

Fred Balfour (President) called the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) to order at 6:32 pm on Tuesday, October, 17th 2023.

Trustees Present: Fred Balfour (President), Don Barber (on zoom), Tom Coakley, Valerie Graves (Clerk), Megan McCormick (on zoom), Margaret Nichols (Vice President)

Ex- Officio Members of the Board: Walt Peck (Treasurer) (on zoom), Emily Richards (Director of Congregational Life)

Trustees Absent: Renee Rogers

FUSIT Members & Guests: Nancy Miller

Handouts:

- Agenda Item # 5: [w Treasurer's Report, October 2023.docx](#)
- Agenda Item # 6: *Handed out on paper at the meeting.*
 - [BoT MbrShp - V4.1 - 2023-24 -.pdf](#)
 - [FirstU Org Chart \(2023-10-11a\).pdf](#)
 - [Governance Chart of Committees & Teams - \(2023-10-08\).pdf](#)
- Agenda Item # 7:
 - [Board Meeting Minutes 091823](#)
 - [Proposed Motion - Change Budgeted \\$3,000 Xmas Eve to 12-23-2023](#)
 - [Proposed Motion: Approve Two Nom ComMembers \(2023-20-17\)](#)
- Agenda Item # 9:
 - [Resolution - Board Work-Product Schedule & Assignments - \(2023-09-15a\)](#)
 - [Resolution - Board Work-Product Schedule & Assignments - \(2023-09-15a\)...](#)
- Agenda Item # 10: [Open Questions Options \(2023-10-17a\)](#)
- Agenda Item # 11: [w oct finance liaison.docx](#)

Agenda Item # 1: Welcome and Chalice Lighting

Margaret Nichols lit the chalice and Fred Balfour read a selection about the fifth principle.

Agenda Item # 2: Congregational Communication Period

There were no congregants present to raise discussion points. The Board reflected on whether it was a concern that people do not attend the Board meetings and were reminded that there have been attendees from the congregation in the recent past.

Agenda Item # 3: Changes to Agenda

The agenda items were moved to accommodate the schedules of those presenting. The Long term project of a culture of involvement was moved to after the team, committee, and liaison reports. The treasurer's report would happen when Walt was present and ready.

Discussion:

- Is the fundraiser for Beacon on Aurora on the agenda?
Response: The decisions about that fundraiser do not need to be brought to the Board level. The fundraiser was discussed by the Operations and Administrative Team and will be discussed with Reverend Janet tomorrow.
- The staff will need to know the plans soon so that they can advertise.
Response: There should be information available tomorrow.

Agenda Item # 4: Visioning Question

The purpose of the vision question is for the Board to have time to talk about an issue in a general way without making any decisions. The topic for discussion was the concept of a Culture of Involvement vs. Volunteerism.

- On the topic of involvement, in the nominating committee report this month, they reported that it has been hard to get the Board member count up to nine - maybe the Bylaws should be changed to five or greater or nine or less.
- The Board can start thinking systematically about what we can do. The question of involvement is one that is bilateral: is an exchange; Rather than volunteerism, which sounds like service. We need to leverage what has already been done and has worked.
- Is a culture of involvement the right title?
- As head of hospitality, the message is that the best way to meet people is working in the kitchen or greeting at the door.
- The use of the word culture implies an atmosphere of contributing and involvement. The vision is to create a culture rather than relying on one or two volunteers.
- The question is how to do that without being exclusive

- The social justice projects end up requesting that people give in a financial way - by buying supplies or giving money. Financial donations excluding those who do not have money to spare. There need to be other ways to be involved or helpful.
- A culture of involvement that makes it possible for everyone to be involved.
- Might be helpful to have a place for suggestions of other options for involvement when someone is electing to not be on a hospitality team.
- It is nice to communicate that even sharing their voice or opinion is a form of involvement when the open question is distributed to the congregation. .
- Some people do not want to be extroverted or social
- Introverts could do tasks for the community individually or on their own that are still valued and important.
- When we are thinking of people being involved we can trust that all people want to be needed, appreciated, and valued. When we are thinking about involvement we need to think about how we deliver the message and how it is received. Nancy pushed the idea of appreciation during joys and sorrows. There haven't been appreciations lately, but it is a great way to uplift those who are volunteering, and to help folks feel they are needed and appreciated. Emails can be sent, but when thinking about how to engage people, The request needs to be made to them directly. Involvement comes from individual connections.
- Being seen and heard is important. Making an organizational change and getting people's commitment to change is highly relational. Even someone who doesn't want to be social, desires to be seen and heard. The step of collecting data needs to happen in a relational way as well in order for that to be meaningful.
- It is nice to see families joining in. Children joined in with oatmeal and ice cream, and helped scoop ice cream. There should be Involvement opportunities that excite kids.
- It is important to include the youth voice any time we can. It is a human rights issue to include youth when making decisions at a system level. Kids love to help if the request is made in the right way.
- The relational aspect is important. Where we are currently, this seems impossible. The staff does not have time to build relationships with people. They are too busy and it feels impossible. The people in leadership roles are doing so many things and are pulled in so many directions that it's hard to have time to create relationships. It feels like a steep battle. How can we get from this place to the place we have alluded to where we have more help?
- Do we still have a membership committee?
Response: We have an engagement and outreach person who has been here for 3 weeks and some other volunteers to help run the welcome table. But it is only a 10 hour a week position. It is not clear that she will have much time to spend on volunteerism and events.

- We can only outsource so much when changing our culture. We could hire an expert but at the end of the day it is the people who are most connected and embedded that need to build the relationships. It all funnels down to a certain group of people - I can see how that feels like a mountain that is hard to climb.
- Do not need to get to every person to change the culture, but have some that are willing to live the culture and model for others for inspiration. It will reach a tipping point and become the culture.
- Renee Ruchotzke led a webinar for board members of UU congregations on encouraging volunteerism. In the webinar, a UUA staffer said that congregations are still so traumatized by the pandemic that they are not able to volunteer for more than little things - now is not that moment to ask for volunteers. But then what do we do in the meantime?
 - We could address that trauma.
 - There could be small groups where we could listen to each other.
 - We need to move beyond a place of welcome and into a place of belonging.
 - Connection and commitment can be healing. What heals trauma is belonging and relationship. People are avoidant, but where is the place to provide some education for what healing can look like.
 - In the future, we can continue the discussion with what other things people can do. What might be rewarding? We need someone to do an internal audit - maybe that would appeal to someone who is not as interested in extroverted activities. Maybe we could brainstorm what that list of opportunities might look like.
 - The Team Fair is coming up and will allow people to know what opportunities there are for helping with teams.

Agenda Item # 5: Treasurer Report

Fred Balfour: The fiscal report for the last fiscal year is in the treasury folder with the last correction. Thai can provide a basis for this year. As we look at the treasury report, there is an effort to name things in ways that clarify what they are. There will be a separate google drive folder for managing money. Right now the treasurer is working with the Board to coordinate when things get sent to the Board before each meeting.

Walt Peck - The revised addition of the “profit and loss vs budget” includes the change of moving the \$5000 of income that had been recorded in Aug 2023, but should have been included in the totals for last year. That money was moved to where it belongs.

The Board will be getting three reports every month:

1. Profit and Loss for the month
2. Profit and Loss for the year versus the budget

3. Updated Balance Sheet

The timing is tricky as the bookkeeper settled back in after maternity leave. The reports will come through Slack from Tom Coakley. They are not public reports because they will have salary information. The Board packet for the meeting will include a version without salaries and with expenses by category. The process for the documents starts with the bookkeeper getting information from the treasurer on the first of the month, which is used to produce the financial statements. The statements are reviewed by the treasurer and head of the finance committee (Nathan Fawcett), then with the whole finance committee. The treasurer report is then written based on that review.

When Board members read the financial documents, they should look at the cash on hand. Right now we have a good amount of money. The second thing to pay attention to is the year to date versus the budget column on the Profit and Loss statement for the year. We are now about 20% into the church year so the percentages should be similar, although some may vary based on when bills are paid. Maintenance has spent a lot of money already this year because of the annex flooring.

Discussion:

- Why is the fundraising so high on the Profit and Loss for the year to date?
Response: When the church does fundraising in April/May, a lot of folks provide the money for the year all at once, especially if they need the contribution to be called a grant rather than a pledge, so we usually do really well in the fall. Usually in the spring the situation is more tight..

Motion: A motion was made by Fred Balfour and seconded by Margaret Nichols to accept the treasurer report and financial reports.

The motion passed.

Agenda Item # 6: Board President Comments - Fred Balfour

A chart of the Board members and their terms was shown and reviewed. An organizational chart for the governance of FUSIT was also shown. Babies First is an outside organization and not part of our budget.

Discussion:

- The organizational chart is missing staff.
Response: Feedback on how to best represent the staff in this chart would be welcome.
- The chart is missing the Nominating Committee.

Another chart of the committees and teams shown. The Board has the important role of approving members of the committees.

Discussion:

- Stewardship should be added as a committee that needs a liaison.
- These documents are also not in the online board packet. The agreement was to have all files discussed or shown in the meeting, in the board packet.

Response: Printed copies were handed out at the meeting and the files are elsewhere in the Board folders and are shared as tools and ways to think about the organization.

Action Item:

Fred Balfour will update the charts based on comments and all Board members should review and provide feedback.

Agenda Item # 7: Liaison, Team, and Committee Reports, and Consent Agenda

Personnel, Megan McCormick, liaison: Personnel has finished their recommendations for the Board Policy Book (BPB) and sent them to Scott Grover and Laura Free of the Governance Committee (GovCo) but there has been no response.

Response: Don Barber will take the recommendations to GovCo. The plan is to take the adjustments from the Board and the input from personnel and put together a draft BPB to bring to the Board and then the Board will work on the document.

Personnel has asked if the current job description policy is active and relevant.

Response: Yes - the policy was adopted last year. OAT reviews job descriptions before the Board. If the Ministry Visioning Team (MVT) reviewed some and OAT reviewed some then no one group would be making sure there is no overlap, so the job descriptions all go through OAT. Once they come to the Board, the Board knows they have been reviewed and the Board job is pro forma. The Board can expect the job descriptions for the Assistant for RE and the Childcare Coordinator to be in the consent agenda soon.

Consent agenda items:

- [Board Meeting Minutes 091823](#)
- [Proposed Motion - Change Budgeted \\$3,000 Xmas Eve to 12-23-2023](#)
- [Proposed Motion: Approve Two Nom ComMembers \(2023-20-17\)](#)

Discussion:

- Any changes to the minutes?

- The current process where the Clerk turns the minutes around quickly and asks for comments, is helpful. The comment can be provided while the meeting is fresh and changes can be made before the minutes show up in the agenda for approval.

Motion: A motion was made by Fred Balfour and seconded by Tom Coakley to approve the consent agenda.

The motion passed.

Agenda Item # 8: Introduce Long Term Project: Culture of Involvement - Megan McCormick

This is a big task and the staff is feeling overwhelmed. This also is not something that hasn't been worked on before. The starting point will be fact finding and processes will need to be built to get the information the Board needs. We need to know what we already have in terms of involvement and where people already feel connected and have made commitments. There will also be a needs assessment. The hope is to develop a plan that doesn't all fall on one person and is intentional and proactive. People are currently working in silos - maybe this process can bring a collective understanding and strategy to the efforts for involvement.

This work will require people - and hopefully not the people who are already involved in everything. The effort will be to implement a culture of involvement with a focus on sustainability. There can be time limited pushes that will help shift the culture toward something that is more long term and sustainable.

There is psychology around motivation and while we can understand ambivalence about a topic, things can be done to decrease that ambivalence. People are ambivalent, but they also understand the importance of involvement.

The project will begin with meetings with MVT and the Social Justice Council to listen and find out what is going on in those groups.

Involvement and commitment are good for people. People are often scared to jump in but once they do, it feels good. The curve sometimes goes too far with people over committing, but there is a sweet spot that is self reinforcing. And in the spirit of the discussions at the Board retreat, rather than just giving a list of the ways to be involved, we need to look at the messaging of why people should be involved.

Agenda Item # 9: Approval of Updates to Work Products and Schedule - Fred Balfour

Motion: A motion was made by Fred Balfour and seconded by Margaret Nichols to accept the file "Resolution - Board Work-Product Schedule & Assignments - (2023-09-15a)" and further, the board understands that the schedule and parties may change during the year.

All of these things will inform the agenda and plans for the year. The PDF includes the changes based on feedback from the Board. There are two files in the Board packet, one with comments and one with the resolved comments included.

Discussion:

- Typically, the Board asks two open questions. The chart should also have a January date for open questions. The last item related to the BPB should have been done last June but was not because GovCo was waiting for input. For this year, The Board should be looking to adopt the updated BPB in January and will not need to go through it again until the following year - with June being the right time to address it in the future. The document title should include the church year of 23-24 because specific names are provided for folks that are responsible and they may not be responsible in future years.

Motion: A motion was made by Don Barber and seconded by Tom Coakley to amend the document with the January open question date, January as the timing for adoption of the BPB, and the inclusion of the church year in the document title.

The motion to amend passed.

The motion passed.

Agenda Item # 10: Fall Open Question Decision

- Fred Balfour

All the open questions were merged into one document and then grouped by topic. Columns were added to show if the question was related to an internal or external issue. Several questions related to a culture of involvement. Other question topics were: governance, social justice, needs of members, and Sunday services. The goal is to pick an open question for the fall, pick a few and send them to MVT for input, pick two that can be for fall and winter, or to form a small committee to work on the open question development.

Discussion:

- The document changed right before the meeting. That makes it hard for Board members who were not able to read the document the day of the meeting.
- The newsletter is due tomorrow. The Board could pick a category and then wordsmith into something everyone can be happy with.
- Involvement has floated to the top.
- Some questions are similar.
- The question could have a scale and then a write in option for engaging.
- People need choices of answers.
- Open questions should be open for them to reflect.
- The first suggestion has the words “beyond the Sunday service” which could be leading rather than open.
- In another question, the word “Service” is too much like volunteerism and can be loaded. The word could be changed to involvement.
- “Conditions” was meant to refer to what obstacles need to be removed so that people can be involved?
- The question could be: What involvement opportunities are wanted and what conditions are needed?
- Would some answer with new programs for ministry? Are we looking for that? Or are we asking how to get people involved in what we already do?
- Do not want to imply that we are expanding programs.
- The Board wants to get information about what the congregation is thinking about. The question should be as broad as possible.
- What avenues or paths would cause them to be more engaged?
- What are the barriers to becoming more deeply engaged in FUSIT?
- There is also a question related to how we need to evolve for the future, which Informs vision of ministry (VoM).
- Can the question of Involvement wait until January?

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- For the VoM - the Board will work with MVT in April. The winter question would still be in time for the VoM.
 - The involvement question should be first and then evolution can be in the winter.
 - Add in a meaningful way - in a way that is meaningful to the individual and fulfilling to them. How do we as a community make it so people want to come in?

Proposed Fall Open Question: What types of opportunities for involvement bring you a sense of meaning and purpose and what barriers exist to you becoming more deeply involved in this community?

Motion: A motion was made by Tom Coakley and seconded by Margaret Nichols to accept the proposed fall Open Question.

The motion passed.

The Board agreed to have the topic of evolution for the future for the Winter Open Question.

Agenda Item # 11: Finance Committee Input on Creation of Three Year Financial Projection: 2024-2025 to 2026-2027 - Tom Coakley

The October finance report was shown. The plan for the creation of the three year financial projection was discussed. The finance committee came up with a conceptual model and then a list of what they are working on. There will be a tour on Thursday for Tom Schickle about how the space could be rentable. Other ideas are percolating as well. More information will be brought to the Board as the project progresses. Finance will be informed that the Board is thrilled by their efforts.

Don Barber: The finance committee is working on tasks we asked them to work on and that income is so important for determining future programming. But no one is working on the current deficit. Despite carry over, the current budget is \$15,000 short. The auction is projected to raise \$14,000 and new fundraising is projected at \$5,000 and the teams need to get to work on those projects. The Board needs to be really engaged in finances.

Discussion:

- Clarification - the budget could be \$34,000 short if auction and fundraising is not effective. The Board will need to work with stewardship to bring in the rest of the pledges.
- The budget should be a discussion item for the next meeting agenda and the Board should connect with those involved with auction and fundraising in the past.

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- Social justice has been asking the congregation for money. There is no recycle sale, which, in the past, was a way for people to use their time to bring in money. We need to give FUSIT people a way to contribute their time and energy to bring in revenue.
 - FUSIT could host events that bring in members of the community to support FUSIT.

Action Items:

The Budget shortfalls will be added to the next meeting agenda. Each Board member should be thinking about ideas for supporting fundraising.
Fred Balfour will invite stewardship to come to a meeting to give a report on pledges.

Agenda Item # 12: Name of Organization - Emily Richards

We are called the First Unitarian Society of Ithaca, but we are not Unitarian. We are Unitarian Universalists.

Agenda Item # 13: Closing Words

The closing words were read by Fred Balfour.

Meeting adjourned at 8:38pm.

Minutes taken by Valerie Graves, 10/17/2023.