**Unitarian Universalist Society**
**Board of Trustees**
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**January 20, 2021** (virtual via Zoom)

**Present:** Joe Rasmussen (President), Alan Swanson (Vice-President), Amy Fretz (Past-President), Mike Pavelich (Treasurer), Carol Adamson (Secretary), John Raley (Financial Trustee), Colleen Higgins (Trustee), Paul Pomrehn (Trustee), Julia Audlehelm (Trustee), and Rev. Diana Smith (Minister, Ex-Officio)

**Absent**: None

**Guests**: Deb Schoelerman

Board President Joe Rasmussen called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm. Paul Pomrehn provided the opening words, with chalice lighting by Rev. Smith. After check-in, the Board commenced with the agenda as follows:

**Consent Agenda**:

December Board Minutes, January Executive Committee minutes, staff report, Treasurer report and financial summary, Sponsorship of Iowa City’s 18th annual Night of 1000 Dinners

*The consent agenda was approved by unanimous consent.*

**Committee Updates**:

* Governance: Amy Fretz

The committee met on Jan. 19th. They are reviewing policies and procedures. She will have the notes of the meeting for Board review at the February meeting.

* Personnel: Alan Swanson

The committee will meet on Jan. 21st to discuss the searches for staff.

* Finance: John Raley

The committee met last week. They reviewed the big actions of the last year including implementation of in-house accounting, 2020 Payroll Protection Program loan acceptance, and meeting the goal of $70,000 in reserves. The committee also discussed the budget concerns brought forth by Chris Rode. Committee members have reached out to Chris in reconciliation. Raley said the committee is anxious to work on the disparities in income and expenses in the coming year. Pavelich reported the 2020 Payroll Protection Program loan has been forgiven.

* Right Relations: Colleen Higgins and Julia Audlehelm

The committee met last week. Higgin’s has an ongoing concern, namely, the committee can not act unless they are asked to help. They question what they can do if they see a conflict but have not been asked to intervene. She said the committee has never received a request for help with conflict.

Audlehelm reported that there was discussion on need to advertise the committee’s purpose and function. Higgins said they also discussed term limits for the five-member committee. They did not come to a decision yet, but she thinks they will end up staggering the terms.

* Mission & Vision Review: Paul Pomrehn

Pomrehn reported that the committee has not yet. He is gathering input from committee member on the prospect of having regular meetings.

* Rules for Committee Meeting Summaries or Minutes

The Executive Board is asking that each Board committee create a record of their meetings to help the full Board make informed decisions and maintain oversight. Each Board committee should place their report in *Dropbox – Agendas & Reports* following a meeting that summarizes the issues discussed and any specific action or recommendations made to the Board of Trustees.

**Unfinished Business**

**Building Re-opening: Benchmarks and Phases:**

Rev. Smith said UUS is still in Phase 1. The COVID team continues to meet. Phase 2 plans have already been established. The team is now studying the building airflow and HVAC systems as they look toward Phase 3 protocols.

**Mortgage Refinance**

Rasmussen asked if there were any questions about the refinance. Adamson asked Pavelich where the mortgage principal payment is listed in the Budget vs Actual spreadsheet and Pavelich explained. Pavelich said that the interest earned on the Capital Campaign funds in the Operating Account offsets the interest paid with it not being used to pay down the mortgage principal.

**Spending Guidance for 2021**

At the December Board meeting a decision was made to re-authorize the guidelines to staff and team leaders regarding budget spending during 2021. Rasmussen presented the final draft of Spending Guidance for 2021. There was extensive discussion about how major expenditures can be brought to the attention of the Board. The final draft of the Spending Guidance for 2021 was amended (see bold type below):

2021 finds us in a difficult budget situation as income has declined while many of our expenses are not optional. Early in 2020 the Board of Trustees instituted a freeze on all nonessential spending. Later in 2020 that freeze was relaxed to allow conservative spending that would maintain programming and fulfill the basic mission and vision of UUS. Everyone was asked to delay any spending that could wait until 2021. Now the new year requires that we renew this conservative approach to spending. Spending on new materials, new equipment, and capital expenses should be kept to a minimum. Improvements to the building and grounds should be postponed until later this year unless they are necessary to ensure the integrity of the facility or come from endowment funds when aligned with endowment fund designations and Board policy protocols. If there are ways to spend less money without causing harm to your program, please consider this. If you feel the health of your program requires you to spend budgeted money, then the Board will trust staff and team leaders to make responsible decisions without specific guidelines by the Board. **Please consult with your Senior Staff member when you encounter an unforeseen or major expense.** Any spending beyond your budgeted amount must gain prior Board approval. Together we will emerge from these times and into a better and more secure tomorrow.

- UUS Board of Trustees and Minister Reverend Diana Smith

*Pavelich made a motion, seconded by Swanson, to approve the Spending Guidance for 2021 statement, as amended. The motion carried.*

**Internet Connection and audio-visual equipment purchase**

Rasmussen reported that the upgraded internet service connection is complete and operational. A new computer is still needed. The old computer will be repurposed.

**Approve vacancy for a new part-time AV Coordinator**

Rev. Smith shared the job description for this new position and asked the Board to approve funding in the amount of $4,200.00 for the position’s compensation. This amount is based on an average of five hours of work per week.

*Pomrehn made a motion, seconded by Higgins, to approve $4,200.00 for the hiring of a new part-time AV Coordinator. The motion carried.*

**New Business**

**Staff Vacancies Update**

With the resignation of Jessica Zimmer-Saltzman as DLRE, Rev. Smith is requesting formal authorization to begin the search process for a new Director of Lifespan Religious Education. Before a motion was made, the Board discussed at length the future of the position with a look back to how the position became fulltime.

Pomrehn said an RE program review is in order. He hopes that there will be discussions to explore the staffing of the UUS RE program, perhaps with the help of a regional UUA advisor.

Fretz explained that a program review was underway last Spring with the help of a UUA consultant but was stopped short due to constraints of the pandemic. She believes this review needs to be completed to inform the work of the DLRE search committee.

Rev. Smith said she and Jessica Zimmer would like to revisit the reimagining of the RE program that started last year. Ideally, she would like a DLRE search committee to lead the effort of understanding the issues involved with the RE program. The search committee will also need to gather stakeholder input on their wants and needs. Another option to consider is hiring a person as an acting or interim DLRE. The program reimagining would be taken on by the next DLRE.

Rev. Smith reminded the Board that UUS does not have a RE team. She is hoping that some members of the search committee may want be part of the RE team. This will give the new DLRE a support system a structure to work within.

*Raley made a motion, seconded by Pavelich, to authorize Rev. Smith to create a search committee and commence with the filling of the DLRE position. The motion carried.*

Rev. Smith reported that the Music Director search is underway, and she is currently forming the search committee.

**Midwest Leadership School scholarships and GA/Midwest Regional expenses**

The Board’s 2021 budget line item 5610 has $2,000 designated for Scholarships. The Leadership Development Committee (LDC) has proposed that we shift that amount to the LDC. Historically, the LDC has been responsible for decisions regarding scholarship requests for Leadership School and expenses to be reimbursed for GA and the Midwest Regional Conference.

*Swanson made a motion, seconded by Fretz, to authorize deleting the 2021 budget line item #5610 and creating a budget line item in an equal amount for the Leadership Development Committee. The motion carried.*

**Authorize Paycheck Protection Program loan application, if qualified**

Pavelich reported that UUS does not qualify for the Payroll Protection Program as defined in the COVID-19 Relief Act for 2021.

**Approval of Bio-Cell Repair Contract**

The Buildings & Grounds team is recommending that the bio-cell/water retention basin west of the church and south of the parking lot be repaired as soon as possible. The retention basin has developed a serious erosion problem around the drainage tile. If the erosion continues it will erode the integrity of the south side of the basin. The contract was submitted for review by the Board. The Building & Grounds team is asking this non-budgeted expense to be approved by the Board.

*Fretz made a motion, seconded by Audlehelm, to authorize the contract and estimate for the repair of the Bio-Cell up to $20,000.00. The motion carried.*

**January 30 Planning Meeting**

Rasmussen proposed working on the Annual Vision of Ministry, as described by Hotchkiss – identify the congregation’s top goals for the coming year. This would be preceded by a discussion of the major areas of the budget.

Pomrehn suggested using the Jan. 30 meeting as a workshop to discuss the best way to further our understanding of Governance and explore ways UUS can use Hotchkiss planning model for its own Annual Planning. He suggested that the planning would include an annual discernment of what is important to the Board and to the Minister, and it would provide the framework for evaluating UUS progress in meeting its goals.

Fretz would like to start small with just the Board and Rev. Smith. Pomrehn advocated for participation of fulltime staff as well.

Fretz described the threefold planning model, noting the two Board products of an Annual Vision of Ministry and the Three Open Questions. Swanson provided a recent example of how he used a question in his Sunday service break-out Zoom room. He found it very informative and believes this model would be a concrete way to include the congregation in exploring the three questions.

Rev. Smith observed that this current discussion may be what we need to have on Jan. 30th.

Rasmussen proposed, and it was agreed, that we invite the staff and continue the discussion at the Jan. 30th meeting.

**Appointment(s) to the Johnson County Inter-Faith Coalition**

DCL Peggy Garrigues has been the UUS interim representative on the JCIC and has proposed that she be replaced by Rev. Smith.

*Fretz made a motion, seconded by Pavelich, to appoint Reverend Diana Smith to the Johnson County Inter-Faith Coalition. The motion carried.*

**Annual Certification with UUA – Section 6 completion**

Rasmussen will talk to Pomrehn about giving this task to the Mission and Vision Committee.

**Board – Minister Covenant – discussion**

This discussion was tabled until the next Board meeting.

**Board Read Proposal: UUA’s Widening the Circle of Concern report**

Rev. Smith created a plan on how to approach the reading of the report as a Board Read. She proposes to split it up over five months, focusing on specific sections she feels are pertinent to the current state of UUS. She thinks the report’s study guide will help us reflect on UUS programs going forward – at the June Retreat and ultimately with the congregation. By engaging with the report overtime, the Board will have an opportunity to become well informed and reflect on how to use the report. *Rev. Smith will send an email to the Board identifying the sections she suggests we study together.*

**Guest Comments** – none

**Closing**

Rasmussen gave process observer comments, Raley provided closing words, and the chalice was extinguished.  *Pavelich moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Fretz. Rasmussen adjourned the meeting at 9:38 pm.*

The next meeting is Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 7:00 pm.

Carol Adamson, Secretary