

First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
Policy Board Meeting Minutes
13 February 2023 via Zoom

Meeting was called to order by President Steve Wilke at 6:38 pm.

Others in attendance: Erin Milligan, Vice President; Alison Lamothe, Secretary; Jeremy Colton, Treasurer; Joel Hickman, Trustee; Rebecca (Becca) McBride, Trustee; Norma Vogelweid, Trustee

Absent: Susan Lammert, Trustee

Staff: Rev. Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt

Church Council: Cathy Rauch

Special Guest: Clint Cruise, Facilities Cluster Chair

Chalice Lighting: Rev. Mason

Opening Words: Rev. Mason

Reading of Board Covenant: Norma Vogelweid

Process Observer: Norma Vogelweid

We began our meeting with a **presentation by Clint Cruise**, our Facilities Cluster Chair. Clint recently published an **Update on Building Projects** in the E-News (02/10/2023). Steve shared this with the Board along with other related documents prior to the meeting.

Among a number of pressing maintenance issues, the most urgent is repairing or replacing our roof. Clint reported that the Facilities Committee has contacted five different roofing companies and received two bids. The Board was able to review the bid from Bartch Roofing Company. The Facilities Committee prefers them because they prepared a custom proposal based on a well-thought-out analysis of our building's needs. In addition to Fred Baer of Bartch Roofing, they have consulted with Ron Unterreiner, the President of People of Construction, Inc., who has years of experience managing construction projects, and he agrees that the Bartch proposal is our best option.

Although the Committee is solidly behind the Bartch proposal, a member of the Facilities Committee is determined to look at repair options and has until March 03 to come up with a counter proposal. It is important to respect this deadline because bids can only be guaranteed for a limited period of time; the Bartch bid was received on January 30 and is only guaranteed for 30 days. In the meantime, the Facilities Committee cannot make a formal recommendation to the Board that we accept the bid.

Agreeing to accept the bid will require us to take an amount of money from the endowment that will need to be approved by a congregational vote, preferably in late March. To discern Board members' opinion on the matter while we wait for formal recommendations from the Facilities and Finance Committees, we conducted a **Straw Poll**. Three options were formulated by Steve Wilke in consultation with Finance Committee Chair Kathy Wilke and are as follows:

1. Take money from the endowment with no plan to pay it back—**one vote in favor**
2. Take money from the endowment with a concrete plan to pay it back;
3. Take the money from the endowment and roll the amount we owe into a full capital campaign that not only pays the endowment pack but also fixes other problem areas around the church—**six votes in favor**

At the end of our discussion, Alison suggested that Rev. Kim offer a sermon on the importance of our physical church home and its need for nurturing and renewal/repair.

Consent Agenda – documents submitted and read in advance of the meeting:

- a. Minutes of Previous Meetings:
- b. Report of the Minister – Rev. Kim Mason
- c. Report of the Administrator – Lynn Hunt
- d. Report of the Board President – Steve Wilke
- e. Report of the Counsel- Cathy Rauch
- f. Report of the Treasurer—Jeremy Colton

Norma noted that none of these reports covered our Board baked goods give-away during Fellowship on January 29. Board members weighed in on whether it was a worthwhile event and what we might do to make it more successful. Suggestions included greater participation among Board members; using only one table as opposed to three in a u-shaped formation that served to wall us apart from the congregation; planning further in advance and establishing this as a regular, periodic event. On a positive note, we did engage with visitors and at least one said they were ready to sign the membership book afterwards!

The Board was reminded to submit their **Canvass pledges** early to help the Canvass Committee inspire the rest of the congregation to follow suit.

This month's **Board training topic** was **From "Me" to "We": Healthy Communications**. It was divided into the following sub-topics:

1) Speaking with One Voice, by Renee Ruchotzke (2013)

Board members should strive to speak with one voice even when there has been some disagreement among committee members when making a decision. In the context of upcoming difficult decisions regarding building maintenance and how we finance it, it is important that we support a group decision even if we did not individually vote in favor of it. To emphasize our own disagreement over the group's majority opinion will foment discord in the congregation; our job as leaders is to prevent or reduce rather than exacerbate congregational anxiety.

2) Great Teams Make Great Boards, by Renee Ruchotzke (2018)

Some recommendations for nurturing teamwork: 1) to spend time together outside of regular Board meetings, such as retreats; 2) covenant as a Board to be prepared, accountable and to listen deeply; 3) build trust by admitting vulnerabilities; 3) be in alignment with Mission and Vision (we are working on it!); 4) Lean in toward creative conflict while avoiding destructive conflict.

This last topic reminded us that conflict need not be avoided at all costs and that in fact it can lead to better and creative solutions. It is important (and perhaps something Unitarians are particularly good at) that we remain willing to have our assumptions challenged and to change our minds.

3) Keeping Meeting Minutes, UUA Congregational Life (2018)

Alison recommended that, in the future, this be shared with all incoming Policy Board Secretaries.

Due to a lack of time, the following agenda items were postponed until our next meeting:

- Whether to present our Values Discussion at the Annual Meeting (Potential Vote)
- Renewal Goals (Discussion)

New business

Norma remarked on the success of our recent auction and wanted to express our gratitude to the Auction Committee co-chairs, Kathy Wilke and Emily Jaycox. In the tradition of our Cares and Concern Committee, she

suggested we send hand-written notes on behalf of the Board and agreed to carry out this task. She also wanted to do something similar for Committee Chairs but Lynn thought that would be best handled by the Cluster Chairs when warranted. Norma attended the Welcoming Congregations Committee meeting on January 22 and noted that one participant expressed how pleased they were that a member of the Policy Board was present.

Steve reported that Lisa Ross of Towards Justice was requesting volunteers to assist making phone calls to members of the congregation as part of the process of discernment for the Active Hope Project. This entails calling and listening to how members view the church's role regarding social justice and social action. Joel Hickman has already been assisting with this endeavor and generally enjoys it.

Action Items prior to Next Meeting:

- 1) Norma will send thank you notes to the co-chairs of the Auction Committee
- 2) Joel will continue to assist Lisa and make phone calls to church members
- 3) Steve will share Lisa's email request with Board members (done!)
- 4) Steve will follow up with the Facilities and Finance Committees and keep us appraised.

Check-in with process observer: Norma said we did fine.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:20 pm.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Lamothe