

First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
Policy Board Meeting Minutes
17 January 2023 via Zoom

Meeting was called to order by President Steve Wilke at 6:35 pm.

Others in attendance: Erin Milligan, Vice President; Alison Lamothe, Secretary; Jeremy Colton, Treasurer; Joel Hickman, Trustee; Susan Lammert, Trustee; Norma Vogelweid, Trustee

Absent: Rebecca (Becca) McBride, Trustee

Staff: Rev. Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt

Church Council: Cathy Rauch

Chalice Lighting: Steve Wilke

Opening Words: Alison Lamothe, from from Heather Cox Richardson's 1/15/2023 Letter[s] from an American

Reading of Board Covenant: Joel Hickman

Process Observer: Joel Hickman

Consent Agenda – Documents submitted to be read in advance of meeting

- a. Minutes of Previous Meeting:
- b. Report of the Minister – Rev. Kim Mason
- c. Report of the Administrator – Lynn Hunt
- d. RE Report- Danielle Kozemczak
- e. Report of the Board President – Steve Wilke
- f. Budget report – Jeremy Colton
- g. Program Council notes – Cathy Rauch

Norma Vogelweid noted how fantastic the number of activities listed in the Minister's and RE Reports for the month of December were and mentioned the great attendance on Christmas Eve.

Safe Church Policy (Vote Required)

The Board approved the following changes in language for the RE Safe Church Policy:

3. Overnights and Trips - A minimum of two adults ~~, one male and one female,~~ will manage every overnight activity and on all trips involving children and youth in the RE.

6. Background checks - All children's and youth teachers, mentors, and advisors will be subject to a sex offender background check upon initial participation in the RE program **and every three years thereafter.**

The Projects and Repair Spreadsheet

Lynn Hunt has prepared an informational spreadsheet listing recently finished, ongoing and pending improvements and repairs on our church buildings and property, including estimates when available.¹ Norma asked how we should prioritize these projects; Lynn responded that we need to prioritize those that are most impactful and suggested the following order of importance:

- The grease trap in the kitchen is not functioning and is causing problems with our sinks as well as water leakage. It is a recent problem but quite impactful, as we cannot use our sinks and therefore are currently using paper products in Fellowship Hall. We agreed that we should make an effort to inform

¹ <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1QiqZkPyeGASFqIRI2zHwFZq7p8nT1bkdgz17CPOdeEA/edit?usp=sharing>

the members of the congregation about the necessity of this temporary change via announcements during services, E-News and signs in Fellowship Hall.

- Ongoing roof and water issues in the RE wing
- Roof issues in Fellowship Hall and the Hosmer Room which are less acute but need to be addressed

As is generally the case with maintenance projects, there is a matter of sequencing: some must be addressed before others. There is also the matter that some contractors have not responded, have not produced bids or their bids have been rejected. This has prevented us from addressing these issues more quickly.

The Facilities Committee has the responsibility of prioritizing and looking for solutions to these problems, in collaboration with Lynn. The Board will have to approve how we finance projects that do not have designated funding.

After the meeting Rev. Kim shared an article with us reminding us that our church is not alone in facing major infrastructure issues after the pandemic.

Facilities and Finance Update (or Lynn and Steve's Excellent Adventure)

Steve Wilke and Lynn attended recent meetings of the Facilities and Finance Committees. Since Lynn and her family members have borne the brunt of the many unresolved water issues of the past year or so, they were interested in getting some firm deadlines for some of these projects. Financial advisor Jeff Cary noted that we have some endowment cash reserves available but the cost of our roof repairs would constitute an excessive amount to take from it. Lynn reminded the Board that if we want to take over 5% of the 13-month rolling average we would need congregational approval. This is the sort of thing we would do at an annual meeting, but we should not wait this long, given that the longer the project is delayed, the more damage will be done and bids can change quickly. The Finance Committee suggested we borrow from ourselves to get projects underway and then start a capital campaign, but in the past our congregation has not kept its promise to repay itself. Furthermore, any interest on a loan will be higher than the rate of return on our endowment, so we will be losing money in more ways than one.

The Finance Committee cannot make recommendations until the Facilities Committee presents bids and makes recommendations. The Board should be getting recommendations from these committees soon. As Rev. Kim reminded us, "we move at the speed of the church."

Board committees UPDATE: Nominations and Leadership Development

Steve reported that the Committee is having a hard time finding people to fill positions, particularly leadership positions on the Board which require a certain amount of experience. The current Vice President is not assuming the role of President in the coming year; although such a succession is desirable it has not been a requirement, in part to help fill open leadership positions. We currently have two fewer trustees than we had last year. One recommendation is to not fill those positions, thus shrinking the Board, although this is something that would need to be approved by the Congregation. For the remaining positions we could help recruit by identifying and encouraging people we know. The suggestion of a return to in-person meetings with refreshments might entice some to step up but discourage others.

Board Training: Anxiety, Differentiation and Direct Communication

This month's installment of Congregational Board Member Training from the UUA Leaderlab addressed several topics:

1. We can view congregations as emotional systems. Leaders can keep people's reasoning capabilities functioning by keeping anxiety as low as possible, thus avoiding its repressive, infectious, and reactive effects. One way we can do this is by reminding folks of our Mission, which we have articulated, and our Vision, which we are in the process of defining. We noted that once people's emotions are involved, rational explanations seldom work to change their minds. We also wondered if the

recommendation to rely on church history would be helpful as we try to define ourselves for the present and future.

2. Self-differentiated leaders know themselves well enough that they know where they stand; what they will and will not do; understand the necessity of boundaries; work with the congregation to ensure that healthy boundaries are in place and supported, and can be clear who they are without requiring others to join them in the same place.
3. Triangulation occurs when a person has an issue with another person but discusses this with a different person. People in leadership positions are likely to find themselves in this position at times and should find ways to foster direct communication, as well as practice it themselves. We discussed how it is human nature to seek to avoid conflict through indirect communication. We can improve our direct communication skills by practicing with less weighty topics. This can help us when the need to have difficult conversations arises.

Mid-Winter Meeting- why it's going to be AWESOME!!!

Steve encouraged us to come on January 21, be supportive and participate in all activities. We will be repeating our values brainstorming exercise with participating members of the congregation.

Setting a Date for Board Bake Giveaway (ie- not a bake sale)

The Board will be hosting a goodie giveaway after the January 29 service in Fellowship Hall. We were encouraged to bring sweet or savory baked goods to share with members of the congregation and help them get to know who we are and what we do.

Check-in with process observer: Joel Hickman described our behavior as “astonishing,” commending our good humor and the fact that we kept to our schedule in spite of a long list of agenda items.

Meeting adjourned at 7:59 pm.

The next Policy Board meeting will be held Monday, February 13, at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Lamothe