leading with Creative Courage: Systems Thinking for Leaders." The focus will be on helping ministers clarify and enhance their sense of direction.

~ Report on the Board of Trustees meeting Laurel

- Some time was spent orienting new Board members.
- There was discussion about visitors to the Board. How can the visitors be included and still adhere to agenda items during the Board meeting?
- Jeannie pointed out that in years past, people who wanted to speak at Board meetings got themselves on the agenda.
- Laurel said she talked about design and construction at the Board meeting. The Board voted to approve roof repairs and ramp construction.

- Urban Larson has stepped back from the budget drive. There is one person still involved, and Erin is pursuing other possible stewardship leaders.
- The Board also discussed their own retreat plans.

~ Financial

- Journey Songs collects dues and applies their expenses against those funds. Some places where they sing also provide donations. Last year they ended up with a surplus.
- Laurel said that funds not spent now go into the Reserve Fund, rather than to dedicated accounts, which makes them easier to apply as needed.
- We need to find someone to fill the role of following-up on outstanding pledges from the prior FY. Judy suggested waiting to see how the numbers are before taking action. Maybe we could include a cover letter with the database-generated reports sent to individuals owing money.
- Judy asked who is the point person for the database? Erin said it will be part of the Membership Coordinator's duties. For now, only Peter Farago fully understands how to use the database. We need to get more individuals involved. Susan asked if we should bring Fran in later in the year, along with the Membership Coordinator and Peter, about database issues. Erin said it may depend on when the Coordinator is chosen and when s/he starts. It was acknowledged that we are still working our way through basic tasks in the database. The Ops Council will revisit the topic in November.

~ Sunday Special Collections

One Sunday each year, a special collection has been dedicated to the Coming Of Age program. Rowan suggested changing the COA collection Sunday to a youth program collection. COA has a scholarship fund, but not all of the funds are needed. Laurel asked if we could use those funds to reduce fees for the COA program. Judy said we could use the scholarship funds to, in effect, reduce the fees. Other comments: Some congregations charge for OWL and some don't; some vary fees for members and non-members. People tend to show up more regularly when they pay fees. Erin said a long-term COA discussion and review will be held next year, so maybe we can postpone a decision on this change. Rowan said an option could be to use COA funds for training OWL teachers.

Another special collection supports the music program. A third has been held for the UUA on Association Sunday. Erin isn't sure if Association Sunday will continue to be held. In the past, we have had a special collection for the Community Minister's programs. Social Action presents requests for special collections for their projects. We are waiting for their input.

- Rowan said Guest At Your Table boxes will be back this year and suggested we include a collection that supports denomination affairs in some way. Judy advocated supporting a connection between FUSN and the greater UU world.
- Rowan said congregations are being encouraged to observe a Sofia Faz Sunday with music, stories, etc. Sofia Faz is one of the “mothers” of UU education. FUSN will observe this over Thanksgiving weekend. Perhaps we could use this occasion as one of the special collection Sundays.

~ **Update: Committee issues/reports**

- Social Action: Ops is waiting for their fundraising activities schedule for this year.
- The committee chairs meetings schedule was discussed. It's usually noon-2 on Saturdays, TBD, probably November 14 and March 12. Susan will send out a hold-the-date message to committee chairs.
- The FUSN art show will be held Friday night, November 6, and Saturday, November 7th. Ops had agreed this should not interfere with coffee hour on Sunday, although there could be some use of Alliance Room. Laurel will check with the art show chairs, MaryLou Eschelmann and Linda Rinearson, about whether they will want to use the Alliance Room on Sunday, November 8. A question was raised about whether it might interfere with a FUSN breakfast, but the art show won't be in the Parish Hall.
- Buildings & Grounds: Laurel shared a member's request to put up a plaque to honor the Women's Alliance. It was agreed Ops needs to know what it will look like and where it would go. She will ask for details from the requesting party. Erin is meeting with two Alliance women to work out details of what to do with existing Alliance funds.
- Holiday Fair: Bonnie McDonald will chair again this year. We need to confirm who will be co-chair. Laurel will hire strong young people from Newton Odd Jobs and FUSN youth to help set up and clean up, at \$20 per hour, 4 hours each on Friday and Sunday. Jeannie said she can also help on Sunday. Wendy will touch base with Bonnie about her anticipated needs.

~ **Plan retreat: All**

Planned for Saturday October 3, 12:30-4. The RE retreat is also October 3rd (morning). Andrea will be away. Use morning RE retreat for focus. Perhaps change the date to October 24 or 31. Susan will check with other Ops Council members if they could do the 24th or 31st. Laurel can host at her house. Food preferences will be decided by email. The retreat will help with planning priorities for the year, such as finalizing the rental agreements language. Judy suggested reviewing last year's goals, and if they are still worth pursuing, to do so.

The Board has its assigned members to contribute a column to the newsletter. Does Ops want to do something similar?

~ **Thank yous:** All

Perhaps Andrea already did thank yous for the summer services. Susan will double check with her. Thanks should go to Gayle Smalley and her team for the summer chiming concerts.

~ **Still pending:**

Bruce Henderson had requested holding a meeting in the Alliance Room for Bernie Sanders organizers. Judy recalled a previous discussion on political candidates and issues. The UUA recommends not using space for candidates. Ops agreed to continue the policy of not using FUSN space for political activities. Use of space criteria include if it's free or rented; if it's educational or for fundraising; if it's for candidates or for issues. FUSN space will not be used for candidates. Tom Bean did rent FUSN space for a discussion of the issue of casinos.

Note: The Assistant Clerk left at this point, about 9:15 pm. Any additional business should be added.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Schwartz,
Assistant Clerk