

Board of Directors' Meeting

UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF HARTFORD

Tuesday, February 7, 2017

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

Members absent: Martha Bradley

Guests present: Rayla Mattson, David Newton, Janice Newton, Jean Groothuis, Richard Groothuis, Virginia delima, Laurie Kelliher, Sherry Manetta, Tom Richardson, Harriet Gardner, Mary Sherman, Jeff Howard

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

Chalice Lighting and Opening words

The chalice was lit. The Reverends Rion Starr provided opening words.

Board Covenant and Mission Statement

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

Minutes

Discussion: Minutes of September, October, November and December meetings were approved with one correction to the October minutes provided by Phil Gardner regarding specifics for the parental leave plans.

Actions: Margaret will email January and February minutes to Board members for review and approval via email and will ask Linda to post approved minutes on website.

Strategic Plan

Discussion: Tom Richardson presented the draft goals prepared by the Strategic Planning Group (SPG), asking for Board feedback to affirm that the Group is moving in the right direction and/or provide feedback on changes to that direction. The report and goals were developed through a widely participative process open to the whole congregation as well as review of research data from expert outside sources. The goals are intended to: (a) have measurable outcomes and end states; (b) have defined end points, and (c) be a guide for decision-making throughout the congregation. The proposed strategic goals are:

1. USH will offer a comprehensive, lifespan religious learning and growth program to support the needs of the USH community.
2. USH will be a congregation that maintains relationships based on respect, understanding and safety.
3. USH will commit to an innovative financial model with stronger and more diversified revenues.
4. USH will attract a healthy stream of visitors.
5. The Greater Hartford community will recognize USH as a leader of the community's social justice initiatives.

Strategic Plan (cont.)

Tom summarized some of the themes that emerged from the surveys and other input from the congregation relative to the 5 goals above:

1. Support for improvements to our physical space to support our lifespan learning.
2. Our sense of respect, understanding and safety involves:
 - a. Covenants about how we interact with one another
 - b. A clear administrative structure
 - c. Connections beyond worship
3. An innovative financial model might include:
 - a. Spending less time on operational issues
 - b. Developing innovative financial approaches
 - c. Relying less on stewardship
 - d. Reviewing the size and purpose of the endowment
 - e. Detailed analysis of the costs of being in this building vs. other options
4. Maintaining a healthy stream of visitors might involve:
 - a. Engaging and retaining them once they come
 - b. Articulating our mission and values outside of our walls
 - c. Improving our physical space – e.g. 21st century sanctuary and other space
5. Becoming a visible leader in social justice in Greater Hartford might involve:
 - a. Recognizing that what we do is great, but we are 'hiding our light under a bushel' to some extent
 - b. Going beyond just 'showing up' and being a clearing house
 - c. Leveraging relationships within the community more vs trying to do so much by ourselves
 - d. Seeking out press coverage, raising our profile

Board members asked questions for clarification, and made a few suggestions for the SPG to consider in their final proposal, and stressed the importance of building in a process for buy-in by all four of the Councils.

Decision: None needed at this time

Actions: Board will vote on endorsement of the goals at the March meeting

Budget Review 2016-17

Discussion: Phil Gardner provided a concise overview of FY 16-17 revenue and expenses as of December 30th.

- Revenue Highlights: Year to date we have received 62% of pledged amount (consistent with this time in prior years), \$6,115 in non-pledge giving, prior year pledges of \$5,942 (vs. \$4,000 budgeted). Based on non-performing pledges of \$26,805, Brian Mullen projects a \$1,367 shortfall in pledge income for this fiscal year.
- Expense Highlights: Expenses for general maintenance are approximately \$9,000 and Brian projects \$15,000 for the year, \$5,000 over budget. Phone expenses are \$1,100 over budget for the year, due to the switch from Frontier to Comcast for the new system and the installation costs. Phil suggests that expenses for snow removal may be lower than projected, due to minimal snow fall so far this fiscal year, with.
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Budget Review 2016-17 (cont)

- B&G small projects budget is already \$4,725 over the \$10,000 allocation, due largely to the hearing loop and the purchase of the new phone system. Phil recommended that we authorize an additional \$5,000 to be drawn from the endowment to cover this, and then reduce the allocation for B&G Small projects for next fiscal year from \$10,000 to \$5,000. Members noted that for the past couple of years we have not been consistent in requesting an annual up-date to B&G's five-year plan for small projects which is the condition for authorizing those funds to be drawn from the endowment.

Decision: Katharine Ann Anderson moved and Hank seconded that up to \$5,000 in additional funds be allocated from the Endowment for FY 2016-17 to cover the additional expenses of the Building and Grounds Small Projects, not to exceed a total of \$15,000 for this fiscal year. The motion passed with 9 yeas and 1 abstention,

Actions: Hank Murray will work with B&G to get an up-date five-year plan to the Board for review and discussion at the March Board meeting.

Stewardship Update

Discussion: Laurie Kelliher and Rev. Heather provided the Stewardship Committee's update.

- The theme will be "answering the call of love".
- It will reflect the loss of the matching funds and of the lack of revenue from Performing Arts and the auction (or similar large fundraising event).
- Campaign will include pulpit testimonials and a pancake breakfast on Stewardship Sunday.
- Committee is considering stewardship broadly, including promoting fundraising initiatives within Councils/SubCouncils.
- Stewardship is sponsoring the Council Fair with a theme of "piece of the pie".
- Charts at UU, USH and You sessions and other mechanisms are being used to help new and old members think about how much they might expect to give.

Decision: None needed

Actions: None needed

Budget Draft Highlights 2017-18

Discussion: Phil provided highlights of the Finance Committee's draft budget for 2017-18:

- Income:
 - \$43,000 from the endowment (as it has been for the past few years)
 - Fundraising income of \$15,000
 - Increase pledge income from \$271,000 to \$320,000.
- Expenses:
 - Incremental increase in personnel budget to continue to move toward fair compensation for all staff. We are making progress but we are not there yet.
 - Maintain the B&G budget for general maintenance at \$10,000, even though it went considerably over that amount this year due to unanticipated one-time expenses.
 - Increase the Social Justice budget to \$2,500 using funds from the Petty fund (which is in the process of being re-named the Social Justice fund because it continues to be augmented with funds from other donors).
 - Increase RE training budget by \$1,000
 - Increase the budget for worship supplies by \$500

Budget Draft Highlights 2017-18 (cont.)

- Overall changes:
 - Reduce expenses by \pm \$12,000
 - Set stewardship goal at \$324,000 and budget \$308,000 for expenses

Decision: None needed at this time

Actions: None needed at this time

Executive Session

Discussion: Board discussed various financial and personnel projections and plans as they related to the budget for FY 2017-2018.

Decision: The Board endorsed specific personnel and financial strategies reflected in the proposed budget for next fiscal year.

Actions: None needed at this time

Donation Policy Proposal

Discussion: Hank presented two alternative proposals from the Finance Committee to clarify policies and procedures for the handling of donations and gifts to USH. The only difference between the two proposals related to unrestricted gifts of \$1,000 or more. In Version One, the donation would be deposited into the General Fund and remain there while the Board, with recommendations from the Finance Sub-Council and input from the congregation for donations over \$25,000, decides how the donation can best address the goals and needs of the congregation. The only difference in Version Two is that the donation would be deposited in the Endowment while that decision-making process proceeds. The Board discussed the pros and cons of the two proposals and made some suggestions as to wording.

Decision: The Finance Sub-Council will revise, based on Board input, and present a revised proposal for a Board vote at the March meeting.

Actions: The Board will take action on this policy at its next meeting in March

Green Sanctuary Update

Discussion: Jeff Howard updated the Board on new developments and initiatives:

- Jeff encouraged Board members to review the "Lead by Example" proposal from the Green Sanctuary SubCouncil, sent via email.
- There will be a People's Climate March in Washington DC on April 29. The Green Sanctuary Sub-Council is recruiting people at USH to participate, hoping to have a bus-full or more.
- There was a Solarize Connecticut table at the All Council Fair and Green Sanctuary will sponsor a Solarize workshop during coffee hour on March 5th.
- The discussion clarified that while the Solarize Connecticut project can be promoted on the boards and kiosks along with other programs and projects, any other displays or tabling by a Solarize Connecticut vendor should occur in locations in the Meeting House other than Fellowship Hall or the Upper or Lower Lobby.
- We are eligible for a free energy efficiency audit of our building as part of the installation of our solar panels and that process is underway. Results will be available later this spring.

Decision: None needed at this time.

Actions: None needed at this time.

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Ministers' Report

Discussion: The ministers had submitted reports in writing prior to the meeting due to the anticipated length of this meeting and other portions were included under other agenda items.

Decision: None needed

Actions: None needed

Sponsorship for Ministerial Student

Discussion: A woman who will become a member of USH in April is enrolling in Meadville-Lombard Theological Seminary as a non-resident student on a path to being ordained as a UU minister. One of the requirements is that a student must be sponsored by a UU congregation. Such sponsorship imposes no particular responsibilities on the congregation. This was just a heads up for now; more information and opportunities to meet the student will follow.

Decision: None needed at this time

Actions: The Board will be asked to officially vote to endorse this sponsorship in May or June.

Regional and General Assembly

Discussion: Revs. Heather and Cathy encouraged Board members to consider attending either the Regional Assembly and/or the General Assembly and pointed out that now is the time to register. They reminded members that we now have a scholarship fund to support members attending such denominational events and suggested that we encourage other members to attend as the opportunity arises.

Decision: None needed

Actions: None needed

Closing Items

- The annual meeting is scheduled for May 21. We need to remember to post the notice of the meeting and the slate of candidates for election in the mandated time frames.
- Board members were reminded to prepare their reports for inclusion in the Annual Report.

Decision: None needed

Actions: None needed

Adjournment: President John Brancato adjourned the meeting about 9:45 PM.