

Unitarian Society of Hartford
Board Meeting Minutes Draft
December 10, 2024, 6:30-8:00

Present: Nancy Kemmerer, Nina Elgo, Jon Covault, Laura Cipriano, Laurie Kelliher, Paul Cipriano, Rev. Bob, Jim Venneman, Rick Tsukada

Zoom: Judy Sullivan

Regrets: Gloria Mengual, Jonathan Blech (Youth Group Board Representative)

Zoom Guests: David and Janice Newton

Welcome: Nancy Kemmerer welcomed all.

Nancy read opening words with the Chalice Lighting

Matters of the Heart: In this holiday season we are remembering those who are no longer with us, realizing that anniversaries are particularly hard-hitting at this time of year. The Bev Spence memorial service will be May 3. [has since been rescheduled to April 26]

Louise Harmon's book *The Education of Ebenezer Wells* has been published.

Approval of Minutes from the November meeting

Nina moved to accept the minutes and Paul seconded, unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report

Jon Covault - summarized the Treasurer's report, see details below

Motion and vote Soup Sunday Profits - Motion to retroactively move profit from Soup Sunday into a USH Youth Activity Fund in the Schwab account, This is profit after expenses for soup that is sold at USH and donated to Church Street Eats. This will be the policy moving forward. Jon proposed, Jim seconded, passed unanimously.

Rev Bob- What's Up Website - HartfordUU.org id expected to be up and running in January.

Rick - technology report - consider including in our budget funds for ongoing software and hardware updates. Church Windows may need to be replaced, possibly at the beginning of the fiscal year. Routine maintenance and replacement of equipment and software needs to be expected and budgeted for.

Council Reports

Laura Cipriano - Community Within

- volunteer appreciation at annual meeting - start nominations in January
- Dec. 8, the first day of the regifting sale, was very successful, totals will be available after the sale concludes on Dec. 15, much thanks to Susan Hope and Gloria Bent for organizing the sale and for the many donors and volunteers.

Judy Sullivan - Social Justice

- Researching community organizations
- The Hartford Promise Zone is a 3.11 square mile neighborhood in Hartford; it is one of the neediest areas in the country and is right in our USH back yard.

Laurie Kelliher - Membership - see below for report

- Nominating committee is being formed.
- What is the distinction between friends of USH and members?
- Childcare is needed for meetings.

10-minute break

Jim Venneman - Finance

- Year End Appeal in December 2024, endowment appeal will be on hold until Jan. 2025.
- Endowment Update: We have received cash donations of \$81,417 and these funds have been matched and will be routed to the UBS main (general) endowment account. The funds were received from 23 individuals or couples. There have been some minor adjustments in the records, as information changes daily.
- David Newton reports: The legacy funds have not been processed with respect to the 50 percent match. As of 12/10 we have about \$194,000 legacy assignments in our records. Thus, when we do the match for legacy records we will "acquire from escrow about \$97,000.
- Tile and Vanco software will be used for giving.

Paul Cipriano - Administration

- Security Medical Annex planning is progressing
- Working on a map of USH building with phones, fire extinguishers, fire alarms, exits marked. Maps will be laminated and placed at strategic locations throughout the building.
- Planter bollards have been ordered and will be installed in the spring.
- \$3000 left in the grant for additional security cameras.

Motion and vote Allworx phone app does not work well for receiving calls offsite. Motion was made to ask Karolina to research cellphones that would meet Rev Bob's communication needs. Motion Laura. second Paul, unanimously approved.

Rick- Spirit Life, Board Minutes, A/V zoom, WAs have planned through spring, more direct conversations to analyze former services month-to-month. Board message duplicates other messages.

Motion and vote Shahan Islam was hired as RE Director for six months, the board unanimously voted to approve continuing the contract.

Nancy - Board Retreat Progress - good progress toward goals set last summer. Will revisit next month when there is more time.

Guests' comments - none

Rev Bob- Closing Words and Extinguish the chalice

8:12 Adjourn

Treasurer Report

December 10, 2024

Submitted by Jon Covault

Current budget year (24-25) income and expense update:

Income and expense information was reviewed for July 1 - December 5, 2024 (5 months or 42% of our FY25 budget year).

The total pledge giving received as of December 5, 2024 was \$158,196 or 51% of our \$308,000 pledge goal. Rental income was \$7,460 (47% of \$16,000 budgeted). The budget includes \$12,000 income from a year end Stewardship appeal which will soon begin. Total income to date for FY25 totals \$199,396 (3% ahead of budget).

Total expenses for this 5-month period were \$192,408 or 41% of budget. Expense variances included \$2,500 for web page construction which were not part of original budget, and unpaid Knox Foundation water usage for August-November totaling \$4,387 (the prior contact person at Knox who processed reimbursement for June-July this year, appears to no longer be in that position, Karolina is reaching out to other contacts at Knox Foundation).

RE Soup surplus:

I have been asked how much the youth group Soup Sunday accumulated "profits" are that could be used for a youth identified project / activity. I have reviewed data for period 2020-2024 - a total of \$972.08 in Soup sales profit" were merged annually into the general budget bottom line. I propose a paper transfer of this amount within our Schwab account from the "general budget surplus carry forward" bucket to the RE activity bucket (current balance of \$393.10). I further propose that surplus funds from youth led fund raisers such as Soup Sunday (\$347 for first 5 months of FY25) be added annually to this earmarked portion of the Schwab account.

Membership Report December 2024 - Laurie Kelliher

Attendance at Sunday services remains more robust than it has in years. Several Sundays we have had over 100 people in the pews. The Sundays when Rev Bob is in the pulpit sees more than a marginal increase in attendance.

Music Sunday continues to draw people to USH and we are also seeing the return of more old friends as well as some newcomers. Shahan Islam makes himself very available at the Welcome table to greet families and guide them to the classrooms.

Again, it is extremely important that we offer accommodations as well as a warm welcome to families. We would like to be in a position where we need to have childcare for events outside of worship service. Raising young Unitarian Universalists would be a lofty goal.

The Welcome Team met in December. People have reported problems both accessing and using Sign Up Genius which is the app we use to organize the assignments for the front door greeters, the welcome table and the ushers. Karolina has found a glitch in the program and has corrected it as of an email notification today. Once the problem has proven to be resolved a slot for the two candle bowl positions may be added. The goal is to reduce (totally resolve) the Sunday morning scramble for bodies at the posts.

Do we resume First Connections in 2025?

No one attended the last two sessions that were offered though we had visitors on those dates. The weekly enews includes info about the gathering and the Worship Associates announce the sessions during Sunday morning announcements. As mentioned before, one possibility is the robust activity at coffee hour in Fellowship Hall gives a sense that it is the USH "scene" and the congregation is in fact a welcoming one.