

## Board of Directors' Meeting

### UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF HARTFORD

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

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

**Members absent:** Rev. Cathy Rion Starr, Rev. Heather Rion Starr – both on parental leave

**Guests present:** David Newton, Janice Newton, Virginia de Lima, Sherry Manetta, Tom Richardson, Joan Nicoll-Senft, Peter Meny

**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 John read the 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 the January and February meetings were distributed for review. Prior minutes have been posted to the website and David Newton and Margaret are reviewing the postings for completeness.

**Decision:** None needed at this time

**Actions:** Members will approve the January and February minutes via email by the end of this week. Margaret will distribute the March minutes via email for review within one week.

**Email Follow Up:** *Minutes of the January and February meetings were approved unanimously via email with one spelling correction and the addition to the February minutes of the unanimous vote via email to approve the appointment of three members to the Audit Committee.*

#### **Strategic Plan Goals**

**Discussion:** Tom Richardson presented a report on the Strategic Planning Task Force's work to date. Martha reported on behalf of Rayla that we are doing 'okay' in regard to RE but it would be helpful to expand Rayla's hours to allow her to focus some attention on the lifespan education aspect of RE, help to make it a bit less haphazard. Gloria suggested that the wording of #5 focus more on 'collaboration' than 'leadership'. Chris suggested that focus on growing membership be more about keeping/engaging than simply attracting more visitors. Tom agreed and noted that because there is always some natural attrition in membership, maintaining a constant stream coming in is also important. He posed questions related to that incoming stream: What demographic do we want to be targeting? Go wide with awareness of the constituencies we are reaching? Hank asked, what are the next steps in this process? Tom replied definitely *not* another survey, perhaps some under-the-stairs discussions, meetings with Councils and Sub-Councils. It was agreed that the purpose of this presentation was not to wordsmith the document but rather for the Board to confirm whether the team is going in the right direction.

**Decision:** Gloria moved and Katharine Ann seconded a motion to affirm that the team is going in the right direction and to encourage them to continue forward with their work.

**Actions:** None needed

### Safer Congregations Policy Proposal

**Discussion:** Joan Nicoll-Senft and Virginia deLima presented the working draft of the work group's proposal and requested feedback from the Board. It is a blend of pieces adapted from other congregations' policies as well as materials from multiple sources and with the help of Kim Sweeney from the UUA. The plan would lead to a committee of the Board to carry out the policy. Martha noted that its scope was expanded from simply 'sexually safer congregation' to include broader segments of the congregation, such as elders. Hank suggested that there be a brief presentation of the plan at the annual meeting. We noted the challenges in the need to balance the safety and privacy, worth and dignity of *all* concerned, including the perpetrator of unsafe or inappropriate behaviour. Virginia requested that the Board endorse the work-in-process of this report so that it can be presented at the annual meeting. She also noted that the official adoption of a plan is the first step in USH becoming certified as a "Safer Congregation" by the UUA.

**Decision:** None needed at this time

**Actions:** Board members will send feedback to John over the next few weeks, and he will communicate with the task force.

### Donation Policy

**Discussion:** Hank presented the two previous proposals with edits to incorporate the suggestions from the February meeting. It was noted that whatever policy about donations is ultimately approved will replace the policy currently in our By-Laws. A written vote resulted in a 4 -4 tie between the two proposals. John polled members as to whether further discussion would be likely to change anyone's vote; the answer was no. Margaret suggested that the tie vote may indicate that the Finance Committee had done such a good job in addressing the previously contentious issues that the one remaining difference between the two proposals was not significant enough to make one approach inherently better than the other.

**Decision:** There was consensus that (a) we want this issue settled as quickly as possible and (b) we would refer the matter back to the Finance Committee along with the content of the Board's discussion.

**Actions:** The Finance Committee will come back to the April meeting with a proposed resolution to the tie.

### Stewardship Update

**Discussion:** Peter Meny reported that the Stewardship Committee is on track with its action plans.

- Presentation at the semi-annual meeting
- Testimonials
- Pie table at coffee hour attracted lots of newcomers
- Stewardship Committee members met with many stakeholder groups to solicit ideas for and commitments to fundraising activities; they will follow up with the groups on this in May.
- Event on USH Facebook page on March 12
- March 19 under-the-stairs for newcomers regarding stewardship
- Stewardship Sunday March 26
- Brian Harvey and Brian Mullen are working on a spreadsheet for tracking progress

**Decision:** None needed at this time.

**Actions:** None needed at this time.

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#### **Stewardship for UUs Consulting**

**Discussion:** Mark Ewert could come sometime this spring for a weekend consultation, Friday evening through Sunday. The first weekend in May tentatively looked like a good time for us. Peter suggested we find out from others who have used this consultation what their outcomes were. Gloria suggested that we ask for and follow up on references. Chris wondered whether we needed this consultation; are we not doing okay as we are?

**Decision:** We will pursue this consultation

**Actions:** John will follow up on the suggestions for vetting the consultants, then – assuming everything looks positive - confer with Mark about his availability, and propose some possible dates to Board members via email.

#### **Annual Meeting**

**Discussion:** The agenda is typically pretty pro-forma, with few required items other than approving the minutes of the previous year's annual meeting and electing the new members of the Board. The balance is mostly brief reports from officers, Council Chairs and ministers.

**Decision:** None needed

**Actions:** Members will send their reports to Linda so she can prepare the annual report. The slate of candidates will be posted on the website at least 25 days before the meeting. Margaret will post the notice of the meeting on the doors of the building at the end of this meeting.

#### **Regional and General Assembly**

**Discussion:** This topic was tabled due to lack of time, except to encourage Board members to try to attend these events and to encourage others to go as well.

**Decision:** None needed

**Actions:** None needed

#### **Building and Grounds Five-Year Plan**

**Discussion:** Hank distributed the draft Five-Year Plan and reported that B & G is still working on this. The challenge of the leaking roof figures large in this discussion. They are working on getting the roof assessed in various aspects, including – sometime during the next 2 – 6 weeks, depending on the weather - boring into the core to determine whether the roof contains asbestos. If it does, this will make the ultimate solution even more challenging. This discussion highlighted again the need for more long-range planning around the use and future of our building, i.e. do we keep pouring money into keeping it functioning as it is, or do we think more broadly about what the physical home of our congregation needs to be like going into the future.

**Decision:** None needed

**Actions:** Hank will continue working with B&G on the Five-Year Plan and hopes to have it to bring to the board within the next couple of months.

#### **Comments from Guests and Board Members**

**Discussion:** This item was omitted, with the permission of those present, because of the late hour.

**Decision:**

**Actions:**

**Adjournment:** President John Brancato adjourned the meeting about 9:20 PM.