

# Unitarian Universalist Society of Iowa City All-Congregation Meeting

January 23, 2011

## MINUTES

*The board will review these minutes at its next meeting, and then they will be placed in the UUSIC Board of Directors notebook, which is available to members and friends in the Administration Office.*

*Minutes may also be requested via mail or email from our administrator.*

**UUSIC members present:** approximately 100 attended the All-Congregation Meeting

**UUSIC Board members present:** Haverkamp, Laughlin, Lenth, Locher, Otto, Salterberg, Siefers

**UUSIC Board members absent:** Lindaman, Young

**Ex Officio present:** Cole, Maucere

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by President Russ Lenth at 11:05 am.

**Action Items:** Lenth indicated two main goals for holding the meeting—approving the 2011 budget, and discussing the UUSIC facility issue. Lenth then turned the meeting over to Treasurer Dick Siefers.

Siefers shared the good news that UUSIC's actual 2010 income exceeded forecast and expenses were slightly below forecast for the second year in a row. This is inclusive of \$5,000 of additional giving above the amount budgeted to the denomination and the set aside of \$5,000 into building reserve.

He stated some budget assumptions for 2011:

- 1) Buildings and Grounds budget has been increased 31% or \$1,800. This is in addition to the \$11,000 available on the Balance Sheet under Building Reserve.
- 2) UUSIC's Board has an obligation to help ensure that the Society's expenses are supported by a reasonable forecast of the Society's income. This means that for 2011, UUSIC will be at 54% of fair share giving (UUSIC's dues to the Unitarian Universalist Association). This is an improvement of 30% budgeted in 2010; however still significantly below the 100% Fair Share Giving that the Board desires. If additional funds are available, the Board will make a commitment to improve the Fair Share Giving status at the end of 2011. Siefers explained that UUSIC has good reasons to be below the 100% Fair Share Giving level because of extra expenses for the ministerial search. When a new minister is hired, he said, those expenses will not be present, and UUSIC should be able to give more to denomination (UUA & PSD).
- 3) There will be a two percent increase in staff salaries, except for Maucere, who received a four percent increase last summer.

Siefers made note of the line item of \$2,000 for consulting fees to have the value of Society's property professionally appraised.

Siefers concluded that UUSIC is much more financially secure than it was three years ago.

The Board had made a motion to approve the budget, and Dave Martin seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Lenth then provided background on the facility exploration, including the work done by the Visioning Committee that started in the fall of 2000. He acknowledged all of their work. At the time of the vote in 2002, 65% voted to investigate buying land and eventually build a new church. Thirty-five percent voted to investigate renovating. The Board had agreed that a two-thirds majority was needed, so the process stalled at that point.

Next, in May 2003, there was a vote to look at land parcels. Seventy-six percent voted in favor of this, but no action has been taken.

Russ then explained what investigations the Board conducted in the fall 2010 and winter 2010-2011:

- Telephone interviews with select leaders as well as a random sampling of members
- Four open forums
- One forum for parents/RE teachers
- Online survey
- Congregational vote on paying to obtain an assessment of 10 S. Gilbert (which occurred earlier in the Congregational Meeting)

**Future process:**

- Today's discussion
- Ballot results
- Organization of task forces to gather additional information, based on ballot results
- Options and recommendations to be discussed/voted on later this spring and in the future

Lenth explained his goal to make incremental steps that will help UUSIC determine its direction.

Lenth then gave an overview of ideas and concerns raised during investigations. These are as follows:

- Need more space for lifespan/Religious Education, forums, meetings
- Need flexibility
- Need improved heating, ventilation, and air conditioning
- Need ADA accessibility
- Need to be responsible environmentally
- Location
- Growth
- How to pay for whatever is done

Next, he provided a summary of the online survey results, which are also available on the website. About half of the members provided feedback.

Q 1...what are the three most important functions of a site or facility in fulfilling our mission and goals over the next 15-20 years?

1<sup>st</sup> choice: Friendly, inviting, welcoming

2<sup>nd</sup> choice: Inspiring place for Sunday services

3<sup>rd</sup> choice: Sufficient/flexible space for RE/lifespan

Q 2...indicate three additional characteristics (beyond ADA, green, comfort, RE space) of a facility that are most needed for the Society to accomplish its mission.

1<sup>st</sup> choice: Adaptable for future growth

2<sup>nd</sup> choice: Visible, attractive to newcomers

3<sup>rd</sup> choice: Downtown location

Q 3... In considering our mission and goals for the next 15-20 years, please select your first three choices for action by the Board:

1<sup>st</sup> choice: Estimate cost to acquire land and build

2<sup>nd</sup> choice: Estimate cost to extensively remodel this site

3<sup>rd</sup> choice: Identify existing structure to re-purpose

Lenth then provided ballot instructions, and explained the consensus of the Board members present at the January meeting that the building is not adequate to carry UUSIC's mission very far into the future.

Lenth explained that UUSIC's discussion about the building needs to be more about what UUSIC wants to do in the world and how UUSIC will be able to do this. He stated that "we all care about what is best for this congregation. Let us trust each other on that."

Lenth explained that only a simple majority is needed for the ballot vote, because this vote is to give the board guidance.

Maucere then facilitated an open forum, where members and friends could express thoughts, questions and opinions.

Peg Voelker—How much do we want the market to know our intent. Will that determine the value? Will we be able to leverage more if we have a "poker face." I hope we have some discussion about how to improve this area of the city.

Rich Young—We are heavily invested in this church. The purpose of this church comes down to service—Sunday services but service to everyone in this community as well. I don't think we can do the service needed unless we build or repurpose. One possibility would be to consider repurposing Roosevelt School when it is closed.

Cliff Missen: I was among a group that went to the new St. Thomas More Catholic Church, which is LEED certified. Three places churches who build can be: Paying it back/paying a mortgage, paying it forward, or they are slacking off.

Karen Fox: Our building can be of service to the community, regardless of what we decide to do with it.

Jill Stephenson: My theory is to raze both UUSIC buildings, then put in underground parking, then several floors for commercial space, and then the UUSIC would be on the top two floors. This would allow us to rent, and would help us pay off some of the cost. We'd still be downtown.

Ann Bovbjerg: Let's get "REAL." I think the voting options finally seem real. Cash—we have never been real about this. No one has ever asked me if I would give money to the project.

Lori Enloe: As a parent and RE teacher—I want to cornerback on what Rich Young said about service. Roosevelt is closing, probably in 2012. It's in the downtown area, has a ravine in the back, we could rent space to others—there's a lot of possibilities.

Mary Kathryn Wallace: Out of the box thinking is good.

Second round: Only one person wanted to speak, and that was Lori Enloe, asking if she could speak again about Roosevelt School.

Enloe: Roosevelt is on Benton St. It's been there since 1931. It's on acreage, off of Benton and Greenwood, behind the Mennonite Church.

Steve Locher: A lot of resources are on the UUSIC website for those who want to learn more before voting.

Someone then asked a question about financing. Lenth said UUSIC would need to have a capital campaign. UUSIC, however, can't have a capital campaign without a concrete plan.

Deb Schoelerman: Ames and Des Moines have grown. I don't think we can grow in this space. The decision is not about us: What are we doing for the children that follow us?

Gordon Strayer: We had a mortgage on this church. We don't have to pay the whole thing at once.

Linda Fischer asked about other buildings that UUSIC has considered...Lenth and others mentioned cooperating with the Synagogue, exchange of UUSIC's present land with land out by Rochester, Gold's Gym, Towncrest area—city is looking to renovating, Roosevelt would need to be remodeled...

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 pm.

*Susan Salterberg, secretary*