

**First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
Policy Board Meeting Minutes
12 September 2022 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

Absent: Rebecca (Becca) McBride, Trustee; Luke Steffen, Trustee; Norma Vogelweid, Trustee

Staff: Rev. Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt

Church Council: Cathy Rauch

Chalice Lighting: Steve Wilke

Opening Words: Steve Wilke

Reading of Board Covenant: Steve Wilke

Process Observer: Erin Milligan

Consent Agenda. Documents submitted to Board to review prior to meeting:

- a. Minutes of Previous Meeting: 8-13-2022
- b. Report of the Minister – Rev. Kim Mason
- c. Report of the Administrator – Lynn Hunt
- d. Report of the Board President – Steve Wilke

Erin moved we approve the documents as submitted, Alison seconded, motion passed.

Building update- Lynn Hunt

In her report, Lynn stated: “We had a good amount of flooding in all areas of the building during the major rain events. We did not have major damage but cleanup took a good amount of time. All of our drains have been cleaned.

I have continued to contact roofers about the flat roof over the RE wing and off of Fellowship Hall. The last roofer I spoke with recommended we obtain a consultant (he provided a name) because the roof design (over the RE wing) just does not drain adequately and re-roofing will not address the issue.”

The consultant has recommended we contact a plumber to improve drainage off the roof. The slate roof also has ongoing issues.

On a brighter note, our play space is almost done!

Social Action Project Update- Cathy Rauch and Joel Hickman

Cathy reported that at a recent meeting there were eight participants. They are organizing one on one conversations with members of the congregation to determine what they believe is worth doing and in what they would be willing to participate. They hope to wrap up the process by December. Small group discussions are pending. Joel added that the next meeting was Wednesday, September 14.

Board committees update

Ministry. Susan Lammert reported that they took questions from materials prepared by the UUA on “Belonging” and surveyed committee members to come up with an average evaluation of our congregation. In response to the question, “How involved is the Congregation in our Mission?,” we rate 3.5/5. On “Sense of belonging,” we rate 2.5/5. On “Strength and ability to integrate new members,” we rate 2.2/5. These numbers indicate a need for improvement, and the Membership Committee is working on this. For her part, Rev. Kim is

updating our Membership class to include “assignments” for new members to encourage participation in different responsibilities and hopefully foster better integration.

Personnel. We need a Board liaison. We are hoping that Norma Vogelweid will be willing to do this. We will approach her when she returns from Portugal.

Nominations. Becca McBride was asked to serve as Board liaison and confirmed via text message during the meeting that she would be willing to do so.

Governance Basics- How to be the BEST Board we can be!

In a document submitted to the Board prior to the meeting, Rev. Kim reminded us that at our August retreat, we agreed that “each month we’ll take some time to go over an aspect of board leadership. This month we’re going to go over Governance Basics. This is not about Policy Governance, but more simply about things like the difference between policies and procedures and how to work with bylaws.” She provided the link [1. Call of Duty: Governance Basics | Congregational Board Member Training | LeaderLab | UUA.org](#) and tasked us with reading each of 6 topic areas and watching any associated videos.

As part of this training we watched Dan Hotchkiss’s “3 Parts of Effective Governance.” In his view, the three main responsibilities of a Policy Board are 1) its partnership with the minister and paid staff; 2) being in conversation with the congregation, and 3) to uphold and set policies for the congregation. In another topic area, “Being Good Stewards of Time and Money,” Hotchkiss describes different budgetary approaches that exist and have existed in congregations throughout history that he summarizes as “green shades” versus “rose-colored glasses.” Basically, the former’s “first priority is to make sure that the budget balances and that the congregation makes no plans or commitments it is less than 100 percent certain it can meet.” The opposing view is that all things are possible and emphasizes that a congregation is not a business. In our own budget planning process, we have asked committee chairs to submit requests for essential funding and for ideal funding. As is the case with most congregations, we end up being able to cover essential requests only.

Hotchkiss proposes that the Policy Board, rather than the Finance Committee, drive the budgetary process:

Instead of starting by inviting program units to submit budget requests to the finance committee, this process begins with the governing board. Their first task each year is to define not a budget but a statement: A Vision of Ministry. The Vision is a short list of the new and different ways this congregation plans to transform lives over the next one to three years....

The board may create the Vision by itself. Or, better, it may ask a varied group, including staff and clergy, to join them in creating a statement for the board to authorize. The Vision of Ministry confronts directly the question that most budget debates are about indirectly: What aspects of our mission will be our top priorities?

The board votes a new Vision of Ministry each year. It also adopts, and less frequently revises, written Budget Policies defining the core principles that will guide budgeting each year. The principles will likely include fair compensation, adequate building maintenance, a financial audit, adequate insurance, and a strong mandate to maintain high standards of health, safety, and accessibility.

After the board adopts the Vision of Ministry and the Budget Policies, these form the basis for the annual call for budget proposals from the program units. The request is not for a “dream” budget but for a budget that will accomplish the Vision and comply with the Policies. The board, not a finance committee of Green Eyeshades, determines the actual proposed budget.

The takeaway for our Board is that we need to establish between 1-3 annual priorities and build a budget around “dreams” or goals. From a spiritual perspective, it is important that we have aspirations! On the other hand, when people submit proposals, it is important that they think about how we can raise the money to achieve these goals.

At the August retreat, we identified establishing a Vision as a priority this year. This training indicates it should be an annual process.

Once the Board establishes a Vision for the year, Committees can consider how they can contribute to this Vision. This Vision should drive the annual canvass. If Vice Presidents become Presidents in the next fiscal year, they can build on the Vision and priorities established the previous year.

Coffee Hour discussion

Steve has proposed that the Policy Board and the Church Council host coffee hours this fall. This is in line with the Board's responsibility to be in conversation with the congregation. We should come prepared with brief talking points to help members understand what we do. We can also introduce people who are unseated to people who are seated at a table. We determined that the Board would host the 09/25 coffee hour, and the Council would host 10/09. Alison and Steve agreed to form a subcommittee and met briefly after the board meeting. Alison offered to work on the talking points for the Board and prepare an announcement for the E-news. Someone suggested that Jeanette Myers be part of the subcommittee to help the Council decide what they want to do while hosting the coffee hour.

Discussion of COVID-19 and whether to change our current policy

In August the Board voted to follow the Covid Task Force's recommendations that, due to high levels of Covid transmission, we continue to require masks during worship services in the sanctuary or elsewhere in the building. Masks are optional under all other circumstances.

We discussed whether to change this policy or amend it, with some speaking in favor of continuing as we are and others advocating that masks be optional in all circumstances. Ultimately, we decided that we should not take a vote on the matter because three Board members were absent. Cathy recommended we wait for the Covid Task Force to weigh in before we make a decision on the matter. The Task Force do not have a set meeting date at this time.

Changing meeting date for October/November. Although the Board typically meets the second Monday of the month, Rev. Kim has conflicts on October 10 and November 14. The Board agreed that our October meeting will take place on Sunday, October 16, at 11:30 am in person (!) at church in Classroom 1. Members were encouraged to BYO brownbag lunch. We will determine the date, time and location of our November meeting during our October meeting.

Checking in with process observer: Erin commended us for how we treated one another, especially that we did not interrupt one another. We also did well with time boxing and ended the meeting before 8:00 pm!

Meeting adjourned at 7:57 pm.

The next Policy Board meeting will be held Sunday, October 16, at 11:30 am in person (!) in Classroom 1.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Lamothe