

Board of Directors' Meeting

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF HARTFORD

Tuesday, December 6, 2016

Members present: John Brancato, Katharine Ann Buck Anderson Chris Wilt, Hank Murray, Margaret Leicach, Rev. Cathy Rion Starr, Rev. Heather Rion Starr, Gloria Francesca Mengual, Martha Bradley

Members absent: Phil Gardner

Guests present: Jim Venneman, Richard Groothuis,, Jean Grootius, Virginia deLima, Peter Meny, David Newton, Janice Newton.

Call to Order: John Brancato, President called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

Chalice Lighting and Opening words

The chalice was lit. Open words were from Josh Pawlek's charge at the installation of the minister at the New Haven congregation and entitled Our Lives are at Stake.

Board Covenant and Mission Statement

Members read and reflected on the Board Covenant and USH Mission statement in silence.

Approve minutes of June meeting

Discussion: Margaret received no email feedback or vote on the September and October minutes sent via email. It appears that this email wasn't received.

Actions: Margaret will bring hard copies to meetings and in future will try sending to Katharine Ann for forwarding to Board members.

Ministers' Report

There has been a significant increase in Sunday attendance and we have had more than 60 new visitors since the election. More than 200 people attended the SURJ meeting; childcare staff for that event were overwhelmed. Rev. Heather went to the demonstration at Standing Rock. The ministers see a need to focus their work increasingly now on pastoral care and action. There has been much energy among clergy and UU churches around what we need to be doing, but not yet a clear focus. The ministers distributed at "100-Day Plan of Action" survey as an alternative to a "let's wait and see" approach. Those present reflected on and shared their responses to the question: "What's a commitment USH could/should make to respond to the present moment?"

Decision: None needed

Actions: None needed

Proposed Stewardship Goals

Discussion:

- The Finance Team reviewed the various goals from last year, board notes, and the current budget situation. Based on that, they offered the following draft goals for the 2017-18 budget:
 - Fill the \$25,000 gap due to changes in fundraising activities.
 - Continue incremental increases to staff salaries as part of our 3-4-year plan to reach fair compensation levels.
 - Add \$1,000 to the Social Justice budget
 - Continue normal efforts on small B&G projects within the existing budget
- To clarify the first goal, we have a \$10,000 income shortfall in this year's budget due to the lack of income projected to have come from the Performing Arts programs and a major

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fundraiser (such as the auction). The Board authorized a special 'ask' for donations but thus far only \$5,310 has been received.

Decision: Hank moved that the Board endorse the goals presented by the Finance Team with the exception of increasing the funding for Social Justice to a total of \$2,500. Margaret seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Actions: Peter Meny and the Stewardship Committee will incorporate these goals into their promotional materials and presentations for the 2017-18 Stewardship campaign. Peter also suggested that the Stewardship Committee, as it goes to each of the Councils as part of its campaign, may ask each group to consider leading a small fundraising project to help close the budget gap.

Unrestricted Donations Recently Received

Discussion: Much feedback has been requested and received via emails and both oral and written input at two very well-attended 'under the stairs' sessions about how to handle the Garvais and Williams unrestricted donations. The Finance Committee proposed at the November Board meeting that we (1) allocate up to \$5,000 to replace the piano in Fellowship Hall in honor of Sid Garvais' annual playing in Fellowship Hall during the Festival of the Season, (2) allocate \$10,000 to support members who want to attend GA but cannot afford to go in honor of the Garvais' tireless support of the UUA, and (3) place \$5,000 into the so-called "Pettit Social Justice Fund" and \$13,000 into a fund for equipment for a children's playground in honor of Janice William's passions. The three proposals put forward for discussion at the sessions were (1) the Finance Committee's proposal, (2) a proposal to put all of the donations into the Endowment, and (3) a proposal to use those donations to help support the 21st sanctuary goals for significant upgrades to the light, sound and projection capacity of our sanctuary. Members pointed out that there is probably no decision the Board can make that won't upset some segment of the congregation and that it is important that we resolve the *process* by which these decisions are made to minimize the probability of finding ourselves in this situation in the future. It was agreed that postponing this decision would likely increase rather than decrease the tension in the congregation around this decision and the Board moved forward with making a decision.

Decision: A process of anonymous voting resulted in the selection of the Finance Committee's proposal. Margaret moved, Martha seconded and the Board voted to endorse this result with 8 yes votes and 1 abstention

Actions: The Ministers and Board President will ensure that this decision is implemented.

Proposal to Accept Anonymous Donation for RE Sound Buffer

Discussion: The ministers and President Brancato met with the donors and confirm that they are quite flexible with regard to what solution is finally chosen and how long it takes to get to that solution. They agree that our approach should be thoughtful and future-oriented and are okay with some of the money going toward studying the options. They are also open to the money going toward a purchase, if that seems to be the best solution. The donation would be in the form of stock, which will be liquidated and then deposited into our endowment as a restricted fund where it can earn interest.

Decision: Hank moved, Gloria seconded, and the Board approved unanimously that USH accept this donation with gratitude.

Actions: John and the ministers will take the steps necessary to carry out this decision.

Motion to support the Goals of the AIM Task Force and its Application for Certification

Discussion: Having previously reviewed the plans and proposals of the AIM Task Force and endorsed the application for accreditation, the only cautions raised at this meeting related to our process for endorsing sizable expenditures of money for specific projects when that money is not part of our operating budget. Rev. Heather cited research that shows that things get done within congregations when money, power, and energy are aligned. She also noted that the things that get done under these circumstances may or may not be the priorities of the congregation as a whole.

Decision: Katharine Ann moved, Marth seconded, and the Board voted unanimously to approve the following motion:

The Board of Directors of the Unitarian Society hereby supports the application by the USH AIM Task Force for accreditation by the Unitarian Universalist Association. The Board approves the Task Force's broad goals for 2017-18 church year with the understanding that specific projects requiring major funding will come before the Board for approval.

Actions: AIM Task force will communicate this decision as part of their approval process toward AIM certification.

Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting – January 8, 2017

Discussion: Martha, Hank and John are the team putting this together. The themes will be (1) stewardship goals and campaign, (2) decisions about handling the unrestricted donations, (3) the parental leave plan, and (4) a general update. There will be no business conducted, no votes taken; it will be all informational.

Decision: None needed

Actions: None needed.

Update from Nominating and Leadership Development Committee

Discussion: There are vacancies on the Nominating, Audit and Endowment Committees that the Board needs to fill. Virginia deLima, Chair of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee, presented that Committee's recommendations and updated the Board on members of the Stewardship Committee, which appointments do not need Board approval. Rev. Cathy credited John Brancato for his persistence in getting the Audit Committee going.

Decisions:

- **Margaret moved and Hank seconded a motion to appoint Will Anderson to a 3-year term on the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee. The motion passed unanimously.**
- Two people have been proposed and accepted the nomination to be on the Audit Committee and 2 others were suggested but neither has yet officially accepted. It was suggested that we wait until we had 3 confirmed nominees and vote on all three at the same time.
- **Steve Noble was approved by a Board vote via email for a 3-year term on the Endowment Committee.**

Actions: Final vote on the Audit Committee was deferred until the Nominating Committee has 3 definite candidates who had agreed to serve.

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UUA Action to update wording of the Six Sources

Discussion: There is a petition circulating to propose to the General Assembly that the wording of the 2nd source be changed from "...words and deeds of prophetic women and men..." to "...words and deeds of prophetic people..." The required 15 congregations needed for it to come before GA have already signed on, so we would be the 16th.

Decisions:

- **Chris moved, Katharine Ann seconded, and the Board voted unanimously to sign on to this proposal.**

Actions: Revs. Cathy and Heather will take the necessary steps to implement this decision.

Proposal Regarding Hiring New Staff (Executive Session)

Discussion: The original plan to hire one person to serve as both Minister's Assistant and RE Assistant didn't produce a viable candidate, however separate candidates for each of the two positions have been found and were recommended by the ministers.

Decisions: **John moved, Margaret seconded and the Board unanimously approved the hiring of Sarah Cassidy as a part-time RE Assistant and Kate Grigg as a part-time Ministers' Assistant.**

Actions:

1. Ministers will take steps to implement these decisions.
2. Hank will work with Reverend Heather to develop proposed modifications to the By-Laws to clarify policies regarding hiring of staff so that they make sense in light of our current staffing patterns.

Adjournment: President John Brancato adjourned the meeting shortly before 10:00 PM.