

Unitarian Society of New Haven
Minutes of the Board Retreat Meeting of the Board of Trustees
August 14, 2011

Board Members Present: Gregg Burton; Patricia Duff; Gil Belaval; Sarah Berke; Thea Bourke-Martin; Alan Price; Jesse Whitehead

Board Members Absent: Sue Linsley; Lisa Anderson; Sandra Frawley; Larry Rizzolo;

Also Present: Kathleen McTigue; Marion Visel; Tansy Birenbaum.

T. Bourke called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m. and G. Burton recorded the minutes. A quorum of Board Members was present, and the meeting proceeded with T. Bourke presiding.

Agenda

T. Bourke reviewed the agenda for the meeting and gave a quick recap of the preparation meeting on 8/13.

Introduction of Stewardship Working Group

Representatives of the Endowment, Canvass and Finance Committees have been meeting regularly as a Stewardship Working Group in order to coordinate their efforts to address the current financial issues.

Report from Endowment Committee

Carol Cheney presented the report from the endowment committee.

- There are five members of the committee: Carol Cheney (chair); Bob Congdon; Brian Eisner; Mark Law; Tom Wheel. MaryBeth Congdon is also assisting the endowment committee in its work. The committee meets monthly.
- The endowment committee is focused on expanding legacy giving at USNH.
- To facilitate the consistent efforts required over long periods of time to facilitate legacy giving, the committee is attempting to create a system to ensure that information is handed down to successive committee members.

- The committee is planning the formation of a legacy society group to promote and support endowment giving. Members of the group would include people pledging to make a legacy gift or exhibiting a serious intent to do so.
- The committee is evaluating possible changes to the bylaws governing the endowment committee in order to allow for more efficient operation and coordination of efforts with other finance-related committees

Report from Canvass Committee

Joni Messner presented the report of the canvass committee.

- Committee members: Karen Swan (chair); Joni Messner; John Pollack; Terry Vidal; Holy Hawkins; Amy Stevens; Renee Nevarra; Tracy Kindler; Jeremy Hill
- Committee reports an increase in pledge units over the last two years.
- Committee believes that the Lovefest concept has improved the sense of community around canvass.
- The committee proposes that the congregation be challenged to meet the financial needs of the congregation by suspending furloughs, approving a deficit budget and meeting the shortfall with expanded fundraising/canvass efforts.
- Canvass Committee is working with Finance Committee to develop a calendar timetable for developing a canvass goal. Plan is to have a dream 2012-2013 budget by the end of September then canvassing with a goal to complete canvass by March.

Report from Finance Committee

Gina LaRoche presented the report of the finance committee.

- Committee Members: Jeremy Hill (chair); Sandy Frawley (ex officio); Gina LaRoche; Suzanne LaGarde and Susan Godshall. Committee is planning to meet on a monthly basis rather than only at the time the budget is formulated.
- Finance Committee wishes to change the relationship of finance committee and the board to be a strategic partnership rather than simply to perform the task of creating a budget and putting it to a vote.
- Finance Committee is focused on improvements to cash management and fiscal management.
- Committee supports the idea of suspending furloughs and seeking approval of a deficit budget, but the committee but needs to analyze information in greater detail to make a formal recommendation.
- There is interest among members of the finance committee to consider a multiyear pledge campaign in future fiscal years.

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Discussion and Questions of Stewardship Working Group Committees

Questions of the board members were asked and answered. Discussion included the following:

- Members of the stewardship working group expressed concern about a separate fundraising committee since the activities of the group committees are also “fundraising” in the broad sense. Concerns were also raised about the coordination of fundraising committee events that could pull people and resources from other stewardship activities.
- Stewardship working group feels that efforts must be made to transform the way that the congregation thinks about finances.
- Query whether the Stewardship Working Group should continue meeting.

The board plans to decide by the end of the retreat meeting whether to pursue the Stewardship Working Group’s proposal to submit a deficit budget. If so, Stewardship Working Group would provide an action plan for a deficit budget by early October.

ACTION ITEM: Board to decide whether to make further inquiry into deficit budget proposal. (*See Discussion of Financial Challenges below*)

Recess for Lunch

The meeting was recessed for lunch at 1:00 p.m. The meeting was called back to order by T. Bourke at 2:00 p.m. Attendance remained unchanged. A quorum of Board Members was present and the meeting proceeded with T. Bourke presiding.

Board Goals

The board reviewed the draft goals formulated by from the discussion of the board at its June 22, 2011 meeting. Through the course of the discussion, the following goals were proposed:

Vision: To help people and families experience a vibrant spiritual community that transforms people’s lives and makes a difference in the world around us.

1. Engage and serve the congregation to deepen connections & community
2. Welcome and grow new members
3. Shift our financial culture to generosity and stewardship

4. Build right relations and sustain them with clear communication & direction
5. Live our values through social justice and service

Concerns were raised about how the goals affect the work of the staff and what they are expected to do in furtherance of the goals. Staff members are willing to provide a report of the programs and efforts currently in place with respect to each of the goals.

The board determined that the next steps are to determine the current activities being undertaken with respect to each of the goals, from which the board will identify the specific efforts and quantitative metrics for each.

ACTION ITEM: Report on current activities under each goal to be prepared for 9/8 Board Meeting as follows: #1- M. Visel; #2- K. McTigue; #3- Stewardship Working Group plan; #4- T. Bourke; #5- Social Justice Council

Discussion of Fundraising Committee Status

T. Bourke provided an update on the reconstitution of the fundraising committee. A permanent chairperson has not been identified. The board discussed whether it is committed to the reconstitution of the fundraising committee.

ACTION ITEM: Recruitment of a chairperson to continue; the board will revisit action on the fundraising committee at its 9/8 meeting depending on the outcome of recruitment efforts.

Discussion of Financial Challenges

The board discussed whether to pursue the proposal to submit a deficit budget.

Discussion included the following:

- Concerns were raised about whether cash reserves are sufficient to meet deficits if fundraising efforts fail to fill the gap.
- Concerns were raised about the uncertainty for the staff until a final decision is made about whether or not furloughs will be required if the congregation is unable to fill the budget deficit through increased fundraising effort.
- Discussion of conceptual issue of whether it is desirable to raise funds from outside the congregation in order to meet basic operational financial needs or whether the congregation should meet these needs with member contributions.
- Noted that outside fundraising events have been a part of the congregation's history

There was consensus among the board to ask the Stewardship Working Group to determine whether a deficit budget is financially feasible and to develop a plan to be submitted to the board

ACTION ITEM: Stewardship Working Group to analyze deficit budget feasibility and to submit a plan for deficit budget and efforts to fund the deficit for consideration by the board at its 9/8 meeting.

Calendaring Guidelines

Concern was raised that we currently lack consistent guidelines to prioritize requests to use building space. There are a number of event and other space requests from USNH groups and rental users that sometimes present conflicts.

The following guidelines were proposed:

- Events of 25 people or more must be scheduled through the administrator and must be sponsored by a committee, task force, staff member or the board.
- Requests by USNH groups submitted before 9/15 will be held until that date and then calendared with priority over USNH group requests submitted after 9/15.
- Conflicts are to be resolved by affording priority to events in the following order (highest to lowest priority): (1) rentals over \$X, where \$X is the rental rate for the sanctuary for 3 hours; (2) board requests; (3) committees and task forces that don't already have an event in the requested month; and (4) committees and task forces that already have an event in that month
- If scheduled events of the board, a committee or task force conflict with a request for a rental, the administrator will contact the event sponsor to request that the event be rescheduled to accommodate the rental, but the sponsor will not be required to reschedule.

MOTION by S. Berke: to adopt the proposed calendar guidelines.

Seconded and passed without dissent.

The board briefly discussed use of facilities by the Turnpike Players and expects to receive a request from the group for dates that the group wishes to use the social hall for its spring production. The board also noted that several non-USNH groups (but whose membership includes one or more USNH members) have historically been allowed to use building space at no charge and noted that consideration should be given to whether that practice should continue given the building costs incurred by USNH in doing so.

The board discussed concerns raised about inaccuracies in the USNH.org calendar. The board expects the guidelines to assist in the calendaring process and will communicate any ongoing issues with calendar management to K. McTigue.

Schedule for Meetings and Activities of the Board

It was noted that the board is scheduled to meet at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of each month. The board agreed by consensus to hold a discussion, or generative, meeting during months in which there are no events scheduled that the board is strongly encouraged to attend. By written vote, a majority voted to hold such second meeting on the 4th Thursday of months in which there is not an event that board is expected to attend.

T. Bourke reviewed the scheduled events for the coming congregational year.

September – Board Meeting 9/8; Committee Day 9/18; Anti Racism Workshop 9/24

October – Board Meeting 10/13; Board Meeting 10/27

November – Congregational Meeting (TBD by the board); Board Meeting 11/10

December – Board Meeting 12/8

January – Board Meeting 1/12; Board Meeting 1/26

February – Finance month - stewardship meeting (TBD); Board Meeting 2/9

March – Board Meeting 3/8; Board Meeting 3/22

April – Board Meeting 4/12;

May – Board Meeting 5/10; Board Meeting 5/24 *OR* proposed Volunteer Appreciation Event (proposed/TBD)

June – Congregational meeting (TBD by the board); Board Meeting 6/14

Director of Religious Education Search

T. Bourke read a proposed motion to form a search committee based on the previously approved recruitment efforts. This proposal is also intended to resolve confusion that resulted from misunderstandings regarding the prior board charge regarding the DRE search. The board discussed the proposal, which included the following:

- concerns were raised about whether the search committee is too large
- discussion of the need to ensure that representatives of the various religious education groups are represented on the committee
- the board discussed the desirability of having the same committee members involved in each in person interview.

MOTION by A. Price: that the Board hereby approves the appointment of the following USNH members to the Search Committee for a new leader of the Religious Education programs at USNH:

Nancy Apfel (current CYRE asst. director)

Jill Casertano (former RE leader)

Alexandria Garino (YRUU)

Dan Gelperin (ARE)

David Jones (former YAC and now YRUU)

Joe Lesiak

Bruce Levison

Erika Schroth

Sarah Strong

Kathleen McTigue

Charge: The Search Committee named by the USNH Board of Trustees is charged to search for a leader for the USNH religious education program, in accordance with the job description and salary package developed by the Personnel Committee (in consultation with the RE committees and with approval from the board). The Search Committee's recommendation for a candidate will be presented to the Board for a vote in the spring of 2012 (April or May) and the selected candidate will begin work in August of 2012. Regular progress reports on the work of the Search Committee will be presented to the Board through the fall and winter months (2011-12).

The board desires that the same committee members participate in all in person interviews and that the group of committee members conducting such in person interviews include representatives of ARE, CYRE, YRUU and teachers.

Seconded and passed without dissent.

MOTION by S. Berke: that the Board hereby appoints David Jones as chairperson of the Search Committee.

Seconded and passed without dissent.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.