**Unitarian Universalist Society**

**Board of Trustees**

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

September 15, 2021 (virtual via Zoom)

**Present:** Alan Swanson (President), Joe Rasmussen (Past-President), Rochelle Honey-Arcement (Vice-President), Mike Pavelich (Treasurer), Diana Henry (Trustee), John Raley (Financial Trustee), Julia Audlehelm (Trustee), Hazel Seaba (Trustee), Rev. Diana Smith (Minister, Ex Officio), Paula Miller (Acting Interim Secretary)

# Absent: None

**Guests:** Mary McMurray

**Call to Order and Chalice Lighting:** President Alan Swanson called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m., lit the chalice and provided **Opening Words**.

**Check-In:** Members present provided personal updates.

**Approval of new interim secretary**: Pavelich made a motion, seconded by Honey-Arcement, to confirm Paula Miller for the vacant secretary position until the end of the current term on June 30, 2022 pending congregational approval at the Dec Congregational Meeting. The vote was unanimous.

**Board Read:** Members will start reading Trauma Stewardship, by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky. We will discuss the introduction and the first four chapters at the Oct 2021 meeting. Copies will be left for pick-up on the bookshelf in the vestibule.

**Consent Agenda:** Aug 18 Board Minutes, Sept 8 Exec Committee minutes, Treasurer Pavelich’s report and financial summary with Emma Barnum’s Financial Narrative, Rev. Diana Smith’s report including reports by DCL Peggy Garrigues, Emma Barnum, and DLRE Marsha Thrall. The consent agenda was approved without objection.

**Board Committee Reports:**

Governance – Rasmussen discussed a proposed bylaw change: currently bylaws require candidates to elected positions to have completed 1 year of UUS membership and service on a committee. Since so many committees have been reclassified as Teams in the last 2 years the LDC proposed adding “or team” verbiage after “committee” in the bylaws. The board would need to vote on this next month in order to have a bylaw change vote added to the Dec Congregational Meeting agenda. Another concern was how to select committee replacements to 3-year elected positions. Questions centered on whether changes need to be made to official policies for appointing chair or co-chairs when elected committee members can’t fulfill their elected terms. Rasmussen advised that this should be a “bottom up” decision by other committee members rather than an administrative decision. Policies and procedures also need to be created for the new Memorial Garden. Audlehelm advised that they are working on the legal end of it, including reviewing Iowa code law concerning the disposal of human remains. These updates are needed before the Oct 5th meeting.

Personnel – Honey-Arcement advised they would like to bring Dana Van Abbema onto the committee to replace co-chair Mary McMurray before she leaves her position in Jan 2022. Rasmussen moved to appoint her for the rest of Mary’s term, seconded by Henry, the vote was unanimous**.** Honey-Arcement also advised that the committee would like to add Juneteeth as a paid holiday for all staff. She noted that not all federal holidays are paid, but the committee agreed that this is an important one to be covered. Rasmussen moved to make Juneteeth a paid staff holiday, seconded by Swanson, the vote was unanimous. This will need to be added to the Personnel Handbook. A new policy was presented which requires Covid-19 vaccination for all staff and volunteers unless they qualify for a specific exception. A report for the November board meeting will be prepared to review all job descriptions and to make sure that compensation is appropriate. Rev Diana attended a training on important personnel policy statements and advised that for some situations we don’t have strong enough policies in place, especially concerning conflicts of interest or sexual conduct policies concerning relationships between staff and congregants. DCL Peggy Garrigues is now eligible for a sabbatical, but we don’t have a clear policy for how this will work for the DCL or DLRE staff positions.

Finance – John Raley advised that at the committee meeting 2 days ago discussion centered on concerns from some Endowment Committee members about whether the Endowment fund balance should be included in the monthly Treasurer’s report. The Finance committee feels that this decision should be made by the Endowment committee, and the consensus is that the Endowment committee does not want that number included on the treasurer’s report because the balances fluctuate so much over short-term periods. Endowment policies require that they report the fund balance only once per year and those would be included in the annual treasurer’s report. Rasmussen advised that the board should now make the decision about when and how to report Endowment Fund balances and confirmed that information about the Endowment Fund’s status can be found on the UUS website. Pavelich added that since the Endowment fund stocks are owned by the congregation it is important to report both what is in the bank and what is in the Endowment fund each month. Discussion followed centering on balancing transparency of the fund’s balances vs. following established policies which value long-term health and reporting accuracy. Pavelich moved that the Endowment Fund report be removed from the Treasure’s report for 1 month to allow time to discuss new reporting protocol with the Endowment Committee. The motioned passed unanimously.

Right Relations – Audlehelm reported that they have been focusing on Rev Diana’s installation service on Oct 24. Rev Diana advised that they are planning a virtual service at this time and only service participants, plus a few guests, will attend. The decision on whether to only have a virtual or limited in-person service should be decided by Oct 10th. The committee had thought that they would spend $500-$1000 for supplies and gifts toward the service, but that money had to be used to purchase a new computer for Rev Diana. Rev Diana advised that she may be able to use some professional funds to cover installation costs. Pavelich, Swanson, and Seaba agreed to donate some funds to the Minister’s discretionary fund to help cover the installation service cost so that Rev Diana would not need to use professional funds for her own installation ceremony.

Mission & Vision Review – Seaba reported that they will be meeting monthly on 3rd Mondays. Co-chairs Seaba and Henry will provide reports which clarify tasks, timelines, and strategies for assessing mission and vision programs and progress. Seaba advised that by the Oct board meeting there will be a draft report for review, and then comments and revisions should be completed by Oct 31.

**COVID Team Updates:**

-COVID Data and Phases: Rev Diana reported some concerns from the COVID Team, which was created to implement recommendations made at the beginning of the pandemic by medical experts drawing on the recommendations from COVID ACT NOW database concerning county-wide infection numbers. Phase 2 recommends online services only if county-wide infection rates are between 25-75 cases/100,000 people, and Phase 3 allows for limited in-person services if infection rates are between 10-25 cases/100,000 people. Rasmussen noted that Johnson County rates have been hovering at about 30-37 cases/100,000 people for the last few weeks. Rev Diana noted that since current infection rates are hovering right at the current boundary between Phase 2 and 3 that it is very difficult to plan on Thursday whether the following Sunday’s services will be online or virtual. The COVID team agreed with the changes made in August but didn’t anticipate going back and forth between phases or how the state’s weekly reporting change to Wed only would impact the following Sunday’s services. The COVID team advised that the board: 1. Change Phase 3 from 10-25 cases/100K people to 10-50 cases/100K people, and 2. Allow any change from one phase to another to not take effect until the following week’s service. Discussion centered on whether there is sufficient evidence to loosen restrictions, or if there should be a re-assessment by COVID experts and UUS members with a scientific background to review current COVID protocols. Rev Diana feels that if she is preaching in the sanctuary without a mask that she doesn’t want cases to be above 50/100K, but she confirmed that since the Fellowship Hall and Sanctuary are on separate HVAC systems that she feels comfortable having attendees, including families with unvaccinated children, attend services in the Fellowship Hall. She and the staff feel comfortable with making an adjustment to Phase 3. Pavelich proposed, seconded by Henry, that we change Phase 3 to 10-50 cases/100K to allow more people to attend in person and also allow 2 weeks for the UUS to make changes from one phase to another to facilitate Sunday service planning. Included in this proposal is allowing “watch parties” in the Fellowship Hall and no number caps on outdoor congregational events. All indoor gatherings will still require masks and social distancing guidelines. The board voted unanimously to agree to implement these changes to the COVID policy with the understanding that we will revisit COVID policies at the Nov 17th meeting.

-Personnel Committee: Vaccination Policy Update: Audlehelm and McMurray described the new policy requiring COVID vaccines for all volunteers working with vulnerable populations, including IT volunteers. Pavelich asked if this would be in addition to the personnel policy? McMurray added that volunteers wouldn’t be governed by the personnel handbook change discussed earlier during the meeting. Pavelich motioned, seconded by Swanson, to require staff and volunteers to be vaccinated against COVID. The motion carried.

-COVID policy and building rental events: Rev Diana noted that people have expressed interest in renting the building and she and DCL Garrigues have been working on this. The new proposal advises that:

1. Saturday events must end by 10 pm to allow time to clean and would require the purchase of a “cleaning package” as part of the rental agreement.

2. Encourage masking and safety guidelines as are applicable per UUS COVID phase.

3. Require that the renters sign a document that they have received the UUS COVID guidelines and that UUS is not liable if attendees contract COVID during their event.

4. Refunds can be made up to 2 weeks in advance if the event needs to be cancelled.

5. Events over 50 people will require payment for the special cleaning service if there will not be another regular building cleaning scheduled before the next event.

Swanson confirmed that this will be current rules and procedures, not policy, and these may be subject to change. The board reached a consensus to agree to these rule changes which can be edited if needed. The board also agreed that at this time the COVID team may go on hiatus as any further changes to phases or COVID policy will first be reconsidered by UUS members with medical expertise on infectious disease.

**Balance and Growth Initiative (BGI):** Honey-Arcement reported they have held 1 recent meeting via Zoom, and the next meeting is Mon Sept 20th. New DLRE Marsha Thrall was invited to attend by Chris Rode. She summarized her vision of reconnecting and rebuilding RE. There are 3 youth advisors who are active and engaged. She expects that the first 6 months will be an interim period to start getting a solid program in place. She emphasized that RE should really be “lifespan” and not just for youth. Invitee Jean Hood spoke about the history of the endowment fund and past fundraising and expressed concern that if the endowment is used to supplement the operating budget then people won’t donate as much during the stewardship campaign. Discussion followed about how to widen the conversation about how donations to the operating budget benefit many programs in the congregation. Additional Endowment Committee members and the social justice-focused Teams will be invited to discussions.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**Stewardship Campaign**: has a board-approved goal of $420,000 and will launch Sunday, Sept 26. The stewardship group has now recruited members to give five-minute testimonials for this year’s campaign. A New Member Ceremony will also be held that day when 5 new members will join the UUS.

**UUS Memorial Garden:** Audelhelm advised that the UUS Memorial Garden construction is beginning. Three meetings were held in August, and on Sept 14 (and possibly also on Sept 21)meetings will be held with UUS member Hilary Strayer about legal issues surrounding the project. Ultimately the Governance Committee must assist in documenting related policies and procedures. Audlehelm confirmed that per the original discussion no pets would be interred in the memorial garden. Per the legal discussion all cremains have a letter of authenticity that they are actual human remains.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Treats and Talents fund-raiser:** The annual operating budget fundraiser was successfully held online last year. Honey-Arcement advised that we need to look for someone who can lead this again, and she confirmed that this has worked very well in the past when kids were involved. Audlehelm added that a book sale might also be a great fundraiser. Swanson suggested an “auction” of books.

**Guest Comments:** none

**Closed Executive Session:** none

**Process Observer:** Seaba

**Closing Words:** Swanson

**Adjournment, and Extinguish the Chalice:** Swanson

The meeting adjourned at 9:38 pm.

**Next board meeting 7:00, October 20, 2021, via Zoom**

**Paula Miller, Acting Secretary**