

# Unitarian Universalist Society

Congregational Meeting Minutes, May 21, 2023

(Multiplatform meeting via Zoom and in-person)

President Rochelle Honey-Arcement called the meeting to order at 11:27am. Rev. Diana Smith provided opening words as the chalice was lit. Christine Etler reported a quorum was established with 76 members present at the start of the meeting, including both in person and online attendees. (3 additional members joined after the initial count. Total attendance was 68 in person and 11 on-line.) Materials for the meeting were distributed to members by email or USPS 10 days prior to the meeting. Voting is being conducted using Election Buddy online for 5 days following the meeting and through Absentee voting on paper. Voting will remain open until 5 pm, 5/25/23.

## **Motion for the approval of the May 22, 2022 Congregational Meeting Minutes**

Honey-Arcement asked for a motion to accept the December 19, 2022 minutes as distributed prior to the meeting. Miriam Kashia made the motion; Sue Otto seconded.

Christine Etler made a motion to amend the main motion with two minor corrections; Sue Salzberger seconded. The amendment to the main motion was voted upon at the meeting. The majority in favor, 0 against, 0 abstain.

Voting on the amended motion to take place after the meeting (Election Buddy).

*Voting results added to these minutes at the closure of online voting on 5/26/23: Motion passes (100%; 136 in favor, 0 against, 8 abstain)*

## **Motion for UUS to Amend its Bylaws**

Honey-Arcement asked for a motion to accept the Proposed Bylaws Amendments as distributed prior to the meeting. Sue Salzberger made the motion; Mary Kathryn Wallace seconded.

Russ Lenth made a motion to amend the main motion. The following sentence will be added to Article VII, A. 1. "The President shall ensure that a clear agenda is set for each board meeting."

Dave Tokuhisa seconded. The amendment to the main motion was voted upon at the meeting. The majority in favor, 1 against, 0 abstain.

Discussion: Honey-Arcement commented that the Board acknowledges that changes to policy will be required to align with the bylaws if they pass. Decisions have not been made on the exact changes that will be required.

Voting on the main motion to take place after the meeting (Election Buddy).

*Voting results added to these minutes at the closure of online voting on 5/26/23: Motion passes (96%; 132 in favor, 5 against, 7 abstain)*

## **Recognition of Outgoing Committee Members**

Members completing their term in leadership positions were recognized. *Board of Trustees:* Alan Swanson & Julia Audlehelm; *Leadership Development Committee:* Susan Salterberg & Sue Otto; *Endowment Committee:* Jamie Sharp

## **Presentation of Leadership Nominees**

Dave Gallaher and Ron Pile from the Leadership Development Committee presented the nominees.

Voting on all nominees to take place after the meeting (Election Buddy and absentee ballot).

*Voting results added at to these minutes at the closure of online voting on 5/26/23. See below each nominee.*

### Board of Trustees

President: Jeff Walberg (two-year replacement term)

Ron Pile made the motion; Tom McMurry seconded.

*Elected with 98% of the vote (138 in favor, 3 against, 3 abstain)*

Trustee: Monique DeCarlo (two-year term)

Ron Pile made the motion; Diana Henry seconded.

*Elected with 99% of the vote (141 in favor, 1 against, 2 abstain)*

Treasurer: Mike Pavelich (one-year term extension)

Ron Pile made the motion; Jerry Wetlaufer seconded.

*Elected with 100% of the vote (141 in favor, 0 against, 3 abstain)*

Discussion: Chris Rode asked Ron Pile why we are doing an extension of Mike Pavelich's term. Michael Honey-Arcement has agreed to accept a nomination for Treasurer next year. He chose to delay his service until his partner, President Rochelle Honey-Arcement finishes her term.

### Leadership Development Committee

Peg Bouska (three-year term)

Ron Pile made the motion; Carol Johnson seconded.

*Elected with 100% of the vote (142 in favor, 0 against, 2 abstain)*

Jodi Linley (three-year term)

Ron Pile made the motion; Sue Otto seconded.

*Elected with 100% of the vote (142 in favor, 0 against, 2 abstain)*

### Endowment Committee

Dave Martin (five-year term)

Ron Pile made the motion; Steve Brokaw seconded.

*Elected with 100% of the vote (143 in favor, 0 against, 1 abstain)*

Dan Cummins (one-year replacement term)

Ron Pile made the motion; Liz Noyes seconded.

*Elected with 99% of the vote (140 in favor, 1 against, 3 abstain)*

## **Report from the President**

Rochelle Honey-Arcement

Honey-Arcement reviewed how we have lived into our current vision of ministry as we connect with ourselves, each other, and the wider community.

We have been connecting and reconnecting with old friends and new, and with our own purpose. Our world has changed immensely over the course of the last three years and the impact of the pandemic has had a damaging effect on the well-being of ourselves, our community, and the entire world. However, in addition to reconnection, our experience at UUS over the last year evokes other words: resilience, resistance, reorganization, recovery, and rejoicing.

Our resilience is demonstrated in how we have continued to support each other during the pandemic and kept our community and continued to grow; and in our response to the political turmoil and injustices occurring around us. Our congregation has shown resistance to the political actions taking place in Iowa and beyond. Last year, we endorsed the 8<sup>th</sup> principal, and we continue to take action to resist racism, marginalization, and oppression of those most vulnerable among us. Some ways we have affirmed our commitment to resistance include our support of our local immigrant and refugee population, our celebration of the earth with our first Earth Festival, and our creation of the Safe Learning Space for LGBTQ youth. We have worked on the reorganization of our congregational administration through further refinement of our new Shared Governance structure. We continue to recover from the pandemic as the world opens up from the pandemic, as our members share their gifts and volunteer to support increased programming, and as we welcome new friends and visitors to UUS.

### **Report from the Minister**

Rev. Diana Smith

We have had a busy year. Many congregations across the country are struggling with identity, mission engagement, and finances. Relatively we are doing well. We have kept our vibrancy and connection while keeping our mission and vision clearly in our forefront. Rev Diana is grateful for the support during her medical leave from our community and our affiliated community minister Rev. Lois Cole. They took on new and expanded roles to support our ministries. A bit of a review of our year was presented with some slides. Much of this content is to be included in the annual report. Some examples of activities this year include new programming events, reinvigoration and growth in our RE program under the direction of Nic Kaplan, vibrant worship services with increased attendance that exceeds prepandemic levels, and the establishment of the Little Free pantry.

### **Report from the Finance Committee**

Jerry Wetlaufer, Finance Trustee

Jerry Wetlaufer spoke about our plan to amend the balance budget mandate that was previously adopted in 2021. A commitment was made to achieve a balanced budget by 2024. The board is proposing an extension of that we extend our timeline and that "UUS will adopt a balanced budget for 2026 or sooner".

We moved into 2020 in a strong position to achieve a balanced budget. Instead, due to the pandemic, we ended up closing our doors for what would ultimately be 30 months. UUS was left with a deficit of more than \$150,000 in 2020. The congregation authorized the use of \$125,000 in non-corporate endowment funds for the 2022 and 2023 budgets. Although we have continued to struggle in those years, our deficits have consistently fallen each year with much of the approved endowment funds untouched. We currently have approximately \$350,000 in the bank and 1.2 million in endowment (with the general endowment corpus not accessible unless there are extraordinary circumstances).

In 2022 and 2023, we did not/will not use all of the endowment funds that had been authorized. We can thank the extraordinary efforts of Rev Diana, our staff, and volunteers took to weather the pandemic disruption. There are many positive signs for continued health and vibrancy for our congregation, with increased initiatives to bring people into our building and build membership, to increase rentals and to begin to offer summer camps.

Although we are operating under a deficit, we are using our own money, not money we don't have. Only if we are prepared to accept flexibility and extend our mandate for two years can we continue to bring on and support new programming. We want to avoid laying off new employees and eliminating programs just as they start.

### **Motion to Amend the Balanced Budget Mandate**

Jeff Walberg, Vice President

Jeff Walberg spoke about his participation in a workshop with other mid-sized congregations and on his ongoing discussions with some of those congregations located in the Midwest. We are emerging from covid in better shape than some other congregations. One difficulty we have at UUS is that we have a large mortgage, and this has a large part in the disparity between ourselves and other similar congregations. Additionally, one trend that has emerged here at UUS is that our pledging has been going down. Jeff also presented a comparison between our congregation and Champaign Urbana which is a similar size. Through this comparison and an analysis of how our discretionary spending compares to theirs, it is apparent that we are not spending carelessly. If we seek to adhere to the Balanced Budget Mandate as currently written, this could lead to serious, unhealthy cuts. We should not jeopardize future stability by too hastily adopting a balanced budget. We should aim towards building a

model to support future balanced budgets by building the right staffing and pledge levels. Over the next 5 to 10 years, we can achieve some stability and we won't have to keep going through the kinds of major reorganizations and shifts that would be necessary to achieve a balanced budget for 2024.

### **Motion to Amend the Balanced Budget Mandate**

Jeff Walberg motioned to accept the amendment to the Balanced Budget Mandate, as distributed prior to the meeting; Amy Fretz seconded.

*Voting results added at to these minutes at the closure of online voting on 5/26/23: Motion passes (99%; 136 in favor, 2 against, 6 abstain)*

### **CLOSING**

Reverend Diana provided closing words. Rochelle Honey-Arcement motioned to adjourn the meeting. Chris Rode seconded, with unanimous consent to adjourn.

Minutes prepared by Christine Etler, Secretary, Board of Trustees

A recording of the meeting is available:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/C61YTG19Ymg?feature=share&t=5211>