

Unitarian Society of Hartford Board Meeting July 20, 2023

Unitarian Society of Hartford
Combination - USH Board Meeting Room and Zoom
Quorum NO ___ YES X

Board Attendees	Guests	Regrets
Dana Donovan	David Newton	
Nancy Kemmerer	Janice Newton	
Jon Covault	Sherry Manetta	
Rick Tsukada	Laura Cipriano	
Gloria F. Mengual	Beverly Spence (Zoom)	
Jim Venneman	Rev. Bob Janis-Dillon	
Paul Cipriano	Stan Kemmerer	
Judy Sullivan	Kent Jamison (Zoom)	
Tina Davies		
Laurie Kelliher		

Orders of Business

6:35 p.m.– Dana called the meeting to order.

- Dana - Opening words/Welcome
- Nancy – Read Board Covenant aloud
- Dana – Regarding Board Covenant – Do you want it read aloud at every board meeting, or once a year?
- **Motion:** *Nancy* – read covenant every 3 months; *Rick* – seconded. One person abstained. Others voted in favor of reading of Board Covenant every 3 months.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- **Approval of June 2023 Board Meeting Minutes** – previous board already approved June board meeting minutes.
- **Pumps Update** – *David Newton* – group working on pumps have ordered them; they will call to arrange installation once pumps arrive. No water will be accessible in building during the day they are working on pumps (maybe $\frac{3}{4}$ day).

NEW BUSINESS

- **Robert's Rules of Order Presentation** -*David Newton* modeled how to use Robert's Rules... motions, recommendations, moves, remarks... votes on motions, amending motions, request for further discussion, when you have the floor, when you're out of order, and final vote. Announce decision, based on votes. When multiple comments are pending, based on hands raised, facilitator intersperses between votes in favor and votes against. In tie-vote circumstances, one can amend, presenting opportunity for another vote. Another option: move to have motion postponed indefinitely. Motion/second/vote. If someone has a question, ask it and request a show of hands.

- **AVS Department** (*Rick Tsukada*) –
 - **Three people are needed to fulfill the requirements of Audio, Visual and Streaming of USH services. Increased real time training will ensure quality.** Having any of these 3 positions not staffed threatens the quality of the broadcast. A system of trained technicians needs to be put into place. Primary area needing skill development – running of the Bridge, which runs both in-person and on-line service. **Recommendation:** Jon Covault oversee day-today portion of this during Sunday services; Bridge Captain Diana Cipriano will further train Administrator Karolina, already the Zoom Master, with responsibility for streaming services.
 - **Management of Sanctuary sound also needs to be addressed.** Some people already are regulars at this fairly easy task. **Recommendation:** formerly assign members of Sanctuary Audio Team.
 - In conclusion, two paid staff will cover the Bridge. A volunteer corps will cover streaming on Zoom and hall audio, as needed. This will keep morphing as equipment/personalities evolve. This department will be placed under Building & Grounds.
 - **Motion:** *Rick* -establish AVS group, with Karolina being point person for incoming requests.; *Nancy* – seconded.
 - Discussion: **Jim:** members should be charged for use of AVS group for personal needs/services. **Rick:** We need to clearly define roles within this group so they can respond to congregant requests for their assistance beyond Sunday services (i.e. memorial services, etc.). **Jon:** There should be a fee for sanctuary and use of staff/volunteer members' time to provide services. **Vote:** Two board members abstained; all others voted in favor

COUNCIL CHAIR REPORTS

Human Resource Committee - *Paul Cipriano*

- **Administration - Formation of new Human Resources Subcouncil**

- Three candidates have been identified for the new HR Subcouncil – Nancy Kemmerer, Laura Cipriano and Gloria Mengual. HR committee will review HR policies and work with Rev. Bob and staff. Ron Sexton has agreed to be a resource to sub-council.
- **Motion:** *Paul:* vote on recommended HR Subcouncil members. *Rick* seconded motion.
- **Motion:** *Nancy:* that Laura chair committee. *Judy* seconded.
- NO VOTE TOOK PLACE ON WHO WOULD CHAIR COMMITTEE – to be placed on agenda for September meeting
- **Discussion:** *Tina* – In the past, HR has been a sub-council. Constitution notes councils/sub-councils are appointed by Board. Let's work within constitution guidelines. Calling it a sub-council instead of HR committee keeps it within existing guidelines- Let's call it the HR sub-council.
- **Motion:** *Paul* made motion that HR group be changed from committee to sub-council; *Judy* seconded. **Vote:** in favor – unanimous.

- **Treasurer's Report - *Jon Covault***– submitted report (*see below*).

Schwab fund is clear. Funds are needed for memorial receptions.

Family sometimes can cover these costs; sometimes not. Consider line item for this and keep it in the Schwab account rather than larger budget in order to preserve funds for this year-to-year.

- **Discussion:** *Rick* – Donations that come in following memorials can be put into this account. Goal is to keep this financially operable (estimated \$1,000). *Janice* – was looking for \$500, not \$1,000. Feels we should ask for donations. For past memorials, one out of five had insufficient funding; this is an exception. The \$1,400 in Schwab account - dividend and interests can be used for this. *Tina:* transfer funds over \$1,000 to general operating expenses. *Jon:* no changes are needed at the moment.
- *Jon* - USH needs to resolve employer participation agreement as noted in UUA Retirement Plan. Modify 2024 USH budget- approve increased expense for this line item: \$2,709.55 and (see *Jon's* report below) Revision of this needs to be made prior to Oct.
- **Motion**– *Dana* made motion to follow UUA guideline of 10% until end of 2023; and 5% for 2024, as agreed upon in our contract with Rev. Bob. This impacts *Karolina* as well. *Jim* seconded. **Vote:** Unanimous Board agreement. *Please see*

Treasurer's Report addendum addressing this below the meeting minutes.

- **Spiritual Life - Rick Tsukada**

- Rick presented creating a Committee on Ministry (COM) – *(To review description of primary responsibilities, see Committee on Shared Ministry report below.)*

Suggested COM members: Judy Robbins (chair), Mary Gail Harrison, Brian Harvey and Martha Bradley.

- **Motion:** *Rick* proposed creation of a Committee on Ministry, made up of above noted members. *Nancy* seconded.
- **Discussion:** *Judy:* if the board is overseeing quality of relationships, how is this measured? *Rick:* to address circumstances that fall between relationships before it jumps into involvement of multiple people.
Amendment: *Judy* recommends removal of word "quality" from last sentence before bullets. *Rev. Bob* suggestion– use verb "reviews" the quality of the relationships instead of how it is presently worded. involvement **Vote:** unanimous, in favor of amendment.
- **Further Discussion:** *Tina-* Need clarification of what members of this group do. Rick asked *Rev. Bob* to speak to this - *Rev Bob suggestion:* COM takes a look into how ministry is doing (both minister and other ministries) – what's working/isn't. Can serve on conflict management issues. Board is I.Q., COM is wisdom. *Laurie:* Past COM served as sounding board for multiple audiences; there was no resolution component to it, but gave all a place to come in and talk. *Rev Bob:* COM often can address things earlier. *Judy:* Given that board has many questions, what about presenting this to members for feedback? *Rick:* Some intention goes back 10 years or so to experiences with Heather/Cathy/Terry – trajectory of how situations played out within congregation may have been different if we'd had COM. Would have been good way to also improve flow of information to minister as well. This would be an opportunity to process things up front prior to taking things to stakeholders as large church group. *Jon:* UUA has guidelines on this. *Laurie:* Committee on ministry

being allied with congregation rather than allied with minister – this perception is important. *Rev. Bob: It's important that it be both/and, not an alignment with one or the other.* **MOTION: suggested amendment-** *Laurie: Consider renaming it Community of Shared Ministry.* **Judy** seconded this motion. **Amendment Vote:** unanimous in favor of proposal as amended: unanimous.

COUNCIL CHAIR REPORTS (*Reports not made by the following Council chairs during Board meeting due to time constraints. Council chair reports enclosed, below Board meeting minutes.*)

- Community Within (Tina Davies)
- Membership (Laurie Kelleher)
- Social Justice (Judy Sullivan)

INTERNAL REVIEW OF USH TRANSACTIONS (Dana Donovan & Sherry Manetta) **Sherry Manetta:** Laura Cipriano, Sherry Manetta and *_Miriam Byroade_* were subcommittee who reviewed USH financial transactions, for the operating and Schwab accounts for FY 2021-2022, and for the USH endowment for the calendar years 2021 and 2022. Findings and recommendations:

- Endowment (governed by CT law and by the USH constitution and by-laws) –care was not always taken with matching expenditures to endowment accounts– result: incomplete reports and all withdrawals from the endowment were not fully reported to the board. There is not always a clear distinction made between restricted and unrestricted funds. **Recommendation:** 1) keep an inventory of equipment purchased and track over time (e.g., technology for hybrid services), 2) provide more complete reporting to the board for capital projects, i.e., what was spent and the sources of the funds (whether from the endowment, special contributions or operating funds), and 3) ensure funds are withdrawn from the appropriate restricted and unrestricted accounts – apply this to all capital projects. (*Example: Lighting project took place over extended period of time - \$6k came from general funds – hard to track where money was spent and where it came from in expenditures. – No suggestion was made of any questionable discrepancy. A full accounting of lighting project, however, never came back to the Board.*)
- **Challenge:** *Recordkeeping: (Example: repayment of loans made from endowment to Western MA congregation could not be verified to the loan amortization schedules (amortization schedules were subsequently located).* Brian Mullen was good at recordkeeping; turnover has since occurred. Record-keeping has not been as clear

lately. – Better budgeting and communications to Board has been taking place as of late. Prior to recent improvements, payments have been made with no invoices on record – files not complete.

- **Challenge:** Need to identify and decide how to keep financial records. Overall: lack of adequate staffing to cover financial responsibilities. Patty is good, but her hours are less than Brian Mullen. We have good board volunteers doing the work, but this is transient. There is a finance chair, an endowment committee – multiple people taking responsibility, which is good. Need to sort through for clarification of roles, policies and procedures – could use improvement.
- **Discussion:** *Dana* referred to example of \$14,000 payment that could not be identified, which now has been identified. Another item – moving costs for Rev. Terry were taken out of endowment. *Dana* noted it might more appropriately have been taken out of operating budget.
- **Recommendations:** *(presented by Sherry)*
 - Restricted account issue - leftover solar panel money – Board should get a final report on remaining funds in the endowment and address whether or not these funds from restricted to unrestricted;
 - Clarify whether or not a payment we made was supported by a vendor invoice and whether the payment got into a vendor's 1099. Create discipline going forward to track and record expenditures.
 - That the Board obtain a written document designating the purpose of any restricted fund and that any change in purpose be in writing and signed by the donor. Expenditures for restricted funds in recent years should be determined to have been made appropriately and consistent with the written intent of the donors.
 - The Board should review a small group of restricted funds, some for amounts less than \$10,000, donated between 1927 and 1995. The Board should determine whether to convert to unrestricted. (Jim Venneman suggested that we create a wall plaque listing donors/memorial gifts that are in the Endowment. No dollar amounts. Same concept as the plaque for the Memorial Garden. However, this one can be more creative. Those of us who attended Rebecca's ordination in New London saw theirs, which resembles a tree with fluttering leaves. Several of the small restricted gifts are for flowers given in memory of those who died, with acknowledgement in the bulletin. USH no longer has live flowers. These gifts were

- to keep the names of loved ones alive. This plaque will meet that goal.)
- The Board has the discretion to accept or not accept a restricted contribution to the endowment. Small contributions should be unrestricted. Large restricted contributions, such as for noise abatement or solar panels, should be accepted only in unusual cases and by a vote of the Board.
 - Regular reports should be provided to the Board on unrestricted and restricted endowment funds. Reports should include withdrawals from and contributions to the endowment.
 - Have regular reports with the balances by fund in the Schwab account attached to Board minutes. This will enable committees/members/etc. to see what funds might be available. *Example: Board in 2017 put \$10,000 of the Garvais money into the Schwab account to provide funds for those who otherwise could not participate in the GA. As of several months ago, none had been used.*
 - The Endowment Committee should be increased from three members to five members in accordance with the USH constitution and by-laws.
 - Capital budgets should be prepared and approved by the board along with operating budgets. Reforecasts should be prepared as appropriate. Multi-year budgets would be beneficial for planning and are required by the USH constitution and by-laws. Recent policies approved by the Board lay out some of these requirements.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Financial Guideline Committee** – Dana recommended formation of this committee to help ensure continuity, clarity from this point on. Staff/volunteer changes – we need some guidelines for continuity in reporting. Dana requested volunteers – Sherry was asked to join; she expressed a willingness to serve on committee, but not as chair. Jim and Jon were recommended by Dana. Sherry recommended that staff with expertise in this area (Patty) also be involved. Jon: is your suggestion for adhoc committee? Dana: yes.
 - **Discussion:** *Paul:* Karolina worked on financials in past parishes; maybe she can work on this as well. Jon: when position posted, suggestion was for one person to do everything financial and Patty was hired for this. Dana: recommended that acceptance of report be held off until a few more changes are made and presented again to Board.
 - **Motion:** *Dana* made motion for creation of a Financial Guideline Committee. *Paul:* seconded motion. Vote: unanimous. Jim V.,

Jon C and Sherry to serve on committee; Sherry noted that she does not wish to chair this group. We can look into possibility of Karolina's involvement as well.

- NO VOTE TAKEN AT TO WHO WOULD CHAIR THIS COMMITTEE. Vote to be placed on agenda for September meeting
- **OWL Program** - Rick, Annie and Dana met with Fern Street Church folks regarding OWL program – neither church has trained staff. Training will be done during the Fall, with new potential joint program starting in Spring.
- **Possibility of August Meeting - Recommendation:** *Rick* suggested that Board meet in August. *Nancy* noted that HR Subcouncil could use this time to look at salaries. Dana shared that this was done during June Board meeting. All staff were given a 4% raise. Music director given 8% to bring him up to norm of other UU music directors. Rick reiterated that we should meet in August, as much has happened during past two years and multiple challenges exist:
 - Fewer USH members
 - Not enough kids to sustain present RE program
 - Fewer volunteers – need to have reality-based conversations on what we can do, what we cannot do, based on present situation. We should not skip a month. Average service attendance is 50, with a good week being 80. What is trend with stewardship? There is no need to vote on anything, but let's reflect on what is hopeful and what is realistic – this should happen before we kick into full gear in September. *Judy* noted that this sounds more like a retreat of sorts than board meeting and thinks it will be helpful. *Rev. Bob* acknowledged that these things are important and noted that he hoped we could allot time to reflect further on this during September combined boards meeting in Springfield.
 - *Paul* recommended that the Board take a break in August; it's been a trying year. He suggested making the meeting elective and showing up if you want.
 - No vote was taken on holding a Board meeting in August.

GUEST COMMENTS

Laura: doing OWL with another church exposes other parish parents to another location option for attendance.

David – Requested that audit report please be sent to chair of endowment committee

MOTION TO ADJOURN – *Dana made motion* – 9:20 PM. Gloria seconded.

COUNCIL CHAIR WRITTEN REPORTS SUBMITTED FOLLOWING JULY 2023 BOARD MEETING

Membership Council Report – submitted by Laurie Kelliher

USH welcomed two new members at a Membership Ceremony on June 18, 2023. Michael Lettick and Laurie Friedmans have joined the Unitarian Society of Hartford. The ceremony held during the Sunday service was followed by a celebration cake.

First Connections, the monthly forum for visitors is on hiatus for the summer and will resume September 3, Under the Stairs. Designed as a comfortable space for visitors to share their thoughts and questions, First Connections is open to friends and members alike who enjoy meeting new people and giving insight to life at USH.

In the Annual Report from June 2023, the Membership Sub-Council noted 22 visitors in the preceding 5 months. It is likely that more people visited but did not identify themselves. In September the Welcome group will discuss either moving the Welcome table to Fellowship Hall or adding FH as a second site. A presence in FH may be a more relaxed setting for visitors.

We know that people arrive as new comers but most do not return. Each identified visitor receives an email inviting them to First Connections for two months in a row following their visit. The “Welcome” sheet asks people to indicate interests and 11 people checked off the 20’s/30’s group. (The sheet pre-dates the disappearance of the 20s/30s and needs to be changed BUT the critical point is that they are out there and they are seeking.)

Similarly 11 children came with their parents over the past year but did not return. There is reason to hope that having a minister in the pulpit will create more of a draw to USH but like every other faith in the United States it is the visibility of families and younger congregants that creates an inviting setting for all.

Social Justice Council Report – submitted by Judy Sullivan

The Social Justice Council will not meet in July and August. We have decided to break and spend time doing specific “homework” concentrating on building educational and inclusive activities/programming.

Areas of interest:

- Anti-Racism/White Privilege

- Plans for October pizza/movie night with discussion of a racial justice themed movie (specific movie TBD) with Gloria Mengual
- Discussion with Hartford Library to explore USH participation in Hartford Reads in Color book review group
- Environmental Justice
 - USH has renewed membership in IREJN (Interreligious Eco Justice Network) and working to make use of their resources
- LGBTQ+
 - Planning to share booth with Universal Church of West Hartford in Hartford's September Pride event
 - Updating/creating better handout information re: USH
- Communication with congregation and community
 - Weekly enews submission
 - Updating/rewriting Social Justice pages on USH website
 - Email to SJ council every two weeks to track "homework" progress

Spirit Life Council Report - submitted by Rick Tsukada

I. Establishment of Committee on Shared Ministry, amended and passed by the USH Board of Trustees during July 2023 meeting. Revised proposal:

Proposed item for USH Board of Trustee action:

- The re-creation of a Committee On Ministry, that once existed at the Unitarian Society of Hartford. It fell into disuse and eventually was disbanded. This committee, had it been in place during the last decade, may have been useful in averting some of our problems.

Therefore it is proposed that:

A Committee On Ministry (COM), (*Amended* by the USH Board of Trustees, July 21, 2023 to now read **Committee On Shared Ministry, (COSM)** be constituted at the Unitarian Society of Hartford and that the committee members be Judy Robbins (chairperson), Mary Gail Harrison, Brian Harvey and Martha Brady.

The function and charge of the committee shall be, but not limited to:

For the contract ministry year 2023-24, the Committee On Shared Ministry's (COSM) primary duty will be to help shape a successful model of shared ministry at the Unitarian Society of Hartford (USH). The COSM seeks to understand, assess, support and advocate for robust ministry throughout the context of congregational life. Whereas the Board oversees the operations of the church, the COSM oversees (*Amended* by the USH Board of Trustee,

July 20, 2023 to now read "COSM reviews the quality)")the quality of relationships:

- with the minister, by answering questions, informing him of relevant USH history and helping him to understand ways of operating that may be idiosyncratic to USH.
- with the lay leaders, by supporting them to a smooth transition to shared ministry.
- with the congregation at large, by staying informed of any underserved or unmet needs in order to nip potential problems in the bud.
- with the entire USH community by serving as a "first recourse" if problems arise that cannot be resolved quickly.
- by meeting monthly at an off-site location.

II. Other Spirit Life Business – submitted by Rick Tsukada

In general, as the Spirit Life Council Chair, I have been trying to get what I am calling the "current lay of the land" of both the council as a whole and this individual components of the group namely, Music, Religious Education, Worship Associates, Chancel Arts and the independent Spirit Life Program.

Secondly, I am slowly defining my role as the chair of this council as well as to further understand its responsibility given by the by-laws. Which are: Collective Worship, Rites of Passage, Individual spiritual development for children, youth, and adults as well as other responsibilities as assigned by the Board.

This is a far ranging and very non-specific charge and, to some extent, it suggests that it has it "fingers" into other council domains of attention. For instance, the rituals that are associated with the death of a congregant and or member of their family, and the needs of the on-line congregation. I also believe that all of the councils and their individual components need to be part of creating the infra-structure of the shared ministry that creates a strong and healthy community that can operate with or without a minister.

Understanding the nature of the demographics of the congregation and what it may mean in regard to reality-based programing for the church is critical. This includes financial resources and the church's main resource, our volunteers. I do believe that one of my roles is to keep a reality resource based awareness in mind. The crude way of saying it is...if we can't get volunteers to do the job and we can't pay for that need...we should not do it because it taxes and adds to the sense of inadequacy as an institution.

I believe my role is to be a communications **conduit** between the sub-committees/departments and the Board, as well as being an advocate if

needed. This is particularly interesting, given that two of the department leaders are paid staff and their hierarchical structural relationship with the church is a little unclear and needs clarification

All of this is a work in progress.

Brief reports from the Spirit Life sub-committees:

- **Religious Education:**

- Annie Witzler continues to operate in the role of Interim RE Coordinator and is a paid staff person. She is currently doing major cleaning of her classrooms. She has submitted a budget and a 2023-24 activity calendar. The major need is for classroom teachers and having a enough students with consistent attendance. The largest current age group is middle and high school age students. Annie, Dana and I met with Dr. Pat, LRE director of Universalist Church of West Hartford. We are now in a conversation around developing an OWL program.
- Toward the end of June 23, a request was made for volunteers to staff a RE committee. I continue to learn about our current "lay of the land" regarding USH's Religious Education Program and to embrace the current Unitarian Universalist trend toward RE as being a Life-Long endeavor...simply put, including adult RE programming, multi-generational experiences and it embracing a shrinking family-based population.

- **Chancel Arts:** This area is in need of conversation regarding what is possible given the resources available to do the work. i might mean changing our expectations of our Sunday displays.

- **Music:** I have not been able to sit down with Sam regarding his thoughts and wants regarding this important aspect of our spiritual life. To a large extent, I believe, much of this conversation may lay with Rev. Bob's way of doing worship and his specific use of music. The end of year Board report states: Sam will continue to pursue the use of choral scholars and build upon the nascent choir for more appearances. Other additions may be increased opportunities to hear our organ and guest musicians hopefully including the Hartford "Gay Men's Choir."

- **Worship Associates:**

- They are currently into the church's summer services programming and have noticed that we do not seem to have a full complement of summer volunteers like greeters etc. The streaming technology is improving and bugs continue to be worked out within the technical limitations of Fellowship Hall.
- Planning for future services are well on the way, especially in the "shared ministry" experimental structure. Pulpit guest scheduling for the "minister's off" Sundays are complete into the Fall and filling in of WA assignments will be completed this summer. There is an awareness of the need for conversation and creative thinking with Rev. Bob as the 'WA' work toward the meaning of "Shared Ministry" with the understanding it forms the foundation of working without a minister when that once again visits our congregational life.
- Miriam Byroade is our newest WA and will be entering service soon which leads us to a future developmental need... As the last couple of years has revealed, we need to develop Congregational Pulpit Guests and increase the number of available WAs to 12, which allows for serving once every three months in the Sunday schedule.
- **Spirit Life:**
 - They currently are honing their programming, having been provided spiritually focused themes for the past five years with the three UU area churches. They are adding a full-day workshop that will be live, with a guest presenter. They will continue their on-line once a month Saturday discussions groups that are open to any interested people.

Community Within – Submitted by Tina Davies

Following the Ingathering service on September 10, there will be a combined pot luck/celebration to welcome the new year and our new minister. Regular programs will be gearing up, including Yoga (weekly); Lunch Bunch (monthly) beginning in September; and Pizza/Movie (monthly) beginning in October. Some Connection Circles are hoped for, later in the Fall.

Treasurer's Report addendum – Text of Resolutions Regarding Retirement Contributions – submitted by Jon Covault

Resolution to revise USH Employer Participation Agreement regarding UUA retirement program.

Whereas: Beginning in 2014, in order to participate in the UUA sponsored retirement program congregations are required to file an employer participation agreement (EPA) in which the % of wage (or wages + housing for ministers) that will be paid by USH to the retirement plan on employee's behalf, and

Whereas: The EPA filed in 2014 by USH specifies a contribution rate of 10%, changes to this rate can only be made by filing a revised EPA which take effect January 1 of year following revision acceptance, and

Whereas: For the two USH hires this year, employment agreements specified a USH contribution rate of 5% to the retirement plan. One employee will not be eligible for USH contributions until January 2024. The second is eligible and USH will begin making 10% contributions July 1, 2023 resulting in over budget expense for period July-December 2023 of \$2,709.55, therefore be it

Resolved: that the FY24 budget be modified by increasing the USH retirement expense by \$2,709.55 for our recently hired contract minister, and further be it

Resolved: that the board approves submission of a revised EPA that specifies a 5% USH retirement contribution rate for eligible employees with the basis equal to salary (or salary +housing in the case of our minister) but to exclude other benefit payments including FICA reimbursements.