

Unitarian Society of Hartford Board Meeting

April 9, 2024

Location: USH and Zoom
 NO___YES_X

Quorum

Board Attendees	Guests	Regrets
Dana Donovan	David Newton	
Nancy Kemmerer	Janice Newton	
Rick Tsukada	Bill Simmons	
Jon Covault	Beverly Spence	
Paul Cipriano		
Gloria F. Mengual		
Jim Venneman		
Judy Sullivan		
Tina Davies		
Laurie Kelliher		
Rev. Bob Janis		

Orders of Business

6:45 p.m. Dana called the meeting to order.

Approval of March 2023 Board Meeting Minutes –Jon made Motion to approve March Board meeting minutes, as amended. Judy seconded. Unanimous approval.

Tina – Question for Rick: You made a comment regarding more candles on the chancel. What did you mean? Rick: candles on the chancel are often not lit. I was wondering, why?

Jon - On page 2 of March minutes: Clarification – employees need to work 15 hours per week to enroll in the UUA group insurance plan.

UPDATES

- **Building & Grounds** –*David Newton* *(See attached B & G Report)

- Stewardship** – *Jim Venneman* Pledges received as of today's Board meeting - \$258,028.00 There are 26 people who need to be resolicited. Have not heard from them yet regarding pledge. Will be contact MaryeGail to help contact Seabury folks who have not given yet. Will start reminder calls next week. *Nancy* – would be good to help members understand how their financial commitment to USH is spent. *Tina* - An Under the Stairs financial workshop for those interested in knowing more would be good. *Rick*: Reference to what our hopes are for the coming year may help reach folks who are committed already. *Laurie* – heart string tug in vitally important. *Paul*: stress to all how much is done pro bono by volunteers as well
- Treasurer** – *Jon Covault* *(See attached Treasurer's Report)
 Highlights: pledge totals have been flat for past three years, while expenses have risen, including liability insurance and lawn insurance. Relying on Schwab account to cover some increased expenses, including potential expansion of Karolina's hours. *Laurie*: sharing with members increased costs like ones you noted may help them understand the need for increased funds. 'Another \$10 - \$20 K would mean a world to us.' *Tina* - Framing it as 'another \$100 from each of us' may have a positive impact on these increases. *Jon* – noting that this may balance loss of large donors due to recent deaths of members. Suggests using dividends and interest funds to cover expenses related to recognition of USH as historical building. UUA funds from USH have been reduced – would be best not to go below \$100 per member in terms of what we send to UUA.
- Nominating Committee** - *Laurie Kelliher*
 Carolyn Carlson asked Laurie to take charge of membership and provided guidance on that role. Membership representation recently was placed on the Board. The Nominating Committee role was added to this position. Dana is on this committee. Community Within and President Elect need new representatives on the Board. *Tina*: It would be helpful for people to know who is on the Nominating Committee.. *Dana*: seems to me, same as there is a President-elect, it would be helpful to have a Treasurer-elect on Board. *Rick*: How are delegates chosen for June General Meeting? *Dana* – It should go into the ENews; he asked Tina to get message out there. Annual meeting – ballot vote will be taken on Article 2. General Meeting reps will need to convey congregational vote at General Meeting.
- Minister's Report** - *Reverend Bob Janis* - *(See attached Minister's Report) April 30 – date annual report portions are due. First Thursday

is ongoing. Ben Lanser memorial was moving; pleased with USH member involvement/commitment. Thirties/forties group met at USH; there are plans for May and June with youth group as well. Some were members of USH and some new youth came. Eight attended. Youth are looking for community connection; it's still evolving. Good group. *Laurie*: flyer for Welcome Table targeting youth would be helpful; among recent past visitors, one or two have been youth. Passover Seder – another group is interested in participating in this with us.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Home Energy Conservation Proposal – Bill Simmons

This has been a Green Sanctuary effort over time. USH building has energy star. There is a contest – 50th anniversary of Arab oil embargo, which started focus on conservation. **Home Energy Solutions** energy audit program of Eversource – would like USH to decide to get involved in IREJN effort to have congregations ask their members to get involved in energy conservation via energy audits – cost is about \$70. Bill's goal: to get 20 percent of USH members to schedule home audits. He wants Board to approve this program so he could promote it, using phone, email and other marketing communications. *Judy*: Mary Sherwin remains involved with IREJN; she may have suggestions; am concerned about a one-person committee. *Bill*: looking to have others join this effort and be part of committee. *Rick*: Supports idea of this and likes the consciousness/awareness of campaigning within USH for energy conservation. *Judy*: concern is about the process – get others involved so overall USH community will be involved; involve interested Social Justice folks and expand those working on this effort. *Laurie* – Sounds interesting - congregational involvement is what is beneficial to USH and main appeal to me. *Tina*: suggested Bill join Social Justice meeting and discuss his ideas with them.

2. Help with Holly Near concert – 2 pm on May 4 -Need help with refreshments, paying as you come in, as well as security staff at doors and parking assistance. Chairs in lobby for extra if attendance gets high. Seven – eight volunteers would be helpful.

3. Council Chair Reports

- **Administration – Paul Cipriano**
 - Security grant of \$13,000 has finally moved to payment stage from Department of Homeland Security.

- Applied for grant for next year for parking lot lights.
- **Community Within** – *Tina Davies*
 - All is running smoothly.
- **Finance** – *Jon Covault* *(See addendum below for complete report)
- **Membership** – *Laurie Kelliher* *(See addendum below for complete report)
 - Two weeks ago, topped off at 90 people; never less than 70 recently.
 - May be looking at seven people for May 19 new members ceremony
- **Social Justice** – *Judy Sullivan* –*(See addendum below for complete report).
 - Chancel lift update provided by David is in submitted report.
- **Spiritual Life & Update on RE Search Committee's work**– *Rick Tsukada*
 - USH received six applications for DRE opening. We are interviewing four people. First interview is screening process to see if we want to take it into next level. Annie is among the applicants. All interviews are scheduled for April.
 - Tracey Wilson was given to him as a contact – WH historian, along with staff person from U of H – will be discussing land recognition with them. Hoping to weave this into October historical designation celebration event.

GUEST COMMENTS –

- *David Newton*: We shall prevail.

MOTION TO ADJOURN – *Tina* made motion to adjourn at 8:37 p.m; Jim seconded motion. Unanimous vote to adjourn.

Addendums – April 2024 Reports

1. USH Ministerial Board Report ~ Rev. Bob Janis -April 9th, 2024

I, who had dedicated most of my life to penetrate the secrets of the universe, realized that there are no secrets. Life is, and always will be, a mystery. ...Paulo Coelho

Sundays & Special Services

We are in a good groove with Sundays between WAs, guests, and myself. I think it's been a good mix of services, but over study leave may have a think about the "flow" of the year, what we covered and what we didn't. Quite a few new and returning people, and although we don't always retain people, it's good to build up a base.

Pastoral Care and Rites of Passage

The funeral for Benjamin Lanser was a sad one for this congregation.

Everyone stepped up beautifully to be there for this family – thank you!

Programming and Social Justice

- 30s and 40s group had a good second meeting, at USH building this time. Events scheduled for May and June.
- Poetry workshop has wrapped up for now, but talk about reincarnating it next year, perhaps with a focus on writing
- "First Tuesdays" continue through June (may keep it going next year)
- Sermon writing workshop had good initial meeting, follow-up end of this month
- Labyrinth Walk and GHIAA House meeting - both moving in their way
- "First Thursdays" have had a mix of music and liturgical styles – lot of experimenting.
- A new member class is being developed with Laurie

Foundations and Behind the Scenes

- I'll be away on study leave **April 13-19** - Anything that can wait that week until next, please do. I'll answer emails when I get back. You can reach me for pastoral emergencies.
- DRE Search process is ongoing – we are moving into the interview stage next.

2. Treasurer Report ~ Jon Covault April 9, 2024

2023-2024 budget: FY24 pledge giving received as of March 31, 2024 totals \$251,479 or 90% of pledge total (\$279,135) with 25% of budget year remaining.

Expenses have been in line with the approved budget for most categories. As of March 31, expenses total \$293,000 which is 68% of FY24 budgeted expense. FY24 expenses are projected to be approximately \$10-12,000 under budget. Income as of March 31 is 10% ahead of budget (\$41,000) resulting primarily from year end stewardship appeal and payments for FY23 pledges. As a result, we should not need to use past reserves beyond PPP funds for FY24.

There are areas of outstanding grant reimbursement to cover incurred expenses for our security systems (15,915) and historical designation expenses (\$11,025).

UBS Endowment – Scheduled monthly USH withdrawal of \$4,453 to support the operating budget.

Schwab savings account –No USH withdrawals in March.

Quarterly summary of activity / balances for the Endowment, Schwab and M&T checking as separate file provided.

Monthly GNO giving for March: Village for Families and Children: \$1,527 (\$713 USH)

2024-2025 budget: A draft FY25 budget attached with stewardship goal of \$295,000, a 5.7% increase compared with FY23 pledges. Income includes \$57,000 from endowment (4.5% of endowment, not including capital improvements portion of the endowment) as recommended by the endowment committee together with income from Schwab account of \$10,500 PPP funds and \$30,000 from accumulated past budget surpluses.

The draft budget expenses includes \$12,000 contribution to UUA (vs. the UUA suggested \$19,564 for FY24-25). Increased expenses include \$12,200 for staff 3% cola and increase in minister's contract, \$5,000 increase in property/liability premium, \$3,100 increase in cost of medical insurance, increased phone/internet, copier rental, elevator maintenance and lawn care totaling \$7,000. Budgets for 9 line items were reduced by \$200-\$1,000 each totaling \$14,000. Budgets for guest musicians/choral singers, pulpit guests, RE supplies and curriculum maintained at current levels. Funds (\$5,000) for external marketing and event costs related to our October celebration can be drawn from accumulated Schwab dividend / interest.

The budget maintains the current level of staffing for RE and office administration. Increasing Karolina to full-time would require an additional \$23,000.

date	<u>account</u>		<u>monthly invest</u>			deposits	notes	<u>total</u>	<u>expense/</u>	<u>budgeted</u>	<u>Other USH</u>	notes
	balance	dvd interest	change	market	return			withdrawal	fees	withdrawal	withdrawal	
FY24 Q3 Main endowment												
12/29/23	\$	1,334,527										
1/16/24						\$ 50.00	Peter Upton memorial					
1/16/24						\$ 50.00	Dale Hackett memorial					
1/31/24	\$	1,323,190	\$ 1,445.42	\$ (9,489.74)	-0.6%	\$ 100.00		\$ (3,393.14)	\$(3,393.14)	\$ -		
2/29/24	\$	1,351,730	\$ 1,420.63	\$ 31,573.12	2.5%			\$ (4,453.67)		\$(4,453.67)		
3/28/24	\$	1,383,735	\$ 2,893.27	\$ 33,566.88	2.7%			\$ (4,455.27)	\$ (1.60)	\$(4,453.67)		
FY24 Q3 Capital Improvement												
12/31/23	\$	344,736										
1/31/24	\$	345,270	\$ 105.8	\$ 1,319.1	0.4%			\$ (890.60)	\$ (890.60)	investment fee		
2/29/24	\$	353,046	\$ 323.3	\$ 7,452.2	2.3%							
3/31/24	\$	362,307	\$ 730.5	\$ 8,531.8	2.6%			\$ (0.46)	\$ (0.46)			
FY24 Q3 Schwab reserves												
12/31/23	\$	137,387										
1/31/24	\$	137,825	\$ 431	\$ 7	0.3%	\$ -		\$ -		\$ -		
2/29/24	\$	138,217	\$ 418	\$ (26)	0.3%	-		-		-		
3/31/24	\$	140,606	\$ 417	\$ (28)	0.3%	\$ 2,000.00	pre-paid pledg	-		-		
FY24 Q3 M+T Checking												
12/31/23	\$	114,453.90										net change
1/31/24	\$	122,295.30				\$ 39,040		\$ (31,183)	\$ (15.00)			\$ 7,841
2/29/24	\$	113,214.04				\$ 27,768		\$ (36,849)	\$ -			\$ (9,081)
3/31/24	\$	100,467.99				\$ 23,406		\$ (36,152)	\$ -			\$ (12,746)

3.

Membership Report ~ Laurie Kelliher April 9, 2024

- The New Member Ceremony will be held during the Sunday service May 19, 2024. Those interested in membership were invited to a two-session course May 2nd and May 7th. Rev. Bob will lead a “home-grown” version for new members entitled “The Journey”. Previous UUA course “You and UU” and “The Inquirers” series have been used in the past and have involved multi-sessions so this offering will be a leaner, though no less meaningful, opportunity. Fingers- crossed, we may have 6 or more new members.
- Sunday services continue to be well-attended and special note should be made that several old members have been returning with some consistency. The word of our good energy is spreading.
- First Connections was held in April with 6 relatively new people attending to share stories of their decision to explore USH.
- Rev Bob sponsored another 30s/40s group which was held at the Meeting House.

4. Social Justice Council ~ Judy Sullivan April 9, 2024

- **Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA)**

USH hosted six House Meetings on March 20 with two co-host GHIAA congregations, Urban Hope Refuge, led by Rev. AJ Johnson, and New Antioch Baptist, led by Pastor Jeff Powell. Total of 56 attendees met in six small groups to discuss personal stories of concerns in our community. Common themes will be determined and researched for the upcoming new slate of actions.

- **Gardner Spencer Pulpit Guest**

USH welcomed Rev. Jocelyn Gardner Spencer, GHIAA Lead Organizer, as pulpit guest on March 24. As it was Palm Sunday on the Christian calendar, she spoke of "Palm to Palm": the power of love through human connections, and the work of justice as an act of liberation.

- **Anti-Racism Programming: The Sum of Us Podcast Discussions**

Minden, Nevada: The Last Sundown Siren, will be discussed during a Zoom discussion on Thursday, April 18, from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. on Zoom. The full schedule of upcoming podcasts and discussion dates can be found on the USH Social Justice website.

- **EqUual Access and Disability Justice**

The team is in the process of acquiring bids for ADA compliant railings for all steps to the chancel. The next meeting is scheduled for Sunday, April 14, following the service. Follow-up regarding the safety and accessibility of the chancel, below is a report from David Newton (B&G) on the repair of the lift:

"On 3/14/24 two technicians worked from about 12 to 2 PM on the Chancel lift. They said it was in good shape, lubricated the tracks it follows, and said the gears otherwise were well lubricated. It worked when they started, but after they cleaned it and reassembled the works, it failed with clicking of relays indicating the battery was not good. They took it apart again and determined to install two new batteries in series. They suspected one of the original ones was at fault as there was corrosion involved. The fit and removal of the batteries from their respective compartments is difficult, but possible. They installed two new batteries, and normal function was back deploying at a faster rate than before, that is, the operation was faster given proper voltage. The contractors were familiar with similar apparatus. They said for maintenance, we ought to run the lift for an excursion once each week. This has a positive influence on battery health. We are planning to exercise the lift weekly. The cost of the service call and batteries was \$750.00 with no return service necessary."

5. Building & Grounds/Endowment Remarks ~ David Newton -April 9, 2024

1. The clean-up work for various spaces is continuing under the able leadership of Evan Williams.
2. Part of the Lundy vision is a large expanse of glass constituting the outer walls of our Meeting House. One consequence is, as the years pass, that glass is broken one way or another. Currently it must be replaced by shatterproof glass, which is not surprising but does involve additional expense. Recently we found a crack in a very large sheet of glass in the Chapel. The experts said it was something that happens after several years rather like a crack in a car windshield that begins small and progresses. The cost of replacement is about \$1,909. We also have damage in various less obvious panes of glass. We will also replace what appears to be a bullet hole in an Emerson window, which has been there for some time.
3. If the weather cooperates for a few days, we will have the required painting done on our blacktop marking traffic flow and handicapped accessible parking spaces.
4. Several large senescent cotton wood trees have fallen on our parking lot areas. Kevin has chain sawed the residue that is then carried off by visiting wood burning gardeners.
5. Process, there has been a good deal of interest in bestowing a name on the Ambulatory as well as Classroom D. I think process is very important to our success as a group. To this end BG will shortly consider creation of one or more ad hoc groups to publicize naming opportunities in the USH-Enews, to solicit comment and suggestions from congregation members, and to thereafter recommend various actions to the Board. The result may be somewhat obvious, but the process is important so that as a congregation we feel we all participated, could have participated, were solicited for opinions, or could have voiced opinions, and therefore **collectively we own decisions**.
6. **Visioning attitudes.** Please remember when we have visitors and show them our National Register Listed building, the visitors will see what you point out and be impressed accordingly. In fact, they will always in the future see the beauty and symbolism of the building as described. It is, as we know well, an imperfect building though symbolic of our history and faith. Bottom line, keep any griping about leaks, defects of various sorts

etc., etc. for behind-the-scenes non-public discussions where we can deal with them.

7. In another matter, please be advised that the Endowment Committee is moving forward with plans for an Endowment Campaign next summer and fall. This matter will call for some priority and flexibility in speakers, services, and related matters. I will be sending you copies of Committee Minutes to get you informed "in the picture" going forward.
