

**First Unitarian Society of Ithaca
Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2023**

Don Barber (President) called the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) to order at 6:33 pm on Wednesday, February 15th, 2023.

Trustees Present: Don Barber (President), Valerie Graves (Clerk), Dick Kurtz, Margaret Nichols, Nancy Miller, Walt Peck (Treasurer)

Trustees Absent: Therese O'Connor (Vice-President)

FUSIT Members & Guests: Fred Balfour, Emily Richards, Michelle Waffner, Sue Roenke, Barbara Shew

Handouts:

- [☰ DRAFT Board Meeting Minutes 011823](#)
- [📄 Treasurer's Report, February 2023.docx](#)
- [☰ Congregational Life Director Job Description](#)
- [☰ Professional Etiquette for FUSIT Leadership Groups](#)
- [☰ Rene Rogers Trustee Resolution](#)
- [☰ FUSIT's Purpose](#)
- [📄 BOT Perf Evaluation FUSIT 2022-23 Final draft.docx](#)
- [☰ Board Policy Book](#)
- [☰ Staff Job Description Development Policy](#)

Agenda Item # 1: Welcome and Chalice Lighting

Walt Peck lit the chalice and Don Barber read a selection.

Agenda Item # 2: Congregational Communication Period

There were no topics raised at the meeting by members of the congregation.

Agenda Item # 3: Changes to Agenda

The visioning question will be postponed to the next Board meeting because of time constraints. There will be an executive session after the conclusion of the public Board meeting. There was no opposition to the changes to the agenda.

Agenda Item #4: Consent Agenda

Consent agenda items:

- [DRAFT Board Meeting Minutes 011823](#)
- [Treasurer's Report, February 2023.docx](#)
- [Congregational Life Director Job Description](#)
- [Professional Etiquette for FUSIT Leadership Groups](#)

Motion: A motion was made by Don Barber and seconded by Nancy Miller to approve the consent agenda.

The motion passed.

Agenda Item # 5: Monitoring Function of the Board: Team and Committee Reports

Discussion:

- Celebrations is talking about changing joys and sorrows - It may be the time to refresh joys and sorrows, but the celebrations team should engage the current joys and sorrows team before making a change. While the changes are not likely to create issues, any change needs to be handled delicately.
- Changes should only be made with awareness of the history and prehistory of joys and sorrows.
- The personnel committee report included a request to meet with the Board to work on shared policies. The current Board policy book (BPB) mostly describes the process. Personnel might need some policy to work from. Discussing policy with them is appropriate and Don Barber will work to set up a meeting. They typically meet on Saturday mornings.

Action Item:

Don Barber will contact the Personnel committee to set up a meeting.

- Stewardship is working on a pledge target that is more than last year and the reasons will be discussed in the executive session. There is a 6% increase in the request of the congregation.
- We did hit our target last year and money is coming in regularly.
- As stated in the treasurer report, Walt Peck is not interested in being an active participant on the Board and will be stepping down from OAT. Walt plans to continue as Treasurer without the additional responsibilities that were added in the last two years.

- According to the report from the fundraising team, there will be an auction, April 28th-30th. They are working to get businesses in town to donate services and activities for us. They have set a goal of \$8000.

Agenda Item #6: Appoint Rene Rogers as a Trustee

Motion: A motion was made by Margaret Nichols and seconded by Nancy Miller to appoint Rene Rogers as a Trustee.

The motion passed.

The Board members and guests took turns introducing themselves to Rene Rogers and welcoming her to the Board, as well as sharing the benefits of being involved in the church. The Board Liaison assignments were shared with Rene for her awareness.

Agenda Item #7: Adopt FUSIT Purpose Statement

FUSIT's purpose is to create and maintain a welcoming spiritual home for diverse, free-thinking people to unite in community, to provide fellowship, to broaden perspectives and understanding, and to live into our UU Principles by serving the interconnected web of life in justice, compassion, and love.

Motion: A motion was made by Don Barber and seconded by Dick Kurtz to accept the FUSIT purpose statement.

Discussion:

- Thinking of the Board training: "good enough for now, safe enough to try." This statement is better than that. It captures who we are.
- Agreed, it is great.

The motion passed.

Action item:

Dick Kurtz will write for the newsletter and will include the purpose statement in the article.

Agenda Item # 8: Adopt Job Description Process

- In a recent Operations and Administrative Team (OAT) report they expressed that they were looking for direction from the Board about the process of creating job descriptions. Personnel has asked the Board to write this policy.

Discussion:

- There has been some concern expressed about the Board's participation in the process: The policy states that the Board is responsible for accepting and approving all job descriptions. There is some question about whether they all need to go to the Board.
- Especially if all the job descriptions are reviewed and updated annually and any small changes need to go back to the Board.
- The Board approval was more pro forma. It was not intended to imply that the Board is involved in all the small details. This policy is an attempt to clarify the job description development process.
- This will not be as big of an issue going forward as there will not be major changes in job descriptions.
- Should there be any change in the wording of the policy to address the point.
- The annual updates to job descriptions would be included in the consent agenda annually going forward.
- Who is writing job descriptions?
Response: It is not specified in the policy. But that might be clarified in other documents. OAT would see any job descriptions before they come to the Board for approval.
- The "if not done prior" section allows for flexibility.
- As a suggestion - the second sentence under number 2 could include ", overseeing the writing and editing of job descriptions," which takes Board out of writing or wordsmithing job descriptions. The policy was amended to include the text in quotes.
- NommComm has brought in a job description for Board members - there are some job descriptions that are not included in this policy. The policy applies to paid staff.
- The title of the document was changed to Staff Job Description Development Policy.

Motion: A motion was made by Don Barber and seconded by Margaret Nichols to accept the Staff Job Description Development Policy with the amendments to address the comments.

The motion passed.

Agenda Item # 9: Board Policy Book Discussions

The notes from the leadership retreat included things that MVT and OAT were not able to work on yet, but they were not structural problems. However, there were some things that were brought up that needed work: MVT needed clarity around roles; OAT felt there was more work than the four person team can handle and should consider expanding the size of OAT. Also, not brought up during the leadership retreat, but brought up outside of the retreat, was the concern that financial oversight by OAT was not appropriate. These topics could be referred to GovCo. Currently, the finance committee and Treasurer are reviewing finances on a regular basis. There is no reason for OAT to redo the work, but if something came up, such as a large unexpected expense, or a revenue issue, some ministry team should be looking at the issue before it comes

to the Board. That team would be OAT

Discussion:

- Finance is not part of the ministry. OAT and MVT are on the ministry side. What OAT is being asked to do related to finance is not clear.
- What happens on the ground de facto: OAT is not involved in finance whatsoever. When finance things have come up in OAT, they get passed off to finance. As an example, there has been some work to reconfigure rental fees and agreements and it came up in OAT and was sent back to Finance. When reviewing Board policy it needs to be clarified that OAT is not intended to manage finance. This may be something that can be discussed in the meeting between MVT and OAT tomorrow.
- Before this structure - did the Minister make financial decisions?
Response: With previous ministers, they were peripherally involved in finances.
- If OAT is meant to replace a minister, then they need to at least be aware of finance and budget and a big picture view of the relationship with the ministry.
- The charge to OAT was read. The charge to OAT is in the policy book.
- What the minister is responsible for was divided between OAT and MVT, OAT can be aware of finance without micromanaging expenses. Finance needs to go to someone, and that could be OAT or the Board - it will need to be clarified through GovCo.
- The governance structure is working well right now.
- The concern is that if OAT feels there is an additional oversight requirement for finances, OAT is uncomfortable with the added responsibility.
- Read from BPB - 3.6.2 The word minister was replaced with OAT.
- Supervision is another issue that was brought up by members of OAT. There was a question of whether they are best situated and qualified to supervise staff. This will need to be discussed between MVT and OAT and when the Board meets with Personnel.
- These topics need to be brought to GovCo.
- Maybe OAT needs to look at the section of the BPB.
- MVT and OAT will be meeting tomorrow.
- Supervision issues are as clear as mud - Supervision will be discussed with personnel, and then the Board can decide where supervision resides, whether with MVT, OAT, or the Board. First, the policies and procedures need to be set.
- When the idea of OAT and MVT was developed, MVT was considered to be a full partner with staff - to be in a collaborative role. Supervision needed to go somewhere and the Board did not want to be in a supervisory role, which left OAT. The hope is to find a way for this to work successfully so it does not become onerous - if it does, we can work to figure out what is needed to make it successful.
- The number of people serving in OAT is a proposed policy - but the Board needs feedback from OAT before adopting or adapting the policy as related to the number of people on the team.

Agenda Item # 10: Adopt Board Evaluation Process

Therese O'Connor brought forward the culture evaluation, and the new evaluation also includes a work product assessment. This is something the Board has for itself.

Discussion:

- Once the evaluation is completed, it would be good to set aside time within a Board meeting, or otherwise, for the Board to discuss the evaluation results more than we did last year.
- It seems hard to envision how we are going to find time to produce and adopt a five year strategic plan on top of everything else we are doing. Maybe make that one extra credit!
- The world has been such that it is hard to think about next month, let alone next 5 years - hopefully we can start to look farther into the future in the coming year.

Motion: A motion was made by Don Barber and seconded by Dick Kurtz to accept the Board evaluation process.

The motion passed.

Agenda Item # 11: Winter Open Question

“How can we, as a community, come together to provide transformative opportunities for spiritual growth that would change or affect ourselves and the world?”

Discussion:

- Host a series of talks by inspiring speakers of different faiths.
- Provide Education on various world religions through Adult religious education.
- Bryan Stevenson, the author of Just Mercy and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, talks about proximity as one of the ways for people to get involved. A project of the church could be to have some proximity with another group within the community.
- Consider what spiritual growth looks like, and link our daily activities to our spiritual actions. With food systems, this can mean looking at how your eating affects the world around you. Other spiritual actions could relate to transportation, connecting with nature, environmental actions, reducing our carbon footprint, all these actions are ways that we can be transformative.
- The question included several good questions. We could focus on all coming together. Practice by picking a simple goal that everyone can agree on. Could we pick a simple consensus task that would change each of us and the world?
- This winter question could be followed up with: name three outcomes that FUSIT should publicly commit to.

- Try to find the top three goals of the membership.
- If we see service as transformative spiritual practice we should focus on social justice.
- Have discussion in the pulpit that is relevant to our own community and recent events, followed by discussions within the congregation.
- Social justice involvement and participation.
- Babies first could benefit from more engagement - we could attempt to double the number of people working on the project.
- Offer a 10-week program on the topic. Members could offer adult ed programs on their passions.
- Create a liturgical calendar to help focus the whole community and have some continuity.
- Host a service weekend where members of the congregation can sign up for projects to help the community, such as community garden rehab, painting classrooms... etc. Find ways to help the community.

Agenda Item # 12: Closing Words

The closing words were read by Don Barber.

Meeting adjourned at 8:03pm.

Minutes taken by Valerie Graves, 02/15/2023.

Resolutions and handouts:

Whereas The Board of Trustees has a vacancy;

Whereas the FUSIT bylaws state “In case of a vacancy in the Board more than 60 days before the Annual Meeting, the Nominating Committee shall recommend one or more candidates, one of whom may be appointed by majority vote of the Board to serve the remainder of the fiscal year.”; and

Whereas Nominating Committee is recommending Rene Rogers as a board trustee; now, therefore, be it

Resolved that the Board vote to approve Rene Rogers as a trustee through the end of Fiscal Year 2022-2023.

Proposal: FUSIT's purpose is to create and maintain a welcoming spiritual home for diverse, free-thinking people to unite in community, to provide fellowship, to broaden perspectives and understanding, and to live into our UU Principles by serving the interconnected web of life in justice, compassion, and love

D. Barber and N. Miller

01/18/23

PART I: Work Culture Assessment

Scale: 3 = Usually 2 = Sometimes 1 = Rarely

_____ 1. The trustees are engaged and unguarded in their discussion of issues.

_____ 2. When a trustee doesn't follow through on a responsibility or is doing something that is counter-productive to the congregation's stated mission or goals, other trustees will call out the problem behavior.

_____ 3. There are no "silos." All of the trustees understand the operational health of the congregation, and they have clarity in what is happening within the different ministries of the congregation and how the ministries are serving the mission and vision.

_____ 4. The trustees have a strong sense of covenant. They can agree to disagree with compassion and understanding knowing that creative argument can be valuable.

_____ 5. All of the trustees feel a sense of commitment to the overall ministry of the congregation and are willing to make sacrifices (such as budget, volunteer resources, scheduling resources) for the good of the whole.

_____ 6. Trustees model humility and acknowledge their weakness and mistakes.

_____ 7. Board and committee meetings are compelling and produce outcomes.

_____ 8. Trustees leave meetings confident that all of the trustees in that meeting are completely committed to the decisions that were made e.g. The wisdom of the whole.

_____ 9. The trustees have a high investment in achieving their goals They like to be productive and progressive in accomplishing goals.

____ 10. Trustees do not hesitate to bring up the most important, pressing, or difficult issues during meetings, and do not shirk from finding a resolution.

____ 11. The trustees have a strong sense of integrity. When they let down the other trustees on their team, they do their best to make amends and do better the next time.

____ 12. Trustees listen deeply to each other and give everyone opportunities to speak and respond.

____ 13. Meetings and other discussions end with clear minutes and an action list with clearly articulated responsibilities.

____ 14. Trustees foster a culture of constructive critique and options when sharing plans or strategies.

____ 15. Trustees are quick to mention the accomplishments of others and slow to take credit for their own work.

Scoring:

Add your scores for the 15 statements as indicated below

Behavior #1: Building Trust	Behavior #2: Mastering Conflict	Behavior #3: Meeting Commitments	Behavior #4: Mutual Accountability	Behavior #5: Focusing on Goals
Question 4 : _____ Question 6: _____ Question 12: _____	Question 1 : _____ Question 7: _____ Question 10: _____	Question 3 : _____ Question 8: _____ Question 13: _____	Question 2 : _____ Question 11: _____ Question 14: _____	Question 5 : _____ Question 9: _____ Question 15: _____

PART II: Work Products Assessment

Scale: 3 = Yes, completed 2 = Partially completed 1 = Not done

- ____ Did the board actively seek input on existing policies and identify the need for new policies or amendment of policies?
- ____ Were Board goals: clear, measurable, timely, and accomplished?
- ____ Did the board monitor all aspects of FUSIT activities?
What systems are in place for monitoring activity? What else should be monitored?
- ____ Was the Vision of Ministry realistic, clear, measurable, accomplished?
- ____ Did the Board produce and adopt a Mission Statement, which articulates the Society's purpose and related statements (vision, values, and a tagline) to communicate the reasons for the Society's work?

6. _____ Did the Board produce and adopt an annual brief list of Open Questions about the Society's future, as the basis for ongoing planning conversations in the board, with the ministry and staff and with the congregation?
7. _____ Did the Board Produce and adopt an annual Vision of Ministry, consisting of a short list of top-priority areas where the Society will advance its work in the coming year, as a starting point for budgeting and staff planning?
8. _____ Did the Board produce and adopt an annual Ministry (MVT, OAT, Staff) evaluation of the Society's success or difficulties in achieving the prior year's Vision of Ministry.
9. _____ Did the Board adopt an annual, mutual, performance evaluation of the ministry teams (MVT, OAT)?
10. _____ Did the Board adopt and conduct an annual performance evaluation of the board's own effectiveness in their respective roles?
11. _____ Did the Board
 - a. review the Annual Operating Budget and Capital Budget created by the Budget Team,
 - b. align the Vision of Ministry with the Annual Operating Budget, and
 - c. present it to the congregation for approval at the annual meeting?
12. _____ Did the Board produce and adopt a five-year Strategic Plan?

[This plan to be updated every three years, consisting of a short list of the most important results the board intends to achieve through the Society's ministry and the strategic choices (regarding program, membership, capital and operating budgets and staffing) the board has made about how to achieve those results. An element of this Plan will assess the long-range financial health of the Society.]

13. Were there other accomplishments made by the Board? List them.

14. Are there ways the board could improve its efficiency and effectiveness in guiding the work of the Society? Please elaborate.

Add question scores together	42-35	34-28	27-22	21-14
	Excellent work	Decent work but could use focus and re-alignment	Needs focus and much improvement	Serious trouble

Board Policy Book

Retreat provided a constructive atmosphere for identifying the general feeling of how the new organization structure is working and identifying items needing attention either due to holes or ambiguities in the organization structure or haven't had time to get to things yet.

Retreat notes summary of what we haven't gotten to yet:

MVT - Spending time thinking about the Whole

- Communication with OAT
- Cohesive message to congregation
- Communication with Staff

OAT - Communication with Staff

- Communication with MVT
- Develop supervision and evaluation structure
- Communication with Board

New Organization Unplugged holes

MVT - Clarity around roles, expectations, boundaries, responsibility, accountability

- MVT's role in Supervision is unclear

OAT - Number of OAT members and OAT responsibility seem burdensome

- Does Financial oversight really belong with OAT- who and where does this responsibility fit in?

Unrelated but part of this BPB discussion, Jens is recommending being included in BPB section 3.6.1:

The Ministry Partnership Teams shall, during the month of January, evaluate the current structure of the Ministry and prepare recommendations for February meeting of the Board of Trustees on the structure of the Ministry for the next church year.

The MPT will submit the recommendations to the BOT for approval at the February BOT meeting. After BOT approval the team shall negotiate the various contracts for the following year.

The evaluation of Senior Staff, whose Offer Letters expire in June, should be completed in February so that the Stewardship and Budget Teams will know the status as they begin their work. And Offer Letter negotiations begin immediately thereafter.

D. Barber
02/14/23

Job Description Processes Policy

1. Personnel Committee is charged with monitoring the job description template and specific job description content that are new or materially changed to ensure there are no HR or compliance concerns with content prior to finalization.
2. Job Descriptions are owned jointly by Operations Administrative Team (OAT) and the Board of Trustees. OAT is responsible for knowing each staff member's responsibilities and analyzing for redundancies and gaps. The Board is responsible for accepting/approving all job descriptions, ensuring that current job descriptions are in place, and are filed with the Administrator and available for viewing upon request by FUSIT members.
3. Job descriptions are to be annually reviewed by the supervisor of record with the staff member. Any proposed changes are brought to OAT and Personnel, for compliance review, then recommended to the Board for acceptance.
4. It is expected that all positions will have a new or updated job description, approved by OAT and Personnel (for compliance) prior to a job being posted. If not done prior, Board review and acceptance will occur at the next regularly scheduled meeting. In situations where finalizing a job description prior to posting may not be feasible due to business needs, the matter must be discussed with the Board's Executive Committee.

D. Barber 1/15/23

Staff Supervision

In recent weeks there has been a flurry of activity and discussion about roles and gaps in staff supervision. The key actors to date have been OAT and Personnel Committee and both recognize an important role for the Board in developing processes and policies going forward.

Let's start off with an easy one. Personnel Committee member John Gaines shared with me: "what we have is not technically a Personnel Policy Manual, but rather a Personnel Manual (PM)- a living document designed to provide "general information on our policies, practices, and benefits". I propose that by Board resolution we change the name of this document to Personnel Manual next month.

Also, John Gaines, in his role on OAT and PC, sent a recent email to me stating:

"The Board make clear whose responsibility it is to create written processes for: 1) Job creation and job description development; 2) Hiring process; 3) Supervision; 4) Performance Appraisal; 5) Employee professional development; 6) Grievance processes; 7) Employee Discipline and 8) Termination.

As part of the clarification of supervision, there is a need for clarity about exactly what each staff member does (e.g., is there cross training or defined procedure manuals or other written processes, etc.)"

He also shared that PC continues to work through the Personnel Manual to bring forward ideas for updating.

One of those ideas is updating Section 3.4 which can be found in the Supervision folder in 01/18/23 Agenda Packet of Board google drive. I will propose we adopt this new language next month following any new ideas that might surface during our retreat.

After conversations with OAT members and Nancy Miller from MVT, I had written a short memo (please find the Supervision Roles doc in the Supervision folder) to begin the discussion of the 8 points PC brought forward needing clarification.

The 8 supervision process points are listed below with status/ideas to begin discussion:

- 1) Job creation and job description development: (see draft Job Description Processes Policy in Board Packet Discussion Folder)
- 2) Hiring process: Policy needs development – ask PC for support?
- 3) Supervision: OAT taking the lead- most items should be covered in updated (PM)
- 4) Performance Appraisal: OAT taking the lead for staff- BoT takes lead on organization as a whole and leadership teams
- 5) Employee professional development: OAT taking the lead- most items should be covered in updated PM
- 6) Grievance processes: already covered in PM
- 7) Employee Discipline: Needs Policy developed – BoT to ask PC for support
- 8) Termination: Needs Policy developed – BoT to ask PC for support

D.Barber 1/16/23