

## 2023-06-27 Minutes UUSF Board of Trustees Meeting

Rochelle called the meeting to order at 6:33. Present were moderator Rochelle Fortier Nwadibia, vice moderator Jonah Berquist, treasurer Lori Lai, acting secretary Lucy Smith, and continuing board member Linda Enger. Amy Kelly was present for the last meeting of her term and incoming members Sam King and Galen Workman were there for the organizational meeting for the next term. Senior Minister Vanessa Rush Southern and Director of Operations Laura Ludwig were also present. Continuing member Megan Lehman had computer/phone problems and was unable to attend. Rochelle led us in reading the board covenant.

The consent agenda was reviewed and discussed, then Amy moved and Jonah seconded a motion to approve. The motion carried.

Lori presented the treasurer's report. Hooray for us! Hard work brought us to meet and slightly pass our pledge goal. She noted that after a slight delay, the proposed lease renewal document for the Montessori school will be ready for us to review at the July meeting. Looking forward, facility expenses have been running over budget, for various reasons, and in future we'll need to align the budget with what we're actually paying. Lori noted that Laura has been working toward that, but we have a ways to go. Per Laura, some overages are in utilities, so we'll need to raise the budget, as we can't cut those expenses.

In answer to a query from Rochelle, Lori said the committee negotiating the Montessori lease comprises Kathleen Quenneville, Laura Ludwig, and Facilities Manager Dan Barnard. Lori is monitoring. Lucy asked whether the board needs to approve the parameters for the lease terms. The answer is yes. Kathleen will present the proposal in July.

Dir Laura's succinct report is in the consent agenda. She added to it with a recap of where we are re: sextons. Kelvin is staying for a few shifts a week, Leland is still recovering from his stroke, and we have just hired a new sexton, Tony Miller. We are still using two consultants from Structured Facilities, but Dan is planning to cut back one of them.

Laura answered some questions about draws taken/not taken on some accounts and about the operating reserve fund, which is a particular account, held at Schwab, not UUCEF (the UUA's Common Endowment Fund). It's not cash on hand, which is what we use to run operations. It's a rainy-day fund, conservatively invested to be safe. We do take a prudent draw, 5.5%, each year.

Megan had asked for some time on the agenda for a question about accessibility. Rochelle explained the issue in Megan's absence. It's not clear how to gain access to the building for someone who uses the Geary St. ramp to the front doors if the doors are locked. LE noted that there is a buzzer to the front desk, but it can be hard to see. RFN suggested better

signage.

VRS noted GA resolution, which would have severely hobbled what UUCEF could invest in, failed.

Vanessa's report: Staff taking summer vacations. Her priorities are reading, program planning, AND solidifying hiring practices with Dir Laura, using some of the Edgility Consulting insights for use in hiring a membership/young adult coordinator and preparing to hire an intern. Rochelle reminded us that a thorough review of governance and personnel policies was one of the things the congregation asked for when we were developing the strategic plan. The board put that in first-year priorities. Also, re: programming, Vanessa and Rev Laura are seeing a real desire to be together and a real desire for joy. She asked us to put Aug 18 on our calendars for an Extravaganza of Joy. If it works, we may try to make it a quarterly event. Format for this one is a meal together, then English country dancing (with instruction from within the community), also games and puzzles.

Rochelle asked that we answer year-end reflection questions suggested by Vanessa. Sam put the questions in the chat. We were able to address only the first two in the time we had.

#### 1. How did the year go? What are we proud of? What is left to do?

**Linda:** Started work on Strat Plan; to be done = how to check progress and keep going. She also noted that changes to board makeup may mean reassigning areas, also that we need to follow-up with the congregation about progress on the strategic plan. Rochelle noted that despite leaving the board, Scott will continue with the bylaws review. Also that Galen will be communicating with the congregation (when he knows better what we've been doing and striving to do).

**Amy:** She and Rev Laura have discussed ways to engage multiple generations, which the Extravaganza of Joy addresses. She's proud that we actually met our pledge goal. We need to go back to strategic plan discussion at all meetings; also check whether it needs tweaking.

**Lori:** proud of getting BoT backing for SACReD resolution passage, it helped galvanize the congregation to come on board. She is also proud of the careful and responsible reaction of the board to financial challenges despite a rocky year for the economy. To do: Keep moving on the strategic plan, we need financial strategy (which is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year priority); also, membership, we need to look at recruiting and maintaining new members to keep strong; we need to be sure our BIPoC community sees that the board is engaging with all principles, which may inspire them to serve on the board. Lori also gave a shout out to Beloved Conversations attendees.

**Jonah:** He's also proud of our participation in Beloved Conversations, also WEAV; and that we got the operational reserves policy sorted out – hooray! That was a long time coming. Also, bylaw change (re: member expulsion). He said we had a good retreat for organizing, prioritizing elements of the strategic plan. And we made cards! To do: Figure out how to track strategic plan progress and how to report that out to the congregation.

**Dir Laura:** She's proud of our successful canvass, and of the work done to address the potential shortfall; it shows what we're made of when we go off the known map. What's left to do: figure out checkpoints/rulers for measuring progress on strategic plan and define milestones.

**RFN:** We were OK tracking strategic plan progress until the last 2 months, when the canvass needed attention. At our retreat, we were able to prioritize elements over five years. She's proud of the personnel practices overhaul – just locating what policies had been in place (including governance, etc.) was a challenge. Shout out to Carrie Steere-Salazar, Linda Enger, and Dianne Allen for their work reviewing all the policies. She's also proud of our retreat! To do: get the board handbook out to board members. When it's ready, the Nominating Committee and Erica Murray will use it to provide training for incoming board members.

**VRS:** She's proud that we welcomed new senior staff, especially Rev Laura Shennum. Their work in learning to work together helped us all successfully weather some big transitions.

2. How did our work with the staff go? Is there any connection to the congregation and staff that we hoped for and didn't get?

**Jonah:** Staff transition re: Joe's duties were sometimes a little bumpy, it wasn't always clear who did what, so some things, e.g., roster for annual meeting, were not quite what was needed.

**Amy:** Sextons didn't know to water flowers or where cleanup equipment (for flowers) is.

**Lori:** We could do a bit more reaching out to the congregation when we need help; e.g., could Suzy ask members whether they know people who might need a room, and could they help recruit rentals.

**VRS** asked that we send specifics rather than list tonight.

**Rochelle** noted that renaming Rev Laura's title to Minister of Congregational Life makes a big difference; also that the Right Relations Committee is making progress.

3. What norms did we have about how we did our work together? Which of those worked well for us? Are there any we might consider experimenting with?

4. Any other thoughts looking back, and now, forward?

GA Report from Amy. Her written report is to come. Of note were equalizing measures taken to put onsite speakers in a separate room on camera so all speakers looked the same to everyone and a perceived gulf in participation opportunities between onsite and online attendees was minimized. Amy found that quite effective. She said that all voting was online (and time differences were accounted for), which was also an equalizer. She reminded us that the Article II change will replace the eight principles with a Statement of Covenant. Amy feels it's important to support onsite GA meetings as our future as an association of UU churches depends on being able to know/see each other and work together.

John Buehrens celebrated 50 years in ministry at this GA. Also celebrated were 60 years of the Women's Federation, which Amy's mother (wrote bylaws to conjoin Unitarian and Universalist women's groups) and aunt (first executive) helped create in the Rochester, NY church where Amy grew up.

**New business:** Organization of officers. Though our bylaws state this meeting should happen within a day of the annual meeting, we've devolved from that in recent years, maybe per the pandemic. We'll work to get back. When asked by Rochelle, parliamentarian Bob Bacon said we should just go ahead and create/present a slate of officers now, then vote on it at the next meeting, which will satisfy the 14 day notice requirement. The slate we have = Jonah for moderator, Sam for vice moderator, Liz for secretary, and Lori for treasurer. Lucy moved to accept slate; Galen seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried with all 2023-2024 Trustees present voting "Yes." Rochelle announced she will be stepping down both as moderator and as a board member. Her final goal was to complete the board handbook, which is now done.

Jonah will check with the Nom Com and bylaws re: electing a new member to take her place. Galen said we'll need a special election. Vanessa asked how Rochelle wanted to announce her stepping down and suggested she put something in the summer newsletter, which is the biggest platform and is going out in the next few days. Vanessa spoke of her gratitude for the leadership Rochelle has provided; especially working to make the cultural changes (per Paula Cole Jones) we need to live our principles, encouraging board members to equip themselves to make these changes; e.g. Beloved Conversations, WEAV; all the work we've done on being able to name/heal harm, creating the Right Relations team, etc. What not all saw was how learning to navigate those changes called for a lot from leadership, ministers and Rochelle, including

stepping in to hire consultants (Aisha Hauser, etc.). It's exhausting, beautiful, important work, emphasis on exhausting. So getting help to keep it sustainable and to share was invaluable. Rochelle is on the board of the Starr King School for the Ministry and becomes vice chair (with Alison Miller, minister in Portland), as they kick off a capital campaign and develop a strategic plan. This work is happening at a time when seminaries are closing, so those that are left are that much more important and challenged. Rochelle has been a steady hand, guiding, holding the light -- both holding and pushing us, like a shepherd. (Go turtles go! Per GA sermon. Inside joke?) VRS is proud of the progress we made this year, much of which happened thanks to Rochelle's work, which came at a cost to her. RFN: huge that we passed the 8<sup>th</sup> principle, but how to implement it has been the challenge. Thanks to VRS leadership, we're building the pillars to support that work, including hiring Laura Shennum, who's been amazing in terms of navigating, resolving conflicts. Hoping Right Relations Comm will be a big contribution to Beloved Community for us by providing a baseline for a more elevated way to interact with each other. That will be the most positive message we can send: that when people come into a community where longstanding members speak to each other with disrespect, it's not a community you want to be in. Not just microaggressions, but this year has been bad; VRS has thrown herself between bodies sometimes this year.

**Good & Welfare:** Jonah suggests we need to send the (retiring) moderator a card, and one to Liz. Ben Bear has been in the ICU for a week; Liz van Tassel is having chemo for breast cancer. Per Dir Laura, one of the sexton consultants stepped into a beatdown of a homeless woman on our front steps and his face was hit. They'll work with Dan to figure out what to say on a card.

Vanessa read a closing from Eric Walker Wikstrom, The Purpose of This Community Is to Help Its People Grow.

**Adjournment:** Rochelle called for a motion to adjourn. Jonah moved, Lucy seconded; the motion carried. Rochelle adjourned the meeting at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted by Lucy Smith