

FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF NEWTON
OPERATIONS COUNCIL AGENDA
Wednesday April 9, 2014
Alliance Room, 7:00 P.M.

Present: Susan Bartlett, Chair, Jeannie Chaisson, Alan Cody, Laurel Farnsworth, Anne Hess-Mahan, Andrea Kelley, Rev. Erin Splaine. Rev. Meghan Cefalu and Perry Montrose came after attending a previous meeting.

Guests: Karen Davis, Personal Policy Committee. Bobbie Sproat, Board of Trustees rep.

~ The meeting was called to order at 7:05.

~ Invocation / Chalice lighting: Laurel

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.

~ Approvals:

- Minutes for the February and March Ops Council meetings were approved.
- Dick Bail's request to set up a table to educate people about organ donor awareness was discussed. Some of the points raised included: not having too many activities going on at once; too many tables in the Parish Hall; this could be a precedent for requests to set up tables to promote "anything." Rather, a request such as this could go through Adult RE or the Council on Social Action. Several options were suggested as possible alternatives to coffee hour table. Appreciation was expressed that Dick had asked permission. Susan will get back to Dick to discuss possible alternatives.
- Lois Shapiro requested permission to hold a concert at FUSN in October in the Sanctuary, to be produced by the Music Committee. Proceeds would benefit "STEP," a group supporting teenage activities. Since it would involve the Sanctuary, it would be Erin's decision. Erin approved the project. Any funds collected would be passed through to the non-profit group, so that aspiring young musicians of color could have scholarships to attend a summer music camp. A motion was made to approve the request. It was seconded and approved.

~ Personnel Policy discussion, Karen Davis:

Karen updated the Council on salary policies, based on input from several different sources: independent salary research and analysis organizations; UUA salary ranges based on a number of criteria, including congregation size, geography, etc.; and the Consumer Price Index.

Karen suggested changing the fiscal year dates, because employees often work into June for the prior year. Alan pointed out that a June 30 year end would be difficult; we would not have final year end numbers by the time of the annual meeting in June. Numbers should be in before the annual meeting.

~ Because Rebecca Hinds is moving on, the Council discussed replacing the Youth Coordinator and the nature of the position, and whether it includes programming as well as coordinating youth activities. If the role includes programming, perhaps the title could be Youth Director.

~ Alan reminds us that new initiatives add administrative tasks, which needs to be kept in mind for planning purposes.

~ Staff update:

Erin: She pointed out that she will need to spend a good bit of time working with Kim Shanks and others to find both an Acting Director of Lifelong Religious Education for the coming year and a permanent replacement for Perry for September 2015. Kim is putting together a job description for the Acting DLRE. The option would remain open to do a national search for the permanent DLRE.

Perry: Last Sunday's Youth Service went well. Coming of Age participants are working on their credos, and 4 coaches are available to work with them. The RE Council has been working on recruitment and engagement of volunteers. Marc Kauffman put together a visual representation of RE, which will be posted.

A guest talked to the RE Council about how to integrate music into RE.

The multi-generational book group doubled in size for the second meeting.

Yenquei Chuang organized Adult RE mindfulness sessions, with additional visits from Buddhist monks. Those visits had about 50 in attendance.

Meghan: She has attended nine Annual Budget Drive parties and says it's a great way for people to get to know one another. Reinstating Dinners for Seven is being discussed as another way for congregants to interact. Member services is reviewing how we greet and welcome people on Sunday mornings, and who should be in the narthex before services.

May 18 will be a new member Sunday, to officially welcome new members into the congregation.

She and the Communications Committee are looking at new ways to publish the FUSN newsletter, including alternative electronic methods to the PDF format.

Meghan is also thinking about ways to revise Chalice Circles for next year. She and Erin went on their team-building retreat with consultant Jory Agate, and both said it was excellent.

~ Report on Board of Trustees meeting, Andrea:

The BOT did not have a quorum but discussed issues at hand, including an update on the ABD. Current figures are at a \$78,000-\$79,000 shortfall toward the goal. More than 50 families who pledged last year have not yet pledged for FY 14-15; two more pledge parties are scheduled.

The Board also discussed the ministerial review results to date. The materials will be provided to the Board. Eventually, a one-page summary will be issued. There was some discussion about taking time to process the results and, perhaps in the fall, to look at any relevant actions to take.

The BOT discussed the roles of the Ops Council and Board concerning who makes decisions about the budget.

The Financial Oversight Committee is ready to be staffed. One of the three committee members needs to be a Board member who will continue on next year's Board.

Erin met with Dwight Golan, Alice Nichols and Jon Reuman to review the draft Conflict Resolution Policy. They are working on shortening it, and something should be available in May.

A dinner on May 3rd will celebrate the end of the budget drive -- catered by Blue Ribbon, with music for dancing by FUSN's own White Collar Crime. 5:30 – 9:00. Vegetarian options are included.

~ Financial - Review year-to-date spending: Alan

Susan asked if there were any questions about this month's summary. Alan says they will know more about where we stand in the overall budget next month, as final utility bills will be in. Alan anticipates a net loss of 30,000-35,000, which actually would be less than the budgeted net loss.

A question arose about Creationdance getting reimbursed for some of their costs. Erin says there is coordination but not really supervision of Creationdance's work. There needs to be a bigger discussion on Creationdance's relationship to FUSN. It is currently viewed as a separate entity but is also connected to the Music Committee.

May 14 will be the Ops Council's FY 2014-2015 budget discussion meeting. The Finance Committee will provide data available at that time. If people would like to know how decisions are made, they should be able to attend.

~ Update: Committee issues/reports, including:

~ Jud Leonard and Peter Farago have been testing the new database.
~ Susan said the Joint BOT-OC retreat was good, and that Charlie Watts is putting together notes from the session.

~ Laurel: She and Eric Olson sit on the “High Performance Energy Committee” of the City of Newton. Jonathan Kantor, the head of that group, is advocating getting everyone committed to emitting less and being more energy efficient. He will send a letter to the State. Currently, Newton is a “green community,” because higher standards of energy efficiency are being pursued. Jonathan is advocating for stronger requirements. The Green Sanctuary committee voted to add their own letter to support the “stretch code” at a higher standard. A stretch code is a choice, not a requirement.

Laurel asks if the Green Sanctuary Committee has the authority to send the letter to the State or if the Ops Council should endorse it. It is not a mandate and there are no costs involved. Laurel says this is a way FUSN could demonstrate living our values. It would also promote FUSN to those concerned about the environment. Laurel feels having the higher level Ops Council or Board support would be more powerful. Andrea suggests it could be even better if all three FUSN groups sign it.

Erin says it needs to be connected to our faith and that it’s appropriate for a FUSN group to request the Board to write such a letter. Jeannie feels the GS Committee should draft the letter and the ministers, Board and Ops Council all sign. Erin mentioned that Cynthia Gilles provided some archives to Erin, including a letter to the McCarthy House Un-American Committee about its activities being un-American.

Anne points out that this also relates to the Communications Committee regarding outside communication. Anne suggests the Ops Council approve the Green Sanctuary letter supporting a new “stretch code” be sent to the relevant State parties. Approval of the letter may be accomplished by email.

Discussion followed about chickens, bicycles and pansies in the Parish Hall as part of RE an Earth Day celebration -- and whether space permits – and if the activities should continue after RE classes are over. Perry would like to know if such activities could be in the Parish Hall, the upstairs kitchen, or outdoors, weather permitting. It was agreed that Perry could make the decision. Jeannie suggests it would be good to have Earth Day materials at the RE table.

~ Thank yous: Keyes North Atlantic for space for retreat; Erin sent flowers and a note.

~ The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Schwartz,

Assistant Clerk