

# First Unitarian Society Board of Trustees Minutes

Date and Time: May 16, 2018 6:30 – 10 pm

Location: FUS, Gaebler Living Room

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## Attendees:

### Trustees:

- Joe Kremer, President (Governance Committee)
- Chip Quade, Secretary
- Maureen Friend (Personnel Committee)
- March Schweitzer (Finance Committee)
- Dorit Bergen
- Mike Lienau
- John McGevna

### Youth Advisors:

- Henry Hill-Gorman

### Clergy and Staff:

- Michael Schuler
- Kelly Crocker
- Monica Nolan

### Guests:

- Equity team members Sally Lehner and Robin Lowney Lankton
- Dave Weber, FUS representative on restoration project

Unable to attend: Alison Cotter, Youth Advisor

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Materials: April Board Meeting Minutes; Equity Hiring Materials; Financial Oversight Options; Notes from May 6, 2018 Budget Forum; Citizens Climate Lobby's Wisconsin Leaders Letter

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## Current Vision of Ministry:

- Within us, enhance opportunities for spiritual, intellectual, and personal growth
  - Among us, nurture members in all stages of life and commit to build deeper connections
  - Beyond us, embody our UU principles in the larger community as we engage in outreach, service, advocacy, and activism
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## Six-month Board Focal Points:

- Governance during the interim period
  - Communication
  - Radical hospitality
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## Opening reading

*In Our Circle Again*, by Shari Woodbury.

## Spiritual deepening

*A Contribution to Statistics*, by Wislawa Szymborska – Of the thoughts articulated in this piece, how many do we find to be consistent with our own experience?

## Consent agenda

Minutes from the 4/25/18 Board meeting were approved by consent, with the correction from Monica regarding the forum for gathering input about the proposed Restricted Donations policy.

## **Considering equity in hiring processes**

Robin Lowney Lankton and Sally Lehner, from the Equity Ministry Team, brought to the Board a discussion topic and a recommendation. They see an opportunity for FUS to put its faith into action, and align its values with our hiring practices, policies, and procedures. The topics are:

- Diversity: Who's represented in our numbers?
- Inclusion: Do people feel welcome?
- Equity: What does it mean to treat everyone equitably, and how would we do that – knowing that one size doesn't fit all, because we're not always starting from the same place?

The Equity Team proposes that FUS engage with the YWCA to go through a three-year program with them on "Creating Equitable Organizations." Among the questions that the proposed engagement is meant to address:

- What things can we do to improve the way we're a place that recruits diverse candidates?
- How can we create systems that are made to promote equity?
- How would people from different backgrounds experience our space?
- Is equity in hiring something that the Board would like search committees to consider?

The program involves, among other things: An audit (an independent assessment of the current state); Trainings and workshops; A change team, with the train-the-trainer model. The proposed change team would be a combination of the Board, the Equity Ministry Team, the staff, and members of the congregation, totaling 20 people who can then carry the message outward. The cost is \$30,000 over three years. Discussion:

*What kind of experience do the program staff have in working with religious organizations?*

We would be the first congregation that the local Y has worked with. The program manager is available to answer questions. She is confident that, they work with so many different types of organizations, that we would fit within the program.

*Is this a flat fee for an organization, no matter its size? Or would it be tailored to a relatively small non-profit with a limited budget? We're smaller than many organizations that would do this.*

There are different rates. This is the non-profit rate.

*What parts could be customized?*

There are opportunities to customize.

*What could apply to the congregation?*

Different parts apply to different constituencies. This is partly about hiring, and also about creating a diverse, equitable culture.

*How would we fund it?*

Although the Foundation has a \$200,000 fund for outreach and social justice, drawing off of the principal from those funds is impossible.

What about recruiting 10 to 15 different churches who would be interested in participating in a joint program, geared toward religious organizations, and we all split the fee?

Although less than \$1000/month sounds like it's not much, in our budget it's massive. In addition, we're trying to move our staff up to salaries that are consistent with UUA guidelines. We've committed as a board to do that. Currently we're not able to fund salaries at the level we would like. (The tightness of the budget is surprising even to some Board members.) Given this, it will be a challenge to identify the funding for the YWCA proposal.

*If we just did the audit, how much would that cost?*

Kelly and Monica will meet with Naomi (the program director) in June. We can explore this topic at that time.

*Are there funds available from the UUA?*

No – the UUA is not flush with cash. And because we're not a fair share congregation, we're not eligible for any grants from the UUA.

*Should the Equity Ministry Team look into fundraising?*

The team can consider funding models, but should not recruit donor funds at this time.

*Can we form a relationship with the YWCA and look at this issue in future years?*

Experience shows that long-term sustainable change begins with the three-year collaboration. However, if we cannot afford to start the three-year collaboration now, we need to consider a variety of options for moving forward.

*Is it correct to assume that a religious congregation is close enough to a non-profit that we would actually fit into that model?*

*Given that a Board term is three years, how do we fit that into the process of committing to change in this three-year program?*

*Are there any next steps for the Equity Ministry Team at this time?*

Let's have Monica and Kelly meet with Naomi, and we'll go from there.

**Conclusions: Monica and Kelly will sit down with Naomi. A question for her will be: Looking at the half day workshop for up to 25 people – If we have X staff for the half-day, who would she suggest for filling the additional seats up to 25? Joe asks Monica and Kelly to report back to the Board.**

## **Update on FUS restoration projects**

A test patch is in place on the roof. Soon, a preservation architect will give us a determination about whether it's consistent with preservation principles. Fortunately for us, Epic Systems has done a wonderful job of nurturing the copper roofing business in Dane County.

We can think of this work as two projects: (1) Doing the loggia roof, and (2) Figuring out the engineering of the auditorium roof, which blends into redoing the prow. A question: How much weight is the glass in the prow supporting? Perhaps we ought to replace the prow before redoing the roof. And as we know, not only is the roof collapsing, but the infamous J truss is also rotating.

Our philosophy: The end result should look as it's intended to look. Along the way, we don't have to execute it all in the way that Mr. Wright intended.

At this point we're not anticipating time or cost overruns.

## **Update on interim minister hire**

Email went out today about Doug Wadkins, our Interim hire. There will be a full page in the June newsletter from the Search Task Force. Doug himself will write an article for the July newsletter. Doug starts working here July 15th.

## **Changing policy from Audit to Review or Compilation**

There are different degrees of financial oversight. Audits are the highest degree. Next, below that, is *review*. Below that is a year-end report, or *compilation*.

Our current policy: Every five years we need to do an audit. Currently, accountants are managing our finances. Monica, the accountants, and the Finance Committee believe that an audit is overkill. Back when we had a volunteer treasurer, an audit made sense. The cost of an audit is \$7500, the cost for review is \$4000. We included \$4000 for review in the budget for next year.

March moved that we change our policy to require a review every five years. Mike seconded.

In the discussion that followed, Joe noted that the best fiduciary oversight occurs with an audit, and having an auditor shifts some of the financial liability from us to someone else. Joe also noted that the difference in cost between a review and an audit (\$3500), averaged over five years, is \$700 per year. Other discussion points: (1) No one and nothing requires an audit, except our own policy. Summit Credit Union requires a compilation. (2) This doesn't preclude the option of doing an audit if we ever feel that it's necessary.

On a vote, the motion passed with four members in favor, two opposing (Joe and Chip), and one abstention (Dorit).

## **Proposed policy on donations to restricted or designated funds**

Recently the Finance Committee recommended a new policy that would prohibit the creation of a new Restricted or Designated Fund unless the amount of the donation equaled

1% or more of the FUS budget and unless the Board approved the donation. In April, the Board discussed this recommendation but did not vote on it.

We want to get away from situations where we're deviating from the parish-approved budget. A benefit of the proposed policy is that it brings a conversation about our priorities back to a democratic space. It re-centers us, so we don't just have individual donors making decisions. An individualistic mindset versus a community mindset: this speaks to a deeper vision of the community that we want to be. It's taking a moral stand on how we make decisions as a community.

If we implement this policy, would we not be able to have a bunch of members of the congregation who are eager to support a particular cause? If we face an immediate need and people want to contribute to it, would this policy prohibit that? It will always be an option for a donor to give money to the general operating fund, with no restriction. FUS can accept donations without promising to use them in a particular way – without creating an obligation. And we can always accept donations that feed into an existing budget line, such as a “general repairs line” – again, without creating an obligation to spend the money a particular way.

In-kind or material gifts, such as the organ for the Atrium Auditorium, already are subject to Board approval.

Some questions to explore:

- If someone wants to make a donation, how easy will it be to explain this policy to the member? Will it be interpreted as: “Democratic? No, this is the *opposite* of democratic, because the elites have decided on this.”
- Maybe: Buckets (line items in the budget) that are directly related to the visions of ministry? A question for the Finance Committee?

The Board decided against voting on this proposed policy. If this or a related policy proposal comes to the Board again, March would like to see that the proposal takes into consideration the impact on staff time as FUS works to achieve the donor's designated objective.

## 2018-19 Parish budget

In the interval since the May 20th Parish Meeting, our incoming Interim Senior Minister negotiated for increased reimbursement for professional fees that he expects to incur in the process of learning about this congregation. Accordingly, a new proposed budget increases personnel expenses by \$10,000 – and transfers an equivalent amount from the designated/restricted fund to balance the budget.

The Equity Ministry Team members and the Board continued their discussion of whether and how to fund the YWCA program. It emerged that stakeholders do not share a consistent understanding of “all the ways to get things done around here.” Each ministry team includes a staff member from a program area that has its budget. Ideally, ministry teams provide input into the budget process through staff members. In theory, the Budget Forum is an exchange of information, with a proposal to the congregation and input from the congregation.

But how can we engage with members who come up with ideas to do things that are outside of the current budget? Should the Budget Forum happen earlier in the planning

cycle? How are we going to deal with the question before us at this time, about the YWCA proposal? How will we plan to deal with situations like this in the future?

The Board decided not to amend the new proposed budget at this time to include funding for the YWCA proposal. Joe moved that we accept the new proposed budget, including the shifting of the \$10,000 to cover the expenses for the Interim Minister. Dorit seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board will disseminate information at the Parish Meeting that recognizes we've had this discussion and that we are committing to try to move forward, both with the YWCA program and with clarifying "how we get things done around here." On that latter topic, the board would like to figure out a way to figure out, in the middle of the budget cycle, how to get some things going without having to wait until the next budget cycle.

## **Process for congregation-wide signing of petitions**

Historically, we have had a pretty firm conviction on the part of the congregation to not introduce parish resolutions regarding social justice. At times when such resolutions were contentious and divisive, FUS thought it best to avoid the risk of alienating parts of the congregation.

If we were to move toward introducing such resolutions, we would want to have a way to ensure that we all share a good understanding of the issues, and that we vet the issues thoroughly. Currently, we do not have a process for vetting such issues and introducing such resolutions. In addition, we don't want to risk jeopardizing our tax-exempt status.

Our recent Sanctuary effort is an example of how we took a thorough approach to vetting an issue when the situation required it. We took that approach because the Sanctuary work committed the congregation to devoting significant resources and energy.

At this time, we are not actively looking to establish a procedure for evaluating resolutions and putting them forth to the congregation. It's not a high enough priority right now. Without an approved procedure, we will avoid bringing social justice resolutions to the parish so as not to create a precedent that would put us into a bind at some future date.

In the meantime, the Board of Trustees can vote its approval of a resolution. Bernie Tennis, a longtime FUS member who is also a member of the Citizens Climate Lobby, recently asked whether the Board would consider signing a letter that calls for Congressional responses to Wisconsin climate change impacts. Chip moved that the Board of Trustees of the First Unitarian Society of Madison sign the Wisconsin Leaders letter from the non-profit, non-partisan Citizens Climate Lobby, and in so doing, join forces with leaders throughout the state to call for a Congressional response to Wisconsin climate change impacts. Dorit seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board asks the Governance Committee to consider the many things on its to-do list and correctly prioritize the creation of a procedure for bringing social justice resolutions to the parish.

## **FUS Board meeting restrictions on food/beverages for snack breaks**

Maureen, Dorit, and Mike will confer about this and bring their thoughts back to the Board.

## **Thandeka follow-up**

During her consultancy with us, the Reverend Dr. Thandeka led us through a reflection and evaluation process and recommended that we consider continuing it on an ongoing basis. While the reflection and evaluation were useful during the consulting engagement, we are not feeling a strong need to continue with it each month.

### **Other discussions**

The Cabaret planning team put in lots of work on the planning. In particular, Florence, Brittany, Tom, and Dan Carnes went above and beyond in their effort and cheerfulness. And Molly put in a lot of time too. The Board would like to find a way to express its gratitude.

Similarly, we should thank the Interim Task Force. And have we publicly thanked the Music Search Committee? We can recognize all three groups at the Parish Meeting, and also thank each group directly.

### **Closing reading**

#### ***Assignments for next meeting***

Reading and snack: Michael.