

Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

May 21, 2019

Attendees

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

Officers: Amy Shepherd – Secretary, Peter Vitaliano – Treasurer

Guests: Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley – Interim Senior Minister, Walter Clark - Ministerial Assistant, Sarah Masters – Director of Congregational Life, Tamara Srader – Chief Administrative Officer

Other Attendees: Linda Lutes Corsoro, Bill Fogarty, Allen Keiswetter, Phyllis Liner, Bruce Rieder

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

Board Chair Al Himes called the meeting to order at 7:29pm. Rev. Terasa offered an opening reading. Members and guests went around and shared a brief reflection.

Consent Agenda

Linda Battaglini moved to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded and motion PASSED.

Executive/Senior Minister Update

Rev. Dr. Terasa Cooley provided a brief update, noting that things are going well.

Operations Update

Tamara Srader provided an operations update on the new bookkeeper, Jackson Njorobe, who has a church accounting background. She provided a brief overview of his transition into the role. Tamara also noted that we have submitted a grant proposal to receive funding for building security updates.

Tamara updated the Board on the sign in front of the church that was damaged in a car accident several weeks ago. She is talking to the insurance companies for all parties involved to work on resolving the cost of remedying the sign, and she noted that we received coverage for the lost revenue from the weekly plate for the day church was closed due to the accident.

Vision for Membership Development

Sarah Masters, Director of Congregational Life, provided the Board an update on membership development. She went over the Growth Report. She noted that the goals listed in the report were not met, and that membership is down for the last two years. She noted that some who

have dropped have mentioned the situation with Rev. Aaron, as well as the uncertainty of having three different ministers in a short period of time.

The numbers place us in the mid-range for a large size church, which may impact the Ministerial Search. While some members have joined recently, she noted that several families will be moving over the summer and their numbers could impact the search since some candidates may be looking for a smaller large church, and others may be seeking a very large church.

She discussed how UUCA categorizes individuals as "Friends" or "Newcomers" and "Inquiring Friends." If they have been an Inquiring Friend for 9 months, then they become a Friend.

Peter Vitaliano, Treasurer, noted the average pledge per pledged unit. Sarah said the information provided was based upon total pledge units, which is by family group and it includes friends and members.

Sarah noted she would run the report by member to determine what the average member is pledging so that the Board can analyze whether pledges reflect a strong engagement. The Board also discussed overall trends in other religious groups in the US and the UUA as a whole.

Sarah discussed some initiatives including Bring a Friend Sunday, the Cheerleaders idea (for the organizations that may use our church, we have someone come in and introduce the church, who we are and provide an introduction), the Young Adult group (40-50 regulars, 1/3 of whom are not otherwise involved in the church). There is a Spanish language covenant group. Beginning Connections covenant groups, covenant groups who are new UUs. Happy Hours, working on having groups sponsor them, which creates a core group that will come. First Friends program, that groups people to be mentors to newcomers. The Welcome room also continues to be popular.

Sarah also provided the Board with information on some newer initiatives, such as a table in Fellowship Hall that is about UUCA. Sunday Snacks, through which groups sponsor the snacks. Spring Fling – that was very successful. Staff sponsored a lunch for people that were furloughed. People with Disabilities Group. Virtual Soul Matters Group.

She also discussed retention – we had discussed a Good Shepherds program, where we would identify people who were likely to be slipping away and have people reach out to them. That turned into outreach to members who have never pledged before and reaching out to them both for pledges and to just reconnect to the church. Staff also has sent thank you notes to congregants.

The limitations on all these initiatives are budget, staff time, and volunteer leadership – the management of volunteers is key. Folks will volunteer, but you need someone to lead the volunteers.

They will be redesigning the Intro to UU class. It will be during second service and will have 4-5 modules. This makes it more accessible, they can meet more staff, etc. She will plan it this

summer and hopefully start it in the fall.

The Board discussed ways to improve volunteer leadership. It also discussed different interest or age groups and how to create groups that will provide connections between those groups and the church.

Quarterly Financial Report (ATTACHMENT)

Peter Vitaliano, Treasurer, noted that we are on track to realize an operating deficit this year that appears to be the standard deficit of the past few years. We have followed the Board Policy regarding Operating Reserves for most of the year this year. We are also generally close to the Board Policy for the Endowment Fund. We are in a steady state marginal financial situation that is not deteriorating. We need something that will give us a push or momentum in a different direction.

FY2019-20 Budget Approval for Congregational Vote

Peter Vitaliano presented the budget. Revenues are to be expected based on the past few years, and the expenses are conservative. This leaves us with a steady state, no-staff reduction budget.

The key question is how we present the budget to the congregation. We may need to present the mortgage as a separate item and then also address how we can do fundraising to address it. Alan Keiswetter talked about pulling together folks to do a capital campaign. Timing would need to be worked out, and it could also be helpful to the ministerial search committee if it was successful, or can show that we are trying to be proactive if it is not. The last capital campaign was 10 years ago.

Emily made a motion to adopt the budget as proposed, which was duly seconded. Chad wants to make the commitment to a capital campaign to pay down the mortgage. We will use Endowment money to cover the front costs of the campaign, but the proceeds go to pay down the mortgage.

Peter proposed that we need to have a more fleshed out idea that will be presented to the Congregations. Al proposed that we include in the Budget proposal a commitment to long range financial planning including a capital campaign. Emily mentioned a long-term financial planning committee that will study the options and the plan.

The motion was amended to be "Adopt the budget as proposed to include the formation of a committee for long term financial planning with the purpose of eliminating our structural debt and take other actions which will strengthen the financial foundation of the church. This would include a recommendation to the Board by October 2019 about undertaking a capital campaign." Art seconded the motion. The motion was APPROVED.

There will be two more congregational budget meetings before the Annual Meeting to discuss and present the budget, next Sunday and on Wednesday of next week.

Business Expense Reimbursement Policy (ATTACHMENT)

Due to time, this was deferred to July.

Proposed Establishment of Naming / Building Sub-Committee (ATTACHMENT)

During the year there have been requests to rename the Center after James Reeb. The Board discussed proposing this to the congregation in the context of looking at naming as a general matter.

Regular Meeting was Adjourned at 10:10 pm.