

Parish Committee Minutes
First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington
12/13/2022
Hybrid Meeting: First Parish Parlor & Zoom
7:00 pm start time; 9:13 pm end time

Attending: Sara Galantowicz, Anne Quaadgras, Joanna Pushee, Tom Estabrook, Al Tosti, Carolyn Hodges (online), Marie Meteer, Celia Wcislo, Jeff Keffer, Rev. Marta Flanagan, Rev. Erica Richmond

Guests from the Finance Committee: Lissa McBurney (online), Eric Segal, John Anderson, and Amy Speare (in person)

7:00 Call to Order (Sara)

7:05 Mindfulness Exercise & Chalice Lighting (Jeff K.)

7:10 Financial report & dashboard (Carolyn, 20 minutes)

- First Parish maintained its financial position despite lower than planned revenue in November.
- Pledges are starting to rebound as is the plate. Expenses are running below budget.
- First Parish tenant, the preschool Adventures in Montessori (AIM), will keep up with their rental payments according to the formula; currently they have less than full enrollment.
- The Trustees have been contributing funding to the ministers' housing allowance, via the Wellington fund, and Property. Discussion regarding calculation (quarterly) and frequency (annually) of these budgets included the intention to seek clarity on the process by members of the Parish Committee.
- Consolidating accounts for property expenses was discussed. Parish Committee Executive agreed on this goal.
- Closing some additional small remaining reserve accounts to "surplus" was discussed. The four accounts include: worship supplies, linens, partnership church, and art wall. The total sum of these accounts is about \$5,000.

[Motion 1]: We vote to approve to close some reserve accounts. Carolyn will put the language in the chat box of Zoom. (Sara) Seconded (Marie/Tom). 8 out of 8 voted in favor of the following amended motion:

[Motion 1 amended]: "Close to [the] surplus four remaining balance sheet reserve accounts, correlating with roll-over committee funds. Committees receive budgets annually, if unexpected expenditures surface in excess of budget, committees are asked to request funds directly from Parish Committee via a written proposal." (Carolyn H.)

- The financial control review, through a contract with Your Part-time Controller, is progressing as planned with a Zoom meeting among the Parish Committee and the control reviewer slated for January 2023.
- The Parish Committee expresses gratitude to Inez Folsom who applied for a grant from the Cummings Foundation. The grant was awarded to First Parish in the amount of \$1,000, which is being earmarked for social justice activities. The chair of the Social Justice Coordinating Committee will be notified. Rev. Erica showed support to notify the chair of the SJCC.

7:30 (Vote 1, Discussion). Consent agenda: Minutes, Financials, Ministers' Reports, DRE report

[Motion 2] I vote to adopt the consent agenda. (Al T.) Seconded. (Anne Q.) 8 of 8 voted in favor. Unanimous.

7:35 Updates on the State of the Parish (Rev. Erica)

- Welcoming Congregation conversations:
 - An ad hoc meeting, planned for December 27, 2022, will provide an opportunity to form a task force to champion the Welcoming Congregation conversations.
 - Parish Committee Executive supports that the workshops of Zr. Alex Kaptan would be fundable out of the Parish Committee budget line item. The license for this educational tool is \$800.00 and the workshops would be available to all First Parish community members.
 - In January, the Parish Committee will approve the final language to move forward with authorize a Welcoming Congregation task Force, as well as voting on the slate of potential members for the task force.
 - Discussion followed including inquiries of a possible timeline and how the Unitarian Universalist Association signs off on the renewal process for the Welcoming Congregation.
- The 10th anniversary of the mass shooting at Sandy Hook elementary school was marked with a vigil. Rev. Erica and the Parish Committee expressed gratitude to the Property Committee for ringing the meeting house bell.
- Office staffing updates included the following:

After working at First Parish as office associate for one year, Rob Beatty had his last day on Dec. 9. First Parish thanked Rob and had a farewell gathering in mid-December.

Sara Hildago, office manager, is searching for an office associate. Sara H. recommended returning to the original 25 hours a week for the office associate role, in order to pay a higher hourly rate. The Parish Committee expressed support of this

change of reduced hours back from 30 for a fairer wage. Gratitude was expressed towards the office manager by the Parish Committee.

7:45 State of the Parish (Rev. Marta)

- Winter “Big Event” was proposed within the seasons of First Parish life to bring new people into the meeting house and to do fundraising.

Discussion followed with brainstorming; highlights included the following ideas: an Easter egg hunt, a plant sale or garden tour, a neighborhood walking tour, a dance with food and daycare with possible theme of building peace / justice and peace, and a service auction. There is some architecture in place to piggy back on an Easter egg hunt with finger foods and other activities.

8:00 Break

Guests: Lissa McB. (online), John Anderson, Eric Segal, Amy Speare (in person)

8:05 2023-24 Budget presentation by Finance Committee

- Overview and parameters provided. (Eric Segal)
- Each line item connects with a person or group at First Parish. How much money is needed by each group?
- Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) -. Historically the Parish Committee has voted for COLA annually, although not additional merit increases. Additionally, the goals has been to make sure staff are at the mid-point per UUA salary recommendations. This year is the last year before a new UUA salary framework. A few Parish Committee members noted that an overview of staff positions and salaries would be helpful..
- The audit reserve was monies put aside and not spent. (doesn't need to be put aside again.)
- Property (Lissa M.)
 - First Parish's utilities (water/sewer) had been underbilled. Appropriate amount of \$4500. We were budgeting larger amounts in the past.
 - Solar power purchase agreement. We've been consistently overbudgeting this item. We took it down to \$5,000.
 - Discussion followed including items such as snow removal, other maintenance and repair. Gas for heating/electricity is going up so it was suggested to look at recent bills.
- Religious Education is going well and is “in the black” (Eric S.)

Discussion followed about potential adjustments to the “status quo” budget including questions about enrollment, population, and possible savings.

- Music (Lissa M.) - we are significantly underpaying musicians in the summer. Total impact \$1950.

- Gardening - have not come with more requests. Discussion followed including maintenance costs for the trees planted.
- Discussion about having a cushion resulted in looking towards the funds in working capital set aside for things that happen where income or expenses change. This discussion was in regards to staffing.
- Income Page (Eric S.) - some items are guesses and will be revisited such as looking at actuals for the plate.
- Rental fees being charged have not increased in last couple of years.
 - AIM is under-enrolled. (Their rental agreement has a built in COLA. Their costs will go up next year; it's linked to a federal number/guideline.) The Finance Committee is assuming a full enrollment in the draft budget.

Discussion followed and focused on levers. (Sara G.)

- The purpose of the discussion is to identify priorities for preservation and investment. - Which levers do we want to pull first if we need to modify the budget to align with stewardship income?
- Get some ideas of where we can reduce expenses or increase our income. Ideas included bolstering stewardship goals, using surplus funds, looking to planned giving, increasing rent for tenants, and adding a winter fundraiser. In contrast to the income side, the expense side for levers included: reviewing the contribution Property Committee's funds from the operating budget, adjusting COLA, reviewing staffing, decreasing the Parish Committee's budget, and cutting contributions to the UUA. More discussion to follow once the stewardship is completed

[Motion to adjourn] I move to adjourn the meeting (Tom E.). Seconded (Al T.) 8 of 8 in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:13 pm.

MOTIONS (proposed wording that will be adjusted based on the discussion of the Parish Committee)

1. Motion 1: Close the surplus four remaining balance sheet reserve accounts, correlating with roll-over committee funds. Committees receive budgets annually, if unexpected expenditures surface in excess of budget, committees are asked to request funds directly from Parish Committee via a written proposal. (Carolyn H.)
2. I move that we adopt the consent agenda.
3. I move to adjourn the meeting.

Minutes by Joanna Pushee, clerk