

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF HARTFORD
Board of Directors Meeting
Date: January 6, 2015

Members Participating: Bill LaPorte-Bryan, Virginia de Lima, Louise Schmoll, Patrice Fitzgerald, John Clapp, Martha Bradley, Tina Davies, Marye Gail Harrison, Rev. Cathy Rion Starr, Rev. Heather Rion Starr

Others Participating: Jim Venneman, David Newton, Janice Newton, Mike Winterfield, Jean Groothuis, Jeff Howard

Members Absent:

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

Subject	Discussion	Action Required/Responsible
Opening Words	Rev. Heather Rion Starr	
Public Comments	In lieu of comments there was cake from Betty Arnold's 99 th birthday celebration for all.	
Divestment Proposal	<p>Vote on the Endowment Committee's response to Green Sanctuary's divestment proposal and discussion about further actions with regard to the endowment and the greening of the Meeting House.</p> <p>Bill prefaced the conversation by pointing out how much work and thought has gone into this issue, and how it is one of the most important decisions that the Board has been entrusted to make. He encouraged all participants to "listen with open ears."</p> <p>Virginia: As a facilitator, it was a privilege to have a chance to be part of this process of meeting and discussing this important issue.</p> <p>Taking off her jacket and tie, Virginia then put on a sweater in order to make clear that she was changing hats.</p> <p>Motion #1 was made - "I move that we accept, with gratitude, the Endowment Committee's recommended response to the proposal from the Green Sanctuary sub-council. This recommendation had two parts: 1) we vote proxies following the lead of the UUA, and 2) we take UP TO five years to decide whether we should divest stocks of CT-200 companies."</p> <p>A friendly amendment to the above Motion was made; that we substitute for clarity the phrase "those stocks with fossil fuel reserves."</p> <p>That amendment to the Motion was accepted by the Board.</p> <p>The Motion now reads:</p> <p>"I move that we accept, with gratitude, the Endowment Committee's recommended response to the proposal from the Green Sanctuary sub-council. This recommendation had two parts: 1) we vote proxies following the lead of the UUA, and 2) we take UP TO five years to decide whether we should divest those stocks with fossil fuel reserves."</p> <p>One Board member disagreed with the first sentence as written, because she believes we are not accepting it.</p> <p>We discussed alternative language.</p> <p>An amended Motion was proposed as follows:</p> <p>"I move that we accept, with gratitude, the Endowment Committee's report regarding the proposal from the Green Sanctuary sub-council. That recommendation had two parts: 1) we vote proxies following the lead of the</p>	<p>Motion # 1</p> <p>"I move that we accept, with gratitude, the Endowment Committee's report regarding the proposal from the Green Sanctuary sub-council. That recommendation had two parts: 1) we vote proxies following the lead of the UUA, and 2) we take UP TO five years to decide whether we should divest those stocks with fossil fuel reserves."</p> <p>Motion #1 passed.</p> <p>Motion # 2</p> <p>"I move that we endorse the first part of the EC's recommendation – 1) We vote proxies following the lead of the UUA whenever possible."</p> <p>Motion #2 passed.</p> <p>Motion # 3</p> <p>"I move that we ask the Endowment Committee to sell the stocks we own of those individually-owned companies with fossil fuel reserves by the end of this Fiscal Year (June 30, 2015)."</p> <p>Motion #3 passed.</p>

UUA, and 2) we take UP TO five years to decide whether we should divest those stocks with fossil fuel reserves."

The amendment to the Motion passed with one abstention.

Motion #1 passed with one abstention.

Motion #2 was made: "I move that we accept the first part of the Endowment Committee's recommendation – 1) We vote proxies following the lead of the UUA."

A discussion followed regarding what the EC (Endowment Committee) is empowered to do and what affect this motion would have. One Board member believes that it makes sense to agree that they should vote those proxies following UUA lead.

Language is amended to say "endorse" and "whenever possible."

Motion now reads:

"I move that we endorse the first part of the Endowment Committee's recommendation – 1) We vote proxies following the lead of the UUA whenever possible."

Motion #2 passed unanimously.

Motion #3 was made - "I move that we ask the Endowment Committee to sell the stocks we own of those companies with fossil fuel reserves as soon as possible."

A Board member proposed a friendly amendment – specify "individually-owned" stocks.

This amendment was accepted.

Motion now reads:

"I move that we ask the Endowment Committee to sell the stocks we own of those individually-owned companies with fossil fuel reserves as soon as possible."

Discussion followed:

A guest pointed out that the word "ask" is perhaps not strong enough. The guest urged stronger language, and suggested we also put on the table the issue of divesting from mutual funds that own stocks in companies with fossil fuel reserves.

We should stay with current issue only at this point.

There should be a deadline by which point this should be done.

Inserting a deadline is disrespecting the EC's good intentions and willingness to cooperate.

They can't do it instantly.

We can call tomorrow.

Fossil fuel stocks are low and at 50% of old value. We might have a significant loss.

I'm disappointed that this is a negative action, and can't we do something more positive about climate change and act on that?

[A member of the Endowment Committee] makes a good point and let's give a deadline to give flexibility.

I agree with what has been said but think that we need to get past this after one year of discussion and free up all this energy to move on to other good things.

Suggested friendly amendment to the Motion to say "by the end of this FY (June 30, 2015)."

Motion now reads:

"I move that we ask the Endowment Committee to sell the stocks we own of those individually-owned companies with fossil fuel reserves by the end of this Fiscal Year (June 30, 2015)."

Motion to amend passed with one abstention.

Motion #3 was voted on. There were seven votes in support of the motion, and one against. The motion passed.

Discussion:

We have two values – sustaining Endowment of this congregation and sustaining the earth. One of the ways to support both is to look at the "upsides" of the opposite positions.

Issues are real, but whenever we can find a way to "manage" the downsides we should.

We've made the decisions we need to make at this point. There are many other decisions to be made with regard to the EC and GS's dreams for this church.

I think we need to explore some very forward-looking options, such as sharing expenses with other UU churches in the area. Perhaps consider a Kickstarter campaign to get new streams of revenue. I'd like to see solar panels going all the way out to the road—advertise our positive actions.

I want to thank the Board for this decision. I believe this is the right decision, and is also historically significant. I applaud the Board. I also appreciate the EC for engaging and participating in this process – I know it hasn't always been pleasant. My sense is that we're hearing a lot of enthusiasm about how we now move forward from here. I'll go to the GS committee to ask them to develop a process for actions we could take to move forward with creativity and verve on these issues.

Coming at this from a positive point of view, there are companies that deal with alternative energies that are attractive. I'd like to have the GS offer be on two levels. One a process for things the Society can do; the second what individuals can do. I'd like to make the same request to the EC. Suggest investments not only for the Society but for individuals.

USH congregants can also bring actions to UUA and GA regarding this issue.

We could ask representatives to talk about this decision at the beginning of a worship service on Sunday.

Might not be best at beginning of worship service. The semi-annual meeting is coming up soon and might be a better opportunity.

We can communicate the decision in the enews. We can discuss in more

	<p>detail at the semi-annual meeting. For both EC and GS, there is a lot of unfinished work yet to do. It might be helpful for the congregation to share some of what those next steps are.</p> <p>It's my opinion that in the beginning there is the word. I suggest the Board secretary craft a statement for enews tomorrow. Share it with the Board, ministers, EC and GS representatives for vetting and agreement.</p> <p>Secretary: I'll share it to get input.</p> <p>And we should prepare a more detailed discussion for Semi-Annual Meeting.</p> <p>I know that we all appreciate the patient work put in by the Endowment Committee, the Green Sanctuary, and the "Group of Seven." I am proud of how we as a congregation approached this important issue and made compromises so that all voices were represented.</p>	
<p>Discussion on Semi-Annual Meeting January 25th</p>	<p>There were a number of ideas presented at the last meeting as to what should take place at this meeting. We want it to be an opportunity for the congregation to ask question and give input, plus a chance to present something from the Board. The "meat" of what Board shares should also include suggestions from EC and GS on how to go forward. Along the lines of what we might ask for -- I happen to like the write-on-sticky-notes and post them on the wall concept. We should end on positive note -- bring up some of the highlights from last year. Those could be read and summarized.</p> <p>Sticky notes in categories possibly first part of meeting. Second part an explanation of what's happened with the divestment issue.</p> <p>Other questions:</p> <p>What brought you here, what keeps you coming, what's in the rumor mill, areas of interest. Anonymity can be encouraging. Synthesize those.</p> <p>How long? Keep it to a half hour. Immediately after service. In sanctuary.</p> <p>How does this impact the service on that date? We need to consider RE, childcare issues.</p>	
<p>Discussion re possible amending of Constitution</p>	<p>We discussed whether or not to amend USH Constitution at the Annual Meeting in May. We have some things that should be corrected. Not urgent.</p> <p>We shouldn't make big decisions in the first year of two new ministers. We have so much on our plate for this Annual Meeting.</p> <p>The UUA suggests proposing amendments to Constitution or By-Laws one year and moving on them the next year. I find the categories of membership in the Constitution confusing. That to me is pressing. I'm willing to serve on that committee.</p> <p>Can you put something like that together?</p> <p>I don't see any urgency at all to get into constitutional tinkering. We've lived with it for some time and we've got an awful lot going on. I suggest that we put the word out so people know that it is going to be discussed coming up.</p> <p>Important thing here is to find people who are interested in taking on such a task. No matter how long it takes, finding the people is first. This shouldn't be something that we finalize this May.</p> <p>Heather should work with Brian Harvey and with Bill.</p>	

	<p>Heather can't chair.</p> <p>Mention it at the semi-annual meeting in January.</p> <p>No sense of urgency. Don't need to be prepared to tackle it at this annual meeting in May.</p>	
<p>Ministers' report Rev. Cathy Rion Starr Rev. Heather Rion Starr</p>	<p>Report including plans for the birthday party for the Meeting House on January 17th and for the Installation Service on April 19th</p> <p>Heather passed around sign-up sheet for birthday party.</p> <p>This is meant to be a fun, post-holiday, mid-winter get-together to celebrate the birthday of the building. Talk it up!</p> <p>Cathy: At our Installation, Rev. Meg Riley will be preaching. The Installation Committee is up and running. There is lots of work to do.</p> <p>On January 20th and 21st, Heather and Cathy are gone. They will also be out of town from January 31st through February 11th for a continuing education conference in California.</p> <p>Music staffing: Music transition team is working on creating a music staff transition team including those from RE, HR, youth, etc. We need some discernment on the music program. How do you build consensus around that? We want to make some long-term hires, eventually. Beth Norton from the UU Music Network may come as an outside facilitator to help us look at what we want and where we are going. We would like to set ourselves up for the next five to ten years of music at USH.</p> <p>Music is changing significantly and people seem to realize that and appreciate it. At some time we'll need to talk about money and how to budget for music.</p> <p>I don't know if we'll be making any permanent hires this spring. It's possible but we may have another year of interim or one-year hires. Budget is still not being discussed.</p>	
<p>Date of February Board Meeting</p>	<p>The next Board Meeting is scheduled for Feb. 3rd, though Martha and Virginia will be unable to attend and Cathy and Heather will be out of town. Bill will consider whether we should have a meeting at all.</p>	
<p>"Under the Stairs"</p>	<p>No under the stairs discussion is scheduled in January because of semi-annual meeting on the usual Sunday.</p>	
<p>Comments from Board Members</p>	<p>There is a question of our current "certified" membership number per Brian Mullen and what should be reported to UUA.</p> <p>We will probably certify 10+ more members this year than last year.</p> <p>We used to spend a lot of Board time on this. We have spent far less lately. I don't see any need for Board involvement.</p>	
<p>Closing Words</p>	<p>Rev. Cathy Rion Starr</p>	

Meeting adjourned at 9:09. Next Board meeting scheduled for Feb. 3, 2015 at 7:00 PM at USH.

Note: There will be no Board meeting in February. Instead, a Finance Committee meeting was held on Tuesday, February 3rd, at 7:00 PM at the Meeting House.

Respectfully submitted by Patrice Fitzgerald, Secretary