

USH Board Meeting Minutes

May 7, 2019

Present: Sherry Manetta, Sue Tenorio, Marye Gail Harrison, Tom Richardson, Rev. Heather and Cathy Rion Starr, Joe Rubin, Judy Sullivan, Carolyn Carlson

Ex-officio guests - Martha Bradley, Rick Tsukada, Judy Robbins

6:30: Judy read opening words.

6:32 – Rev Heather read board covenant.

6:33 – No changes to agenda.

6:35 – Thank you notes: List of top 50 donors were divided into groups of 5-7 and distributed for each board member to send individual thank you notes. “On behalf of the board of directors we thank you for your significant commitment. Your increase/donation helps us to get where we are going. On behalf of the board...name.”

6:40- No consent agenda this meeting

6:42- Carolyn provided an overview of the Adult Programming Plan for the next year:

- Brian Harvey will continue to do USH and You for new members until the end of the calendar year. Brian, Rev. Cathy and Carolyn are evaluating options for spring, including the possibility of using “Faith Forward” program.
- Martha Bradley was the Connection Circles Chair this year and is looking for a replacement now that she has accepted a position on the board. Let us know if you have any nominations. We hope to have one or two Connection Circles in the fall and possible one in the summer. Susan Hope is also coordinating an Earth Centered Spirituality Group that will offering a variety of related programs next year.
- We have also had a team of three people from our congregation led by Tom Gervais and including Judy Robbins and Marye Gail Harrison - led an effort to identify and implement a deeper adult spirituality program. Judy Robbins is here to speak about the program today.

6:44 - Judy Robbins summarized the Wellspring Program:

- Wellsprings is an adult spiritual UU program that is being offered in 30 congregations nationwide. The plan is to offer it cooperatively with USH, UU-East and UU of West Hartford. It is a ten-month program that requires a serious commitment from participants and is appropriate for experienced UU people who want a deeper experience.
- It begins with a retreat, and includes two meetings a month, a commitment to a daily spiritual practice and agreement to work with a spiritual director. The team surveyed other congregations and learned that this program was very beneficial to board

members and other church leaders who had given a lot and needed some time to rejuvenate. It was a great way to develop future leaders.

- The plan is to offer a daytime group facilitated by Judy and an evening group facilitated by Tom. The goal is 10 people per each session. Cost to purchase the curriculum and materials is \$1500 for first year, therefore \$500 per church. The ministers from the three churches agreed that this cost would be absorbed by each church. Participants need to buy 4 books which are easily available and monthly spiritual direction can cost from free to \$100 per session; these costs will be paid by each participant.
- A question and answer session followed. See detailed handout and letter of support and clarifying expectations from the four ministers.

7:03 Carolyn made a motion to approve this collaborative consortium.

Aye – 7

Nay – 0

Abstain - 0

7:05 Tom Richardson gave a status report on Stewardship fundraising.

Stewardship expects to receive about \$321,000. Tom stated that the Finance Committee recommended that we expect to use \$305,000 in the budget, which is consistent with our average annual collection rate on pledges.

Rev Cathy would like to have a future conversation and deeper analysis about giving trends and giving possibilities.

7:07 Tom's update on Finance Committee. See Finance Committee Report for extensive details.

Current year operations and year-end projections as of March 31, 2019:

Income—higher than anticipated:

- Rental income significantly above budget.
- Prior Year pledge payments are double the amount budgeted.
- Meeting House Presents received met their goal with a very successful last concert
- Germany Grant for Choral Scholars and Composer-in-Residence was not in the original budget.
- Adult Programs were supposed to make \$2000; forecast is a net of zero. FC wants to learn more about the details.

Expense—higher expenses than projected:

- There were \$12,500 in boiler parts and repairs. B&G considers this an operating expense rather than a small capital project causing operating expenses to be over budget.
- Finance Committee has asked B&G to spend no more than \$2,500 for remainder of the year on small capital projects so that this line item comes in \$7,500 under budget. In

total, then, the combination of maintenance and small capital projects will be on budget for the year

- Computer line item over budget by \$3,500. Staff advised to stop calling vendor help line. Linda looking at other vendors. Won't renew contract. Rev. Cathy thinks new vendors will be more expensive.
- Several line items fully spent--Spiritual Life, Revs' professional development, Social Justice

Bottom line. We are ok. Even though expenses are higher, income has been higher than expected and we are on track to come in on a break-even budget.

FY2020 Budget:

Tom then shared a spreadsheet which presented a draft of a budget for FY 20. The budget indicates there are insufficient funds to pay full UUA dues (we would pay only \$7,600 out of \$20,400 fair share dues) and that \$6,800 of Prior Year Reserves would be used to pay for the intern minister and sabbatical coverage, in essence budgeting for an operating deficit of \$6,800 and utilizing Prior Year Reserves that otherwise serve as a much-needed emergency account.

The draft budget holds many operating expenses flat to FY 19, and also includes:

- Raising the hourly wage of three staff to \$15 per hour.
- Providing a 3% COLA for other staff. (Note: Sherry suggested this line item warrants further discussion for this year and/or in the future, e.g., considering a pool that could be used for merit and not just COLA, and other staffing decisions).
- Providing funds for the intern minister.
- Providing funds for sabbatical coverage

Other issues that were discussed:

- Ensuring that the funds from the Schwab account are used appropriately.
- Understanding how money from Schwab reserve accounts are reflected in the financial statements. Sherry stated that for larger reserves (other than prior year reserves) it is her understanding that amounts are reported in income when transferred from Schwab to the operating account to cover an expense of an equal amount. The net impact on the current year operations is thus zero. For example, this applies to Music Sunday and Social Justice reserves. We should have a policy to this effect.
- Recommend separating our special project funds in the financial reports so that income and expense items can be more readily tracked, e.g., for Meeting House Presents.
- Need for twice a year deep cleaning of facility—is this budgeted?

Income and expenses both need to be refined, as just replicating last year's budget may not be accurate.

There was a discussion on not paying the full amount of UUA dues and how this would impact other considerations such as our standing within the UUA (not much apparently), whether it

would impact our eligibility for the intern minister grant, and whether we are willing to continue the practice of not paying UUA dues in future years. Options for paying UUA dues were discussed, including re-negotiating the basis for the calculation which will require an increase of 10% each year for the next 9 years (first 10% increase was in the current year). Perhaps certain special projects, e.g., Meeting House Presents should be eliminated as it is the net of these projects that is meaningful, not the full expense line item. Since UUA fair share is based on the operating cost budget (less capital expenditures) separating these funds would allow us to lower our UUA dues expenditure. Several people stated that full payment of UUA fair share was important.

Options for further budget consideration:

- Raise more money,
- Lay off staff
- Restrict buildings and grounds spending

Recommendations:

- Postpone the board vote on budget to next board meeting to allow people to think about it and look for options.
- Develop talking points to explain the situation to general membership at Annual Meeting. (Sherry and Joe)
- Analyze the donations from current Stewardship campaign to see if any additional opportunities or asks exist. (Joe, Sherry, Rev Cathy and possibly Peter Meny)
- Carolyn offered to convene a small group to look at options for increasing adult program fees.
- General agreement on a need for a fundraising committee to look at more options.

8:50 Annual Meeting

Agreed it will be in Fellowship Hall.

Quick discussion on operational details.

8:55 Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Carolyn Carlson/Sherry Manetta