

Minutes – December 15, 2010
Operations Council
First Unitarian Society in Newton

Members attending: Pat Rohan (Ch), Jeannie Chaisson, Laurel Farnsworth, Anne Hess-Mahan, and Kim Shanks. Alan Cody arrived later in the meeting.

Also attending: Rev. Erin Splaine, Mr. Barb Greve, and Naomi Olson.

1. Opening Words: Jeannie read some inspiring words and led the group in reciting its covenant together.

2. Presentation: Naomi Olson, Chair of Denominational Affairs and the Services Auction made a presentation about activities of the two committees.

Denominational Affairs: Naomi took over the chairmanship in the middle of last year, following Bob Zeeb's death; prior to that she had a leadership role in the congregation's discussion about the ethical eating issue. To date, Naomi has convened a meeting of all involved, including reps to Mass. Bay District, UUSC, UU Urban Ministry, and 2010 General Assembly. Naomi described the status of the group as in the midst of brainstorming and getting going as a committee. She mentioned that it would be good to have a formal youth involvement with the committee, as many of our youth are plugged in to denominational matters.

With regard to General Assembly, Naomi would like to consider new ways for representatives to share information from GA with the congregation. She mentioned two issues about GA: a) Affordability, i.e. only those with ample time and money are able to attend and represent FUSN; and b) the timing of FUSN's annual meeting election is a bad fit with the GA schedule.

With regard to the UUA Social Witness Process, Naomi explained that the current Study/Action Issue regarding Ethical Eating is underway (a brief discussion ensued about the formal process for submitting FUSN's comments; Pat agreed that the Steering Committee will take it up to make sure that the requirements are met). The next Study/Action Issue will be an immigration topic, and Patsy Leibensperger and Clare Kastner will lead the congregational discussion.

Naomi raised 2 issues for future consideration: a) Whether the congregation should consider designating a person to coordinate the Study/Action Issues; and b) How we can increase the Society's ties to the UUA, and thus benefit more from the relationship.

Looking forward, Naomi noted that a service in January will involve denominational identity. As well, the congregation will be able to participate in a UUA-sponsored "Common Read" of "The Death of Josseline: Immigration Stories from the Arizona-Mexico Borderlands."

Service Auction: The 2011 committee is up and running, with three new members. It functions both as a fundraiser and a community-building event. Scheduled for Saturday January 22, with a "Roaring Twenties" theme, solicitation of donations is now underway. The fundraising goal is \$15,000. Parking was mentioned as a challenge. Naomi indicated that this will be her final year to serve as chair.

3. Committee Updates:

Green Sanctuary: Laurel reported that the group felt that recycling worked out very well at the recent Holiday Fair.

Memorials: Laurel stated that a garden initiative is being planned for the spring. As well, the group is considering the nature of future obligations associated with use of memorial niches.

Finance Committee: Laurel reported that the budget process begins soon, with the long-term forecast being presented by the Finance Committee in January. Laurel will present the Building and Grounds proposed budget in January too. Someone mentioned that Religious Education's proposed budget is scheduled for February.

Holiday Fair: Pat reported that it took in about \$16,900.

Membership: Pat explained that the search continues for the Membership Coordinator part-time position. It was re-posted and additional applications were received. Two interviews are scheduled for next week.

Mass. Bay District: Pat was among 5 FUSN attendees at the recent session, "Got Purpose? Part II."

Social Action: Jeannie reported that the Task Force continues to explore what a social Action Council will look like. The group is working on a proposal that reflects the feedback it has received. The Alternative Gift Fair was well attended and successful, bringing in \$5800. As well, one member donated \$3000 to one of the organizations (this is in addition to the foregoing tally).

Music Committee: Jeannie noted that Anne Watson-Born has provided a written report, which has been distributed to Operations Council members.

Worship Committee: Jeannie suggested that the role of the committee merits discussion. As of now, the chair is doing most of the work. The Board of Trustees has agreed to the committee's request for a lay-led service about the Board's role.

Communications: Anne noted that she has a meeting scheduled with Nancy DuVergne Smith this weekend. Anne has joined Facebook in order to access FUSN's Page. It was mentioned that Pat recently wrote up an information sheet about the existing process for submission of items to the newsletter and order of service.

Religious Education: Kim stated that the RE Council has volunteered to assist the DLRE Search Committee in the evaluation phase, which is expected to include both a survey and smaller group discussions. The Council has asked Barb to present comments about FUSN's program at the January meeting; and Barb mentioned his plan to present much of the substance in a January 23 sermon. Barb announced that the Coming of Age graduation service is scheduled for Saturday May 14, with the Youth Group service the following day. This new arrangement will allow COA graduates to be welcomed to Youth Group the day after their graduation.

4. Budget Tracking: Prior to the meeting, Finance Chair Karen Bottar provided a monthly budget tracking report. A brief discussion took place about the report, with Laurel noting that the budget is slightly "over" because of the office furniture expenditure. A conversation took place about the reason that the Operations Council budget is reported as "over," and Pat agreed to look into the matter.

5. Report on Trustees' Meeting: Jeannie gave an oral report on the 12/14 meeting, as follows:

Canvass: The upshot is that it is valuable to reach for goals and that visioning can be done in a way that doesn't make premature commitments. Adrian Bishop has agreed to serve as co-chair.

Governance documents: Susan Bartlett and Gordon Moriarty will spearhead. The goal is to get policies into good order by the end of the year so that by-law amendments can proceed next year.

Harvard U. conflict resolution: The project will go ahead next semester.

Ministerial Start Up Workshop: The facilitated discussion, scheduled for February 5, will involve current leadership, former board chairs, and the former Treasurer.

"Got Purpose, Part II": Phil Davis attended the recent Mass. Bay session; he did not get the take-away he hoped for.

6. Plans for 1/8 meeting with committee chairs: Pat had asked committee chairs for suggested agenda items but has yet to receive any. He mentioned he would include a) committee fair, and b) upcoming governance changes. Laurel suggested including an item about methods for cross-committee communications. Naomi Olson suggested information about the Leadership Development Committee. Laurel offered to bring food for the meeting.

7. New Item: Funding for lay ministers' training: Erin brought up a new item, asking whether there is a way to fund attendance by up to eight Lay Ministers at upcoming Mass. Bay District pastoral care training. FUSN's Lay Ministers have an annual budget of only \$200. The Board of Trustees has indicated a willingness to provide \$100 from its budget.

Motion: Laurel moved that the Operations Council approve expenditure up to \$450 for the workshop registration, and that it be charged to the Lay Ministers' line item. Alan seconded.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

In the course of this item, Erin and several members spoke to the long-term advantages of including a line item for such workshops/training in the annual budget.

Also in the course of this item, a conversation arose about the practices for tracking "overages" that are approved by the Operations Council. Alan clarified that such items are not actually charged to the contingency, and he agreed to create a list tracking the approved "overages."

8. Electronic vote noted for the Record: Pat noted that the Minutes for the November 17 meeting were approved by email vote.

9. Thank You's: Pat will send notes to Lesley Sneddon and Sheila Ardery for their leadership of the Holiday Fair. Jeannie will thank Josie Green, Lynn Holbein and Sharon Sisskind for spearheading the Alternative Gift Fair. Laurel will thank Doris Lewis and the Green Sanctuary Committee for the Solstice Service. Pat will arrange for a newsletter item thanking all the names mentioned above

10. Safe Congregation Policy: Pat briefed the group that he and Erin discussed the timing of this “to do” item, and decided it will be a priority for next year.

11. Hearing Assist Devices: Jeannie indicated that we now have 11 devices. Given that they get regular use, Jeannie proposed buying additional devices. Laurel advised that they cost about \$125 each. In response to a question about a funding source, Laurel recalled that they were originally purchased under the Repairs/Electrical line item.

Motion: Jeannie moved to spend \$500 for purchase of hearing devices, and to charge the purchase to the Electrical line in the Repairs budget. Anne seconded.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

12. Election of vice-chair: Pat noted that the position has been absent since the resignation of Carla Erb from the Council. Pat nominated Laurel, and she was so elected by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Gayle Smalley, Assistant Clerk