

Minutes – January 19, 2011
Operations Council
First Unitarian Society in Newton

Members attending: Pat Rohan (Ch), Alan Cody, Laurel Farnsworth, Anne Hess-Mahan, Kim Shanks. Jeannie Chaisson arrived during agenda item #2.

Also attending: Mr. Barb Greve; Barbara Bates, Jeff Baker, Kevin McCormick and Karen Bottar were present for part of the meeting.

1. Opening Words: Anne read some inspiring words by Gandhi, and led the group in reciting its covenant together.

2. Update: Leadership Development Committee (“LDC”): Pat introduced Jeff Baker and Barbara Bates, explaining that the current trial governance structure includes the LDC, whose job is to identify leaders. LDC reports to the Board. A long-term goal would have the LDC taking over the work both of the Nominating Committee and Committee on Committees.

Jeff and Barbara presented an update and led a discussion, which included the following points:

- LDC would like to increase committee membership.
- LDC’s Charter, approved by the Board in May, sets out five leadership development duties, listed below in descending order of priority. For the remainder of this year, LDC is putting its efforts to the first 2 duties.
- DUTY 1: DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT AN ANNUAL PLAN, IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES, LINKED TO FUSN’S PURPOSE AND CURRENT INITIATIVES OF THE BOARD;
- DUTY 2: DESIGN PROCESS TO RECRUIT AND DEVELOP PROMISING LAY LEADERS;
- DUTY 3: DEVELOP LAY LEADER SUPPORT PROGRAM;
- DUTY 4: WORK WITH OTHER COMMITTEES; AND
- DUTY 5: MAINTAIN LENDING LIBRARY OF MATERIALS RELATIVE TO LEADERSHIP.
- In a fit organization, sustaining leadership is a responsibility of leadership, i.e. developing leaders to sustain the organization. Barbara noted that by its nature, leadership is a mindset, not a position. She noted the goal of developing a broader pipeline of leaders. Jeff explained that a developmental plan will be centered around equipping leaders with a skill set to develop other leaders. He noted that the approach also will help leaders work together. Story-telling was described as an example of a recruitment skill.
- Both Barbara and Alan spoke about the enriching quality of receiving mentoring and training, and the spiritual element thereof.
- Alan raised the question of whether LDC would address leadership capacity, i.e. whether we have the capacity to support the more complex governance model. Laurel expressed concern about availability of leaders, noting that parents of young children are often unavailable. She also mentioned that some positions, e.g. Treasurer, required certain skills that must be developed outside of FUSN.
- Jeff inquired about setting up workshops with the Ops Council, for 2 – 3 hours per month. Several members expressed doubts that their schedules would allow for such a schedule.

3. Committee Updates:

Denominational Affairs: Anne reported that Naomi Olson met with the Board about the process for submitting to the UUA the comments on the ethical eating issue.

Communications: Anne stated that Nancy Duvergne Smith has asked committee chairs to provide updates, for posting on the website.

Social Action: Alan reported that the accounting is complete for the Alternate Gift Fair; he and Fran have reconciled the checkbook, and he is pleased that we have solid and detailed documentation about the various donations and distributions.

Building and Grounds: Laurel reported about a recent meeting with the organ consultant. It appears that the initial organ work will include blocking windows, upgrading blower, and monitoring humidity and conditions.

Services Auction: Pat reminded members that it is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 22.

Membership: Pat noted that things are going well. Regarding the search for a Membership Coordinator, no recommendation has been made yet.

Fellowship Dinner: Pat announced that it's scheduled for Saturday, March 12.

4. Recent committee Chair meeting – “Takeaways”: The January 8 meeting with committee chairs was discussed. All agreed there was great attendance. It was a strong meeting, which arrived at three decisions: A) A Committee Fair will not be held this year; B) Committees seeking volunteers are urged to put such a notice on the website; and C) there was a consensus that two such meetings per year of the group will be about right. A brief discussion ensued among Ops Council members about the schedule for two meetings, with Laurel suggesting early November and late January/early February.

Pat noted that there have been requests from committee chairs about increasing the Ops Council's transparency. A discussion considered the ability to publish the agenda in advance, especially given the likelihood that the agenda will change. Jeannie suggested that it can be published with known items and Pat indicated that he would do so as a trial. Distribution of the minutes to committee chairs was also considered; Ops Council members agreed to a plan for emailing them to the chairs at the same time they are posted to the website.

5. Report on Trustees' Meeting: Pat reported on two items from the January 11 meeting: A) Jeff Baker reported to the Board about the Leadership Development Committee; and B) Pat presented the first-ever Operations Council Report, which was well received. Pat commented that the format will facilitate putting together reports in the future, and he noted that future reports are likely to be shorter.

Alan brought up one additional item: Trustees discussed the proposed Social Action Council, and the Trustee's role in policy decisions under the proposal. There is some uncertainty about how that might work in a controversial situation.

6. Monthly Budget Tracking: In advance of the meeting, Karen Bottar emailed a report. In a brief discussion, it was noted that Pine Village Preschool has paid as required. Alan noted that a recent review of restricted accounts turned up an item that should have been charged against the prior year.

7. Proposal: add separate budget line for Children's RE: Barb explained that the Religious Education Program consists of four subsets. However, while there are separate expense line items for 3 of them, the current budget lumps together the expenses of running the RE office and Children's RE into Line #7350, "Operations."

Motion: Laurel moved that what is now shown as "Operations" be broken into 2 separate line items, as requested. Jeannie seconded.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

8. Mass. Bay workshop – "Got Purpose?": Pat explained that representatives had attended the first two sessions, and now a group wants to participate in the 3rd session, at a cost of \$300. Pat, who is among those wanting to attend, seeks the Council's approval for such an expenditure.

Motion: Alan moved to approve spending \$300 from the Ops Council budget for such workshop; Laurel seconded.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

In the course of this item, a brief discussion arose about the state of the Ops Council's budget, and various charges to it. In particular it was noted that the annual barbeque lacks both a clear organizational structure and budget line. Last year it was charged to the Ops Council. Alan suggested that it would be appropriate to charge it to "Hospitality" in the future.

9. Building & Grounds budget request: Laurel provided to members the Building and Grounds budget request for 2011-12, together with an accompanying memo regarding Major Maintenance Projects.

Laurel's presentation highlighted several proposed increases, which together total about \$10,000 for the budget. The specified items are as follows: Cleaning, 3% increase; Trash removal, \$1800 increase, which will support an additional dumpster for single stream recycling; Fire Alarm, \$1000 increase, for necessary repairs; Heating & Plumbing, \$1000 increase, attributable to work on the compressors; Flooring & Carpet, \$1,000 increase; Property Insurance, \$515 increase; Water/Sewer, \$500 increase; and Roof Repairs, \$3000 increase, although Laurel noted that the roof increase may come down.

With regard to Major Maintenance, Laurel's memo sets out a project list of items that should be addressed during the next 10 years. Laurel invited discussion about priorities. For the 2011-12 year, Laurel recommends an emphasis on the stained glass windows. She explained that the Lovett and Allen windows, located at front and rear, have been restored. Eventually, certainly within decades, each of the side windows, nine in all, will require full restoration.

Pat inquired about the existing money for organ work; Laurel replied that she is currently seeking proposals for the work.

Alan inquired whether we face any issues of a code or liability issue, and Laurel replied that we do not.

10. Long Term Budget Projection: Karen Bottar and Kevin McCormick made a presentation on behalf of the Finance Committee. Kevin provided copies of a long

term forecast, covering fiscal years 2012 through 2016. The 10-page document includes a summary that flags key issues, most notably a projected shortfall of \$79,000 over the next five years. The forecast is based on annual assumed pledge increase at 3%, with most expenses projected to increase 3% annually. Health care is projected to increase by 6%.

The document also notes certain variables; for example, the projected shortfall could be covered by a net increase in 79 members who average \$1,000 in pledges or 250 members increasing their pledges by \$300 each.

Laurel recalled various ways that we have made do in prior years, such as cutting major maintenance by half; eliminating funding for a Membership Coordinator, and looking to the cell tower income as a regular part of the budget. Laurel also noted that we have no reason to expect any increase in income from rentals.

Pat asked about the current year's \$20,000 loss – does it get carried forward in some way? Alan clarified that it represents real cash, and noted that we may have to draw funds from the endowment. A consensus of the meeting felt that the \$20,000 should be shown in some manner in the financial records.

There was discussion about providing such information to members, culminating in agreement that the document will be posted on the website, and an email summary will be sent to the "business list." Karen and Kevin, with help from Alan, will take charge of these communications.

11. Flags in sanctuary: Pat indicated that he has received an email from a member about the poor condition of the two flags at the rear of the sanctuary (Old Glory and United Nations). A brief but wide-ranging discussion considered removal, proper disposal techniques, and the possibility of replacement with new flags.

All agreed more information was needed. Laurel will contact Peter Smith, who is believed to know the background of the UN flag; and Alan will confer with long-time member Jacki Colby about the background.

12. Adult RE Fundraising for books: Alice Wood has sought the Council's approval for putting out a donation basket at Coffee Hour. Alan explained the background -- that the small inventory of books has been offered for sale at Coffee Hour this year, with the proceeds to be put to purchases of books for a new lending library. Pat noted that the RE Council has its own authority to approve fundraising, but even so, he was struck by the fact that the donations would be given for a budgeted item, and that the basket is proposed on an ongoing basis. Barb commented that the policy giving authority to the RE Council did not expressly address Adult RE, and Barb did not want to assume.

Laurel mentioned that FUSN had a lending library in the past, which became defunct, and she questioned the need for such a program. Jeannie suggested publishing a list seeking specific book donations. Many members indicated agreement with Jeannie's idea.

After discussion, all indicated their agreement to Alan's suggestion to defer the decision.

13. Thank You's: Christmas Tree sales cleared \$9,000, and Pat will put an item in the newsletter thanking the volunteers.

14. Electronic votes noted for the record: Pat noted three votes that took place via email between the Council's December and January meetings, as follows:

- ✓ Approval of Minutes for December 15, 2010 meeting;
- ✓ Approval of Music Committee's request to sell tickets to January 30, 2011 UU Urban Ministry benefit concert, tickets to be sold at coffee hour on four Sundays in January;
- ✓ Planned Giving Committee's request to expend a budget of \$240, covering printing, postage and refreshments.

Respectfully submitted,
Gayle Smalley, Assistant Clerk