

Unitarian Society of Hartford Board Meeting

June 11, 2024

Location: USH and Zoom

Quorum

NO _____ YES X

Board Attendees	Guests	Regrets
Dana Donovan Nancy Kemmerer Rick Tsukada Jon Covault Paul Cipriano Tina Davies Jim Venneman Judy Sullivan Laurie Kelliher Rev. Bob Janis	Laura Cipriano (incoming board) David Newton (Zoom) Janice Newton (Zoom) Beverly Spence (Zoom) Laurel Goodgion (Zoom)	Gloria Mengual Nina Elgo (incoming board)

Orders of Business

6:35 p.m. Dana - called the meeting to order. Check-in. Board members were asked how their experience this year has been. Reading from an essay by Rev. Sean Parker Dennison, "Why Failure is not an Option"

Approval of May 2024 Board Meeting Minutes – Jim made Motion to approve minutes. Tina seconded. Unanimous approval.

UPDATES

Building & Grounds – *David Newton* David asked that the proposal "Lighting Phase Two" (attached) be moved and seconded for consideration. Tina made motion, Paul seconded.

There was discussion on the process by which this came about, and the specifics of the project. Adding an audio update to the lighting feature was mooted. The plan as stated represented an opportunity to alter the particular "sacred" feel of the sanctuary as little as possible, while accomplishing the stated goal of improving the lighting.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

Endowment Campaign – *David Newton* presented the brief of the Endowment Committee (report attached below)

Jim Venneman stated there will be a focus group this Sunday to discuss our endowment opportunities. This is intended for people of all different levels of means.

Treasurer's Report – Jon Covault *(See attached Treasurer's Report)

Jon submitted the 2024-2025 proposed budget (attached) for discussion and approval.

The music line items were discussed. Questions of how much is actually used, for guest musicians and choristers. Many returning attendees cite music as a factor.

Nancy asked that \$200 for board expenses, which was removed, be reinstated. This was agreed.

Judy asked that \$500 for social justice expenses, which was removed, be reinstated. This was agreed.

It was asked whether the current procedure of soliciting donations only for memorial receptions was working acceptably, and Janice Newton reported that it was.

Nancy made the motion to accept the budget, with the minor changes above suggested. Jim seconded. The motion was voted yes, with no "nos" and Jon abstained as treasurer.

Sathya Sai – Rev. Bob reported on meeting with Sathya Sai. He recommended not increasing the rent for the time being, as financial constraints for their organization, they've been a good tenant, and help us in other ways. It was discussed that as we increase rental activity Sunday afternoons could become more complicated. Rev. Bob suggested revisiting this in six to twelve months.

Minister's Report Update- *Reverend Bob Janis* - *(See attached Minister's Report)

Rev. Bob forwarded Shahan's request about asking whether two families wish to host exchange students. The Board agreed it was a good idea to share the word.

Rick asked how Committee on Shared Ministry was meeting the needs of congregation and minister, and Rev. Bob replied very well. Worth looking at how COSM might share wisdom & reflections with the Board and/or the wider congregation.

Social Justice – *Judy Sullivan* (see attached report)

Judy asked whether we could hang a Pride flag to celebrate Pride month in June, and also for September as that's Hartford Pride month. A larger question was asked how the congregation delineates which issues are most important to act on in any given years. As to the Pride flag, it was agreed to put it up (noting USH became a Welcoming Congregation in 2004) and to seek Sexton's idea for the best place and means to do so.

Judy added the USH Board Guest Speaker Protocol Draft (attached). Rick moved to accept and Jim seconded. It was passed unanimously.

3.Council Chair Reports

- **Administration** – *Paul Cipriano*

There have been a couple of issues with cameras, that have been attended to. There will be a new camera that shows the parking lot. We have enough money to put bollards to protect the front of the building from cars that may, probably inadvertently, drive into the building. Paul recommended installing these.

- **Community Within** – *Christina Davies* *(See addendum below for complete report)

E-news is going on summer schedule, coming out fortnightly. Will be back to regular communications in September.

- **Membership** – *Laurie Kelliher* *(See addendum below for complete report)

Banner year with ten new members, higher attendance. Flower Communion attendance shows people value that ritual. Noting what people are valuing as they attend, which are voiced at new member offerings – community, connection, a liberal faith, a place for spirit and quiet.

(from Laurie): USH is ending the church year with robust energy for member involvement and enthusiasm.

Since June 2023 USH has added 10 new members.

Our attendance at services is growing and we peaked with 119 people in attendance for Flower Communion. We can look forward to continued growth in the upcoming year.

- **Social Justice – Judy Sullivan**

In addition to the above, put in a plug for attending West Hartford Pride.

With GHIAA's involvement in MIRA, they saved \$50 million dollars that were being paid to other towns to take care of their trash in tipping fees, and the \$50 million can now be used for the original purpose of remediation.

Thursday June 20th there will be a GHIAA Delegates Assembly at the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry in Hartford.

The Rev. Bea Santiago, minister of Ministerial Nueva Creacion in Hartford, is now a liaison to GHIAA, and we welcome her to that role.

- **Spiritual Life & Update on RE Search Committee's work– Rick Tsukada** *(See addendum below for complete report)

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Setting up a new RE Committee for Shahan.

W.A.'s role has expanded with Thursday evening services, role in rites of passage, etc. Manchester exchange is continuing.

Chancel Arts' continual excellence – on 52 different Sundays – is praised and appreciated.

Diana Cipriano's very talented camera work and the visuals that are incorporated are likewise appreciated. We asked about how the experience of those attending online is going, and what we can do to enhance their

experience. The overall experience was described as good community and positive. A new microphone for the library Zoom was suggested.

NEW BUSINESS:

Rick observed that with increased rentals, we have times when we have numbers in the building, but don't have members looking after the building. As we increase rentals, questions of who opens, closes, and looks after the building, as well as the needs of our tenants and guests.

GUEST COMMENTS: Janice Newton noted that a bat was in the building, and door has been left open a lot. Birds also enter the door when it's open. It is urged that front door, and also door to Memorial Door, is not propped open.

MOTION TO ADJOURN – *Jon* made **motion** to adjourn at 9:05 p.m; Jim seconded the motion. Unanimous vote to adjourn.

Addendums – June 2024 Reports

- 1. Buildings and Grounds:** Lighting Phase Two
Agenda Item Board Meeting 6/11/24 ~ David Newton Request, Chair BG

I am requesting approval of the following resolution;

the explanation follows: **Resolution on Phase Two**

Lighting

Whereas, The plans for Phase Two lighting (the Chancel area) have been pending since before 2021, when phase one was under construction adding the lights over the sanctuary seating areas, and

Whereas, Over the last two years the necessary plans including determination of fixtures, switching arrangements, positions and fastening locations, and other aspects of the project have been advanced step by step with David Newton, and Paul Cipriano meeting with our Architect, Hugh Schweitzer, Lighting

Engineer Mike Toto, Keith Schmelter, Project Manager, Lighthouse Enterprises, Inc. to refine, discuss and otherwise determine final plans for soliciting a bid, and

Whereas, a bid has been received based on the collected data, pricing, consultation and related efforts, and

Whereas, The bid is recommended by our Architect representing us in the project and reflecting a realistic understanding of the costs associated with our plans, now therefore be it,

Resolved, That the Chair of BG is instructed to accept the bid on the project of \$65,105 understanding there will also be a cost for Bengtson Renovations for support based on a time and materials used to facilitate access to electricians to spaces above some of the rays.

Related background information:

Do we have money for such a capital project? Yes, one of the important functions of an Endowment is to provide funds for occasional significant capital projects. In the current capital improvement account, before a recent significant addition, we had adequate earmarked funds specifically approved by the doner for Phase Two Lighting.

The Phase One project back in 2021 (the existing lights over the pews) cost more than \$56,000. We all know what has happened with inflation since that time. Considered from that perspective, the quote is reasonable.

Why not multiple quotes? Our experience with Lighthouse, (winning bid in 2021) involved a great deal of learning on their part as our ceiling ray structure is both unique, difficult to penetrate in construction, and aesthetically important. The work of the electricians facilitated by Bengtson Renovations delivered an excellent outcome. We have also had good experience with the Lighthouse correcting minor issues in adjustments of the system at no cost. We have squeezed the bid as they have agreed to stay with the quote and charge less if it turns out that way to them upon completion. (see documentation). It is also a fact of life that contractors wish to stay on the good side of Architects, as that is the source of their work and survival. We

are well represented by Architect Hugh Schweitzer who donates his time for USH projects.

What are the steps in our or similar projects? First you meet among yourselves to determine what changes might be desirable. Then, you meet with an architect, normally if you have one, who designs plans for whatever you plan to do in the space. These plans then call for components, lights fixtures, etc., and a lighting engineer may be consulted to provide demonstrations of fixtures based on relevant knowledge of the space involved (measure all sorts of things, demonstrate fixtures and their capabilities) At that point consultations occur to modify the plans "on the table." Finally, the costs, labor, equipment, etc. are specified to contractors asked to bid on the refined architectural plans. Bid or bids are then evaluated concerning the details provided.

I will be happy to answer any additional questions, just call

860.335.3742 On the following page(s) you can view various

related plans, etc., fyi

2. Endowment Campaign Briefing ~ Board Member Briefing RE: Endowment Campaign

Members of the Board, current and Incoming:

The purpose of this communication is to provide background information regarding the pending Endowment Campaign.

There has been no Endowment Campaign in recent memory. With the revival of the Endowment Committee, its members in recent months have been hard at work developing procedures and policies to guide the pending campaign. While we were engaged in planning, the USH spring financial focus was properly on the stewardship campaign for fiscal 24-25.

As you know, the Endowment Committee (EC) has received substantial funds for use in matching future endowment contributions. We have been considering various methods of communicating with members of the congregation about the campaign, donation choices, and many related details.

The campaign will begin to roll out with a post service focus group meeting on June 16th. The purpose of this meeting will be to seek input from

members on the campaign generally and questions they think we should address as the EC continues to roll out the campaign this summer and especially during September.

The success of the campaign will depend on the collective organizational focus on the effort. We will be asking you, as key members of USH, to join and support us in communicating about the campaign, including the purposes of having an endowment, its historical value to USH, methods of contributing, and the reasons for doing so.

Our intention here, is not to answer the questions this communication may raise in your mind, but to give an early alert for what is to follow. Of course, we have every intention of maintaining full and open communication with the Board and always welcome your questions or thoughts.

Endowment Committee

David Newton, Chair,
Sherry Manetta,
Joe Rubin,
Cris Noble,
Jim Venneman

3. Treasurer's Report – Submitted by Jon Covault ~ June 11 2024

I am recommending the board vote to approve the proposed v7 2023-2024 budget.

Income notes

Endowment contribution proposed at 4.5% of past 13-quarters as recommended by endowment committee

Stewardship - \$308,000 from pledge donations plus \$12,000 from additional stewardship activity.

Rental income increased by 1/3 (to \$16,000) anticipating FT Church Operations Manager involvement

Various one-time income sources include \$9,000 from prior budget surplus, \$10,300 remaining paycheck protection funds and income from grants for developing historical designation (\$14,700) and for installing security enhancements (\$15,900).

Expenditure notes

2024-25 budgeted expenses are 10% greater than 2023-24 budget half of this increase from increasing Church Operations Manager to full-time.

Annual fund contribution to UUA - \$12,000 budgeted which is less than the \$19,500 requested.

Inflation related increases in building maintenance, copier rental, internet/phone fees, and liability, fire and health insurance.

New line items for Minister expenses \$2,400, and RE director professional development expenses \$2,400 / yr. Increase in amount for Staff development / appreciation to \$1,000.

4. USH Ministerial Board Report ~ Rev. Bob Janis

"Do more of what's already working for you." – Salil Jha

Here's to one year together! THANK YOU to all of you for serving, for giving of yourselves – it is greatly appreciated.

Sundays & Special Services

Well, they're all special services in May and June – Mother's Day, New Member Sunday, Youth Sunday, Flower Communion and wrapping up the RE year....and more to come. There's been a convivial, celebratory atmosphere, and warm weather (occasionally rainy) too.

Thursday evening services going well. I was almost tempted to add one more in July – but seeing as the first Thursday is July 4th, let's reconfigure for beginning of September.

Programming and Social Justice

- Though no one can ever possibly fill Tina's shoes, thanks to Tina there's a great lineup of offerings to start with in Community Within. Most are on hiatus in the summer. It's good to get a break and recharge.
- I wouldn't mind doing one more 30s & 40s group offering in July, as the June hike was a bit of a mix-up and I'd like to try to keep momentum going.
- Spoke to Shahan and there's a possibility to try some sort of family gathering over the summer or early fall – I don't want to put pressure on him, of course, but it's a wonderful idea and if families are

interested, why not? We'll look at possibilities and maybe float a couple of ideas.

- Also, you may remember Shahan talked about setting up an exchange program – he already has the possibility of two young people coming here from Germany, if we can find host families, including the possibility of reciprocity for our youth. Exciting possibilities!

Foundations and Behind the Scenes

- The major behind the scenes work this month has been staff transition...we're now ready to go with Shahan on board starting August 1st! My thanks to Joe Rubin for his work on the contract, and to the Search team and Board!
- Meeting ongoing with Annie about that transition too. I think we are well-placed for it to be fairly smooth, thankfully.
- I think my summer dates off and study leave will be, roughly. as follows:
 - Vacation July 18 – August 1 (2 weeks)
 - Study leave August 5 – 11 (1 week)

Those dates may shift very slightly. I may also take a few days study leave or vacation here and there – but it's likely to be a day or two here and there, and I won't be going far, so shouldn't drastically affect pastoral coverage or availability. I do hope to nip away for a week now and then during the year ahead.

Pastoral Care and Rites of Passage

A very lovely child dedication, and a major memorial service for an "outside" family that was well received. July and August may have time for a few pastoral calls – suggestions welcome on who could use a visit.

Happy summer everyone! Thank you for all you've brought to this gathering and our shared leadership. It's been a wonderful year.

Gratefully yours,

Rev. Bob

5. Social Justice Council Board Report

USH Leadership/Mentoring

The May Social Justice Council meeting began with a discussion about inviting members, especially new members, to participate through one on one meetings to discover their talents, interests and concerns.

West Hartford Pride

USH and the Universalist Church of WH will share a booth at the WH Pride Fest on Saturday, June 22. Volunteers needed to cover an hour or two at the booth – it's fun and this year a free USH t-shirt!

The Sum of Us

The final discussion session will take place at USH on Sunday, June 30, after the service.

GHIAA: MIRA Dissolution Authority/Environmental Justice

Several USH members were involved in the process to get state funding for tipping fees related to the dissolution of the MDA. The result was that a \$50mm fund set aside for remediation of the MDA trash facility, now closed, is not being depleted to pay tipping fees. The action team has been invited to the Center for Leadership and Justice's Annual Board Meeting this month to be recognized for our work with MIRA.

GHIAA Delegates Assembly – Thursday, June 20, 6:30-8:30pm, at the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry in Hartford.

A report will be shared from the recent House Meeting campaign and key themes that emerged from the shared stories will be presented. Research teams will be convened to continue the process of identifying the next slate of issues for action.

6. Community Within

1. Most of the ongoing program offerings will be on a "summer hiatus", resuming in the fall (or late summer). The monthly Saturday Sing-Along and the Magdalene Circle *will* meet in July and August, but other groups are on break. There will be a "Summer Gatherings" eNews supplement which can be referenced (and printed out) to show folks, be they regulars or visitors, what our current program offerings look like, so summer visitors can see that "hes, USH *does* have a yoga group"... or whatever their interest might be.

2. The ENews will be on a summer publication "lite" schedule during July and August. We are maintaining the regular weekly Wednesday releases through June, but following that, our publication dates will be:

July 10, July 24, August 7 and August 21.

Michael Michaud and Sue Smolski have been informed and will enlighten the worship associates. Regular weekly worship reminders, plus orders of service, will be issued with no schedule alterations. I expect the weekly ENews will resume September 4, before Ingathering. As always, pressing information can be communicated through eBlasts if warranted.

3. The end-of-year (more or less) picnic seems to have been successful, given the number of burgers and hot dogs consumed. We had loads of help, principally from Janice Newton, Rick Tsukada, John Bengtson, Jaz Perez-Acevedo, Nani Perez, Virginia deLima, Paul and Laura, Mike C, and a host of others (quite a few of whom of whom I'd never seen before). "If you feed them, they will come."

On that note, I thank you all for four interesting years. Peace out!

7. Guest Speaker Protocol -*submitted by Judy Sullivan* - June 11, 2024 – Copy below has been amended and approved by the USH Board:

The board welcomes all members to the monthly meetings either in person or via Zoom. There is always time allotted on the agenda for guest comments. If a non-board member requests time for a specific presentation, see suggested protocol below.

- Contact the minister or church operations manager to determine the committees, councils and/or staff which may be involved.
- Communicate with all appropriate committees, councils and staff prior to meeting with Board.
- Email a written outline of your presentation to the Board prior to the meeting
- Be seated in the designated guest seating at the meeting.
- Guest presentation will be scheduled as new business on the agenda with a 10 minute time limit unless additional time is requested by the Board.