

BOD Report 1/26/26

Unitarian Society of Hartford Board Meeting

January 26, 2026

Location: Zoom (significant snowfall previous days)

Quorum NO____YES__X_

Board Attendees	Guests	Regrets
Nina Elgo Virginia de Lima Laura Cipriano Paul Cipriano Jon Covault Laurie Kelliher Rocco Orlando Judy Sullivan Rev. Bob Virginia de Lima	Barbara Mellen	Gloria Mengual Michael Michaud

Orders of Business

6:30 p.m. Nina called the meeting to order.

Chalice lighting and opening words with Nina Elgo.

Approval December 22,2026 BOD Minutes –

All in favor. Minutes accepted.

Item: Nina Elgo (President) notes personal item of concern. Gloria Mengual has resigned from the BOD due to health.

Laurie Kelliher will take notes for this evening but a process will be decided in near future to cover Gloria's position.

Item: Jon Covault (Treasurer) highlighted several aspects of his Treasurer report, in particular that the anticipated FY26 \$325,000 pledge goal should be readily attainable as 72% of pledges have already been received. He noted that inflation and the previous history of financial one-time items has increased the budget by ~\$22,000 in each of the past 4 years. He suggests that this year's pledge drive goal be increased to ~\$375,000. His detailed financial report is included below.

The weekly plate collection is split 50/50 between USH and the Good Neighbor organization of the month. The intake is directly related to the number of people in the pews/Zoom. The offerings have been generous this year and the question raised is whether that increase in the plate will be reflected in an increase in pledge participants and in money pledged?

Two questions were raised:

Does the GNO act as a "feel good" prompt which leads congregants to increase their offering?

Will the increase in programming and participation foster an increase in USH income?

The new HR team will address the cost of living and make decisions for salary increases.

Item: Rocco Orlando (Finance) emphasizes that the volunteers and staff are stretched thin to provide coverage for rentals (weddings, memorial services, Candlelight Concerts). Discussion is needed to consider an increase in staff and increase in pay. Plans are in process to develop a "rental" committee.

Item: Rental committee plans: Rev Bob commented on rental possibilities. Consideration must be given to both in-house needs as well as outside income-generating uses of the Meeting House. Recognition of regular USH worship and in-house uses (activities, meeting, member/friend memorial services/weddings, etc) may be in competition with non-profit groups, specialty groups (grief, AA, etc) for space, generated sound, building security and more.

A rental committee would be helpful with decisions on renting to particular groups.

Written policies would insure that rental groups' philosophies are in line with our UU beliefs. At the same time, living as an interfaith community, USH has been home to other religious groups such as Sathya Sai, Daniel's House of Prayer, the Dharma group.

Laura Cipriano noted that groups aligned with our UU vision might have participants who become interested in our Sunday services as they learn about us.

Item: Rev Bob commented that USH lives with one foot in the world and one foot in spirituality. He described the Pink Haven Coalition and their work with trans people who have to relocate due to unfriendly, unwelcoming and unsafe geography.

Much of the work has been off-line. Medical care must be available and it is unclear to what degree resources are available with private practice MDs.

Item: Virginia (President-Elect) reports that local UU churches, USH, UUSE and Fern Street have been meeting as the UU's of Greater Hartford to increase opportunities for joint congressional activities. The group might act as a modified GA model. They have been meeting every month (see current USH news about a planned Yard Goats get-together). The churches are involved with the Horace Busnell Food Pantry and soup.

Item: Virginia also reports on Religious Education where focus groups have been meeting to help inform parents about activities and need. Curriculums are reviewed and confidence shared.

Item: Gloria (Secretary) though not present had asked for further conversation about diversity in music and finding opportunities to find other types of music that parallel sermon themes. Currently sermons are not being transcribed as text in Spanish. Possibly Zoom offers closed captioning in Spanish for a fee.

Item: Retreats

Lisa Burch and Rick Tsukada will be offering a Spiritual Retreat (timing TBA)

Summer retreat for the BOD is anticipated. Possibly an outside facilitator will be hired).

Item: Barbara Mellen spoke as a guest and previewed the Navigator's Scout program which was begun 21 years ago as a non-aligned, secular scouting organization that welcomed all youth 4-18 years of age and open to all genders and backgrounds regardless of sexual orientation, neurodiversity or religious beliefs. They have been funded by the UUA among other supporters. USH member Sarah Krippenstapel has been involved and activities have included the back pack program and paper bags for food donations at Fern Street.

Item: Board Reports ***Individual BOD reports are also found on REALM and (?) Kelliher will figure out how to configure them together (?????)

Social Justice:

GNO (Good Neighbor Offering)

December: Hawkwing \$1,949

January: Generation Power CT (previously: Operation Fuel)

February: Chrysalis Center

- Summer Sivetz, Director of Development & Communications, Feb 8 service

Noah Webster Tutoring

Peter Meny held an informational session for new tutors on January 11th. He is looking to add additional tutors for the spring semester.

SOGIEcon (Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity & Expression)

- March 19 & 20 @ UCONN, Storrs, 8am-5pm
- Vendor table with The Universalist Church of WH & UU Society East

Immigration Organizing

- The Interfaith Family Ministry held the first Red Folder training in Hartford and Zoom, on Monday, January 12 at St Patrick/St Anthony's. It was presented by CT Students for a Dream, and five USH members participated. A follow up session will be scheduled to discuss opportunities to meet with individuals/families in need of organizing legal documentation.
- Hartford Deportation Defense: those of us trained in accompaniment have been getting frequent requests (1-2/week). We have been told to expect the number of arrests to increase in the near future. The only thing slowing down the court system is the number of federal judges who have been fired. We heard from Judge Doolittle this week, who was among 20 of 36 judges fired by the Attorney General. The current backlog is over 41,000 cases. Clients needing to return to immigration court are currently given dates in June, 2027.

Membership BOD Report 1/26/26

Robust attendance at USH Sunday services continues including a hearty ~50 crew braving the snow on 1/18/27. One week later, services were on-line as snow brought Connecticut to a halt.

Two events were cancelled due to those weather Sundays.

The first New Member meeting will now be held Tuesday January 27 and the second is TBA. Likewise the Sunday Service Volunteer Fair was cancelled and a new date to be decided upon.

Both cancellations were disappointing. The Volunteer Fair is in support of the many roles (greeter, ushers, welcome table, choir, RE, "bowl lifters" and book table) that volunteers cover on Sunday mornings.

Because of the changing dates for the New Members meeting the turnout is unclear but hopefully 5-7 people may be interested in Joining USH.

Consolidation of meeting notes and individual Council reports will be forthcoming.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Kelliher (for Gloria Mengual...be better, Gloria)