

Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2019

Attendees

Board of Trustees: Al Himes – Chair, Linda Battaglini (by phone), Emily Goodin, Janice Morris, Hieu Nguyen, Chad Ohlandt, Andrea Ryon, Art Stevens, Warren Wright

Officers: Amy Shepherd – Secretary, Peter Vitaliano – Treasurer

Guests: Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley, Walter Clark - Ministerial Assistant, Tamara Srader - Chief Administrative Officer, LeeAnn Williams - Director of Lifespan and Religious Education

Open, Call to Order, Chalice Lighting, and Check-in

The Board Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. Art Stevens read a piece by Walt Whitman. Members, Officers, and guests each briefly shared a personal check in.

Consent Agenda (ATTACHMENT)

A Board member moved to pull the February minutes from the consent agenda to correct grammatical errors. It was moved to approve the Consent Agenda without the minutes, and the motion was seconded and APPROVED.

The technical edits to the January minutes were provided to the Secretary, and there was a motion to approve the January minutes as so amended. The motion was seconded and APPROVED.

Executive/Senior Minister Update

The Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley provided an update on the activities of the Senior Minister search committee, the listening sessions for the new Director of Music Ministries, and the activities around the annual giving campaign.

Operations Update

Chief Administrative Officer Tamar Srader updated the Board on safety issues in light of the recent events in Christchurch, New Zealand. Kol Ami and the Moroccan community have asked about safety and what the church policy is on guns in the building.

Staff considers safety issues on an ongoing basis, and Tamara noted that while in the past we have not had a policy on guns in the building, a policy prohibiting them (other than police officers and other authorized personnel) has been drafted. The Board discussed making sure that such a policy complied with state law.

Warren Wright volunteered to assist with finding someone to write a grant proposal to seek federal funds to improve security given the multi-religious use of the building. Rev. Terasa noted that there will be ongoing communications and an information session about the different religious and other groups that use the building.

Next Saturday there will be a budget meeting to discuss the history of the budget and issues related to the budget. This will provide an opportunity for information about the process before the pledge campaign ends, including what it will mean to existing programs if the budget remains at existing levels.

The Board Chair noted that the Board has discussed creating a budget subcommittee, with Peter Vitaliano (Treasurer), Andrea Ryon, and Denise Kappler. This group will work with Tamara and Rev. Terasa to present the budget information to the congregation. A Board member noted that it would be good to have a narrative around budget decisions and how those decisions impact the church's ability to meet its stated ends.

A Board member asked whether there should be another congregant added to the group. The Board Chair noted that this year is a trial run, including the development of clarity around governance issues related to budget as part of the Board's governance work. He also noted that this is an advisory group, it is not a decision-making group.

A Board member noted that the budget is not how the church makes decisions, but that the Board should establish objectives that meet the stated ends and clarify that those objectives drive decisions. Much of the budget is costs related to staff, so the narrative about priorities is really what the staff is doing and that should not be set in the budget.

If we have a broader discussion of ends, then it will lessen debates about the budget and how it sets the priorities and goals of the church. A Board member noted that the discussions of the ends will be part of the governance committee discussions.

Vision for Lifespan Religious Education

LeeAnn Williams, Director of Lifespan and Religious Education, provided an overview of the RE program, noting the preference of many congregants for a traditional, systematic approach to RE. She noted her hope for a collaborative relationship between RE and the ministry. She mentioned new areas that could be a focus that would help bring RE into the heart of church programming. LeeAnn pointed out that a strong indicator of the integration of RE in this way is non-parent participation in the RE program. We currently are at about 20% and would like to reach 40% or 50%. LeeAnn noted that there is a lot of flexibility about how these goals are achieved and mentioned more integration with programs like Chalice Theater. She also noted that there is an opportunity for an adult faith formation; however, the children's program is very resource and time intensive.

LeeAnn has been working with David McTaggart about creating an adult faith formation, starting to form a committee and exploring what type of programs could be offered. She noted that while this is a key priority, the children's RE program is very resource and time intensive. Rev. Terasa noted that on May 4th there would be an information session about what kinds of needs and desires members have for this new adult faith formation.

A Board member asked how the Board can support lifespan and religious education, and LeeAnn noted that positive word of mouth is key. It is important to encourage people to volunteer, while recognizing that supporting teachers and organizing the program takes significant resources, and the RE program is understaffed. This leads to the current positions being largely administrative, due to the volume of participants in the program. The DC metro area also has many pressures that kids face, and that the RE program must address.

A Board member noted that the Board should provide leadership in terms of objectives that could guide the RE and other programs, and then staff can use those as the guidestar to develop programs and justify changes. It would be good to have these objectives defined before we search for a new minister.

Rev. Terasa noted that an important piece of new programming and new initiatives is to identify how we can step in to support LeeAnn in the work she is doing and not just rely upon her continuing to fulfill these needs.

Monitoring Sub-Committee Update (ATTACHMENT)

Warren Wright noted the Board is working to develop the appropriate points to evaluate a Senior Minister. Fulfilling the Call is a UUA guideline about the types of things the Senior Minister should be doing. The other inputs to the evaluation are the treatment of staff, the immediate surroundings of the Senior Minister, and the day-to-day relationship with the staff.

As proposed, once a year the Board would develop a 1-2 page document that measures the performance of the Senior Minister against the Strategic Plan. This should be a two-way means of communication between the Senior Minister and the Board/evaluation committee. There should also be a continuing group of people who operate under a consistent process of being in conversation with the minister throughout the year. This group is the voice of the Board in these matters, and it should include the Board Chair. This process is designed to avoid surprises by the time the evaluation comes around.

A Board member noted that this piece would be an addition to a prior process that dealt with these issues related to ends and meanings, but now it is designed to be a yearly evaluation of the entire performance and ends and means. Rev. Terasa noted that everything cannot be on the minister to achieve, but that the Board should take some responsibility and these responsibilities should be part of an overall document that lays out the goals and objectives for the year.

Timing is also an issue, since the Board goals are set in September and this process is set to be done in April. A Board member noted the value of a one and three year plan so that progress over time can be evaluated. Rev. Terasa noted that the goals should be evaluated at every Board meeting, and the minister evaluation should be one small piece of that.

A member noted that the Board has limited bandwidth, and that it might be helpful to have more work done in deeper dives in committee meetings, then bring more back to the Board that is completed or closer to it. Warren and Linda will take back the Board discussion and work with Rev. Terasa on the next draft of the plan.

Strategic Plan

Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley raised the issue of how the Strategic plan relates to the work of the Board and the church, and specifically asked whether staff should be directing its work towards the Strategic Plan.

The Board discussed the Strategic Plan and how it could be used going forward. Rev. Terasa suggested a new meeting in June where the current Board hands off the Strategic Plan to the new Board and emphasize the areas where the Board should use it moving forward.

It was suggested that the Board meet the Tuesday after the June meeting to onboard the new Board and talk about which parts of the Strategic Plan to move forward. Overall, the Board should take ownership of the Strategic Plan and determine how to move it forward.

Communications Schedule

Emily Goodin noted that March was busy, April should be more manageable. A Board member asked about the communications plan regarding the 8th Principle due to concerns about whether it has the support that it needs. There was discussion about what the Board has done to convey support for the 8th Principle. The Board discussed its role in terms of the communications and the support it should convey for the 8th Principle.

Janice, Art and Emily volunteered to draft responses to the vote regardless of its outcome. Another Board member noted the importance of showing up at the meeting and voicing support. Chad volunteered to write up another statement of support.

Regular Meeting was Adjourned at 10:14pm.