

## Board of Directors' Meeting

### UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF HARTFORD

Tuesday, October 4, 2016

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

**Members absent:** none

**Guests present:** David Newton, Janice Newton, Jeff Howard, Edith Savage, Rayla Mattson

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

#### **Chalice Lighting and Opening words**

The chalice was lit and Reverend Heather Rion Starr led members through a reflection on what brings us back to USH.

#### **Board Covenant and Mission Statement**

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

#### **Approve minutes of September meeting**

**Discussion:** No feedback/corrections via email on September minutes. It seems likely that they didn't go out via email as Margaret had thought.

**Decision:**

**Actions:** Margaret will resend via email for feedback and minutes will be approved via email and/or at the November meeting.

#### **Solarize Connecticut Campaign**

**Discussion:** Jeff Howard distributed the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between USH and Solarize Connecticut for a vote.

- Reverend Heather expressed appreciation for the ways in which the approach has been broadened and clarified since our last discussion.
- We noted that there is no time-line or end-point specified in the current proposal.
- SmartPower is a not-for-profit organization, while the provider will be a for-profit entity.
- Jeff assured Board members that neither Green Sanctuary nor the provider will be pushing USH members to sign up, nor guilting them into participating.
- Board members requested the following modifications to the MOU – new wording in bold:
  - Item 2, line 2 to read: “.....in-kind support such as USH **members and friends** working with.....”
  - Item 3, line 5 to read: “....The Solarize ~~with~~ Faith committee.....” – removing the word ‘with’.
  - The following sentence will be added to Item 4: “Any tabling will occur elsewhere than Fellowship Hall and the lower level.”

**Decisions:** Hank moved and Gloria seconded a motion to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with Solarize Connecticut, with the changes noted above. The motion passed with 5 yes votes, 1 no vote, and 2 abstentions.

**Actions:** Jeff will prepare the revised MOU for signature by John Brancato, President, on behalf of the Board and will provide to the Board an original copy with the signature of SmartPower's representative. *Note: Comments and strikeouts in the document presented will be removed before the document is signed.*

### Religious Education Update

**Discussion:** Rayla Mattson, Director of Religions Education, presented a comprehensive written report as well as an oral update on the status of the Religions Education Program at USH.

- In the past four years, registration in RE has grown from 23 registered children with sometimes as few as 2 attending, to 45 registered students with attendance on some Sundays as high as 70.
- Volunteers have grown from a few to 28, serving on a rotating basis.
- For the first time we have enough middle school children to run a Coming of Age group.
- For the first time in many years we will also soon be able to offer the Our Whole Lives program, which requires special USH training for both staff and volunteers.
- Recent increases in the budget for professional development and in Rayla's hours also will allow her to pursue the training needed to become a credentialed Director of Religious Education.

The Board expressed appreciate for Rayla's good work as well as her report.

**Decision:** None needed

**Actions:** None needed

### Ministers' Parental Leave Proposal

**Discussion:** The ministers presented the proposed parental leave plan developed by the ministers in consultation with the Parental Leave Team consisting of Phil Gardner, Martha Bradley, Sue Smolski and Eve Peck.

- Rev. Cathy will take 8 weeks of paid parental leave and 4 weeks of unpaid parental leave.
- Rev. Heather will take 4 weeks of paid parental leave, will work half-time for the next 4 weeks, then will work full-time for the last 4 weeks of Rev. Cathy's leave. Rev. Heather does not see a conflict with her commitment at gthe Munson MA congregation when working half time and will schedule appropriately during the full time interval.
- Erica Richmond will be on call for pastoral care needs and may lead a worship service or two beyond the two per year that are part of her affiliation agreement with our congregation. Additional worship services beyond those two will be paid in the same way that we pay other guest clergy.
- Phil pointed out that the additional funds to cover pulpit needs can come out of the carryover funds, without impacting the overall budget.

**Decision:**

**Phil moved and Martha seconded a motion to approve the parental leave plan as presented and to authorize an expenditure of up to \$2,000 to compensate Erica Richmond and/or other guest clergy for covering extra Sunday services as the need arises. The Board approved the motion unanimously.**

**Actions:**

- None needed

### Budget Update

**Discussion:** Phil Gardner raised the unresolved issue of the \$15,000 in revenue in the budget intended to come from fundraising. Approximately \$4,500 has been raised, leaving approximately \$10,500 with no plan to raise it. Phil stressed that the Board needs to take some action on this matter to ensure that we don't run a deficit.

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- There was much discussion of the challenges involved in finding volunteers these days to run fundraising events as a way of balancing our budget, and it was agreed that that is a larger discussion for another time. Efforts to find volunteers even for a fundraising committee have been less than successful.
- Hank's quick calculation suggests that if each of our approximately 160 pledging units gave just \$100 more for the year, that would more than make up the amount budgeted to come from fundraising.

**Decision: The Board agreed by consensus that:**

- **A special letter will accompany the upcoming quarterly giving statements, asking for members to increase their pledge by a specific amount, e.g. \$100 per household; and**
- **There will also be an ask from the pulpit.**

**Actions:**

- **Phil will draft the letter for review by John Brancato and the ministers before it goes out.**
- **Before the beginning of the fall/winter holiday season, probably November 6<sup>th</sup>, John Brancato will do a special ask from the pulpit.**

#### Stewardship Goals

**Discussion:** It is the Board's responsibility to set goals and benchmarks for the Stewardship Committee to use in the Stewardship Campaign. We have committed ourselves to do this much earlier than in the past. Once again we want to think about stewardship goals for (1) survival mode – just keep doing with we are doing; (2) what we could do if we increase our revenue by a little; and (2) our dream goals – what we could do/be if we increased our revenue by a lot.

**Decision:** none needed

**Actions:**

- **Council Chairs will review the priorities from the 2015-16 campaign and from the 2016 Board retreat with their Councils and bring input back to the November meeting.**
- **This will be a significant agenda item for the November meeting.**

#### Board Job Descriptions

**Discussion:** Board members shared how they had each been thinking about and working on this challenge since the last Board meeting. This work is important for many reasons, but especially at this time. The resulting documents will be important tools for the Leadership Development/Nominating Committee as they begin recruiting candidates for Board positions for next fiscal year.

**Decision: It was too late in the meeting to tackle this subject at this meeting. More detailed discussion was postponed to the November meeting.**

**Actions: Board members will prepare two (2) lists of duties for their own positions and send them to John Brancato *in advance of the next meeting* so he can compile them for the November meeting:**

1. **General responsibilities for *all* Board members.**
2. **Responsibilities specific to their own particular role. For Council Chairs, that breaks down further into:**
  - **Responsibilities common to *all* Council Chairs, and**
  - **Responsibilities specific to their own *particular* Council.**

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#### Semi-Annual Meeting

**Discussion:** In previous discussions, we had talked about (1) presenting/discussing our goals for the Stewardship campaign, and (2) having entertaining/informative presentations by Councils of their programs and accomplishments. John Brancato emphasized that he needs a work group to help with this, that he cannot do all of the planning/organizing himself.

**Decision:** Hank, Martha and John will serve as the planning team to develop a proposed agenda and plan for the semi-annual meeting in January.

**Actions:** Plans will be finalized at our November meeting.

#### Leadership Conference at UUSE

**Discussion:** As of this meeting, it appears that Martha Bradley, Gloria Francesca Mengual, Margaret Leicach, and Bill LaPorte-Bryan will be attending.

**Decision:** None needed.

**Actions:** None needed.

#### Ministers' Report/Comments

**Discussion:** The ministers distributed their report in writing because there was a lot to report and also a lot on this month's agenda.

**Decision:** None needed.

**Actions:** None needed.

#### Comments from guests and board members

David Newton pointed out that the management, care and encouragement of volunteers underlies all that we do. This led to a brief discussion of the volunteer coordinators which some congregations have on their staff. Rev. Cathy pointed out that the Council Chairs *are* the volunteer coordinators within each of their own areas within our congregation.

#### Closing Items, Announcements:

Chris, Katharine Ann, and Margaret expect to be available for the Board Under the Stairs on October 23<sup>rd</sup>.

#### Closing Words

Rev. Cathy offered closing words as the chalice was extinguished.

**Adjournment:** President John Brancato adjourned the meeting shortly before 9:00 PM.