

First Unitarian Society of Ithaca

Board of Trustees Meeting

December 9, 2020 Minutes

President Andy Turner called the regular monthly meeting of the Board of Trustees (BoT) to order at 6:34pm on Wednesday, December 9, 2020.

Trustees Present: Andy Turner (president), Matt Hare (vice president), Diana Nier (clerk), Therese O'Connor, Lyn Staack, Simon Catterall, Kim Wilkinson, Carsten Hess, Elton Hall, Rev. Margaret Weis (ex officio), and Jennifer Streid-Mullen (treasurer, ex officio).

Trustees Absent: none

FUSIT Members & Guests: Mary Kirkpatrick, Sara Catterall, Emily Richards

Agenda Item # 1: Opening Reading and Consent Agenda Approval

Rev. Margaret lit the chalice and read a selection.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:

- Approve the minutes of the November 11 Board of Trustees meeting, shown in Google Docs folder as of the date and time of this meeting

MOTION: Approve the Consent Agenda Items. Moved by Therese, seconded by Simon.

PASSED.

Agenda Item # 2: Minister's Report and Upcoming Dates

(Newsletter deadline this Thursday, December 17, at 8:00am)

Reverend Margaret updated the board on:

- The church office will be closed from December 24, 2020 to January 3, 2021. All items must be given to Jessica by December 22.
- Rev. Margaret is halfway through putting together a Healthy Congregations Team, and hopes to have the first meeting before Christmas. She is working to compile resources.
- Rev. Margaret has been elected to serve as the Vice President for the St. Lawrence UUMA clergy chapter. The Board extends congratulations!

Agenda Item # 3: Nominating Committee

- The Nominating Committee is two members short since no one was nominated or elected at the June 2020 annual congregational meeting.
- The Board can appoint people to the Nominating Committee, and is working toward that end.
- We need to inform the congregation and request any "nominations from the floor".

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- Diana will send text to Loretta Heimbuch for the upcoming newsletter.

Draft Text: In addition to voting on candidates to the FUSIT Board of Trustees, the annual meeting of the society is also the time that we elect members to the Nominating Committee. For the June 17, 2020 annual meeting we did not have a full slate for the Nomination Committee. As a result, we have two outstanding spots on the Committee that have gone unfilled. We also did not open up the floor for nominations during the meeting for these two slots. At this point, according to the by-laws, the Board would like to consider candidates for these slots. If you would like to nominate someone (and they agree) for a two-year term, pro-rated from June 17, 2020 and completed in June 2022, please write to Andy Turner (FUSIT Board President) at ast4@cornell.edu.

Agenda Item # 4: 2021-22 Vision of Ministry Process

- We need this approved by the February meeting at the latest.
- Congregational input? Attempted in the past, got very little response
- If we get it done before the February Auction, we can then tie the fundraising to specific VOM items/themes.
- The Board will schedule a VOM balcony meeting in January, prior to January BOT meeting (Jan. 13).

Agenda Item # 5: Treasurer Succession Process

- Jennifer has a job description written a few years ago; she will update and summarize it and we'll publicize it again.
- Can the job be altered to be less intimidating to new volunteers? The most critical skills are comfort with spreadsheet and ability to balance among a lot of people with different perspectives. Accounting background is not vital. Does take a lot of time.
- Time commitment is ~6 hours a week during budget season (April to mid-May), and ~6 hours a month during the rest of the year.
- Board members should brainstorm potential candidates by January Balcony meeting
- The difficulty is identifying candidates. It's difficult to recruit without being face-to-face, and brainstorming among existing leadership tends to bring up the same names over and over.
- Rev. Margaret suggested <https://www.uuinstitute.org/courses/spiritualleadership-305/> as an option to increase membership participation in congregational leadership.
- Communication is vital! Can we create a bulletin board section on the website? Add a "volunteer/leadership/share your skills opportunities" segment in the newsletter?
- Worry about over-functioning. Sometimes it's okay to leave a hole unfilled for a while.

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Agenda Item # 6: FUSIT Sanctuary Upgrades

- Two issues: what are we doing (scope), and how will we pay for it (finance).
- Sara Catterall explained the current plans: repair sanctuary plaster, repaint newly plastered walls, possibly improve insulation in upper part of sanctuary, clean large pendant lights and rewire for LED, organ repair in the spring after dirty work is finished
- This has been pending since 2012, when the Board decided to improve the annex kitchen instead.
- Cracks may have been caused by increased weight from 1990s renovations, but they have not changed over the past several years and do not cluster around the northwest corner where the increased weight is greatest. The structure is sound.
- Mary Kirkpatrick explained that the northwest column developed a slight tilt during the 1990s renovations. Whether this can be corrected is unknown, but it is not strictly necessary.
- What could we save if we skip the additional insulation? Estimated \$800-\$1000/year savings on heating with new insulation. Cost of adding insulation (if bundled in with other projects) is \$24,000.
- Can the new lights be postponed? That requires removal of the pews, so it's much more cost-effective to include it now.
- We currently have \$82,000 funds committed from members of the congregation, which leaves roughly \$52,000 to cover with a loan. We can combine that with the remaining balance of the previous Endowment Capital loan for a total of \$69,000, to be paid off at a flat rate over the next ten years.
- This is the most-requested improvement for the past several years. It would also be great to return to a newly upgraded and refurbished sanctuary.

MOTION: The Board approves the Sanctuary Work Capital Project for \$134,000, and a loan from Endowment of up to \$52,000 additional, \$76,000 total, at 3% interest to pay for it. Moved by Elton, seconded by Therese. **PASSED.**

Agenda Item # 7: Financial Update

- We will need to repay \$9,000 of the PPP loan. This will reduce our carryover to the 2021-22 fiscal year from ~\$20,000 to ~\$10,000.

Agenda Item # 8: Service Auction and Raffle

- The ad hoc Service Auction committee has chosen Bidding Owl as our auction platform. It contains a lot of useful tools in-platform, and charges 5% of proceeds rather than an up-front fee.
- The ad hoc committee would like to have a more formal structure as a permanent fundraising committee, and will need a chair.

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- The February auction can be viewed as a trial run/learning experience. We will need several events throughout the year rather than one large single event, and can use Bidding Owl for future events such as a raffle.
- We need some restrictions on submissions, to make sure people don't just chuck up all their Recycle Sale contributions. We also need to make sure items are not stored in the church, and that contributors are responsible for delivering their items to the winning bidders.
- Stress the SERVICE aspect, tying in to acts of love. Discourage items, with a potential exception for baked goods/home cooked meals.
- Are there any legal restrictions on what we can offer via a public online platform? Lyn will research.
- Needed positions for Service Auction: someone to coordinate ad hoc committee meetings and auction process; someone to recruit service donations from members (outreach); someone to market on the website; tech support to monitor and run the Bidding Owl platform and ensure items are uploaded and listed correctly.
- Lyn will submit a "volunteer opportunities" blurb to the newsletter.
- A raffle (maybe with a big ticket item at the top) could be a relatively low-cost, low-effort fundraiser. This could also be run through BiddingOwl. There are services that offer various bundled options for raffles, so the winner can pick which bundle they prefer out of a handful of options. The raffle would run alongside the Service Auction. It would not replace it.
- Matt and the ad hoc committee will research raffle options on Bidding Owl and submit a proposal at the January meeting.

Agenda Item # 9: Anti-Racism Work (Ministry Team and Jan Retreat)

- The Living the Pledge program had a successful launch this past weekend.
- Rev. Sunshine Wolf has some suggestions to help keep the congregation and Board focused on anti-racism work. The proposed meeting time is Saturday, January 30, probably 10am-3pm with a lunch break.

Agenda Item # 10: Meeting/Action Summary for Communication

- Diana did a quick summary.
- January Board Minute about Service Auction volunteer opportunities.

Meeting adjourned at 8:06pm.

Minutes taken by Diana Nier, 12/9/2020.