

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ST. LOUIS
Policy Board Meeting Minutes
13 September 2021 via zoom

Meeting was called to order by President Gene Rubin at 6:35 pm.

Others in attendance: Steve Wilke, Vice President; Alison Lamothe, Secretary; Kathy Wilke, Treasurer; Susan Lammert, Trustee; Joel Hickman, Trustee; Mitch Herzog, Trustee **Absent:** Sarah Francois, Trustee; Emily Colton, Trustee; Jason McClure, Trustee

Staff: Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt, Sabrina Trupia (seminary contextual education student)

Church Council Chair: Cathy Rauch

Guest Speaker: Karen Siegrist

Chalice Lighting: Gene Rubin

Opening Words: Kathy Wilke

Reading of Board Covenant: Alison Lamothe

Process Observer: Steve Wilke

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

Motion to approve: Steve. Kathy 2nd. Motion passed.

- a. Minutes of Previous Meeting: 8-9-2021
- b. Report of the Minister – Rev. Kim Mason
- c. Report of the Administrator – Lynn Hunt
- d. Report of the Board President – Gene Rubin
- e. Report of the Council Chair – Cathy Rauch
- f. Report of the Acting Religious Education Coordinator – Claire Weichselbaum

Introduction to “MSD Project” –Susan Lammert and Karen Siegrist (PowerPoint emailed to Board members in advance)

At the beginning of their presentation, Susan offered the following summary of this initiative:

“Gateway Greening’s connection to First Church led to our being approached by Greenprint about a possible Conservation Innovation Grant* which covers all of the upfront costs to apply for a grant from MSD for a green infrastructure project to divert storm water to a location where it is detained, infiltrated into ground, evaporated, taken up by plants, or reused. MSD Is under a Consent Decree with EPA and the Missouri Coalition for the Environment to reduce combined sewer overflows into the Mississippi River. Because of this, MSD is committed to spending \$100 million in rainscaping investments including large grant projects up to \$180,000/acre of drainage area.

Funding for 2021 is committed. There will be another round in 2022. The first step is the signing of a commitment letter which says that our church is interested in developing a project. This letter is non legally binding, but would allow Greenprint to put together a mutually agreed upon project which would include design, maintenance costs, etc. If we decide to move forward everything would be paid for, construction, materials, even any legal fees, permit costs etc. We would be responsible for maintenance in perpetuity.

We have been in contact with several churches and a business that have been approved for the grant and are in various stages of construction. All have spoken favorably about working with Green Print.

*Conservation Innovation Grant is necessary since MSD's funding is all reimbursement. This grant covers all up front costs so that the recipients pay nothing at any stage of the project. This money comes from USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service."

Karen said that, since our parking lot has been in need of resurfacing for some time, doing so with permeable materials and replacing the elevated islands with rain gardens would meet the city's goals to reduce rainwater runoff. The slide show they submitted for review prior to our meeting emphasized that Greenprint works with its clients to achieve their highest priorities for their projects, including a strengthened community, shared prosperity and ecological health. A project like this would meet our goals as a Green Sanctuary, both inside and out, and help us to be better stewards of our property and, indeed, our neighborhood.

The requirement that we maintain the project in perpetuity requires that we place a deed restriction on our property. This means that, were our property sold, the purchaser would have to commit to diverting rainwater, although not necessarily using the same means.

The Board voted to approve that Gene sign a Commitment Letter with Greenprint that prompts them "to begin investing in application preparation."

Lynn speaks for the trees

Lynn reported that "[t]he Play Area received the necessary permit from the City to continue installation. We need to put a hedge of boxwoods along the inside of the Kingshighway fence. This is where we were planning to put the paved path (for accessibility) so we need to move that in a bit. There are 3 remaining crabapple trees that were planted as part of the Chapel construction. These trees have been in bad shape for a number of years and are unlikely to survive the installation of the pathway. In addition we have learned from a professional arborist that these trees have a lifespan of 20 to 25 years so they are nearing that as well. In addition they are diseased and would require expensive spraying 4 times a year. The Play Area group and Landscaping all agree that the trees should be removed now and replaced at some point with either dogwoods or redbud (which are what the arborist suggested). We would like to engage the congregation in the selection. The group is also seeking governance support for this decision."

The Board agreed that, based on the arborist's assessment of the health and expected lifespan of the crabapple trees in question, they should be replaced. The Board also discussed the need for a coordinated effort to explain the reasons for doing so to church members, who perhaps can contact the Landscape Committee if they want to offer feedback regarding the replacement trees. We could also consider doing something commemorative with the wood from the crabapple trees.

Questionnaire regarding COVID-19 (emailed in advance)

During the previous Board meeting, Jason McClure and Steve Wilke agreed to work on a questionnaire regarding members' attitudes about returning to in-person services during the ongoing pandemic. This was completed and submitted to the Board prior to our meeting. It asks members how many household members 12 and over attend worship services or RE on Sundays, and of those, how many have been fully vaccinated. It then asks members which of these worship option(s) they and their household members would attend during periods of high, substantial, and moderate transmission, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control:

a. Masked **indoor** worship for all 12 and over members who are vaccinated, with social distancing and safety protocols. Simultaneous online streaming for those who prefer to remain at home or who are unvaccinated.

b. Masked **outdoor** worship for all 12 and over members who are vaccinated, with social distancing and safety protocols. Simultaneous online streaming for those who prefer to remain at home or who are unvaccinated.

c. Masked **outdoor** worship for all 12 and over members, regardless of vaccination status, with social distancing/safety protocols. Simultaneous online streaming for those who prefer to remain at home.

d. Virtual-only worship service

Mitch suggested, and the Board agreed, that we add the following categories:

d. Masked **outdoor** worship for all 12 and over members, regardless of vaccination status, with social distancing/safety protocols. Simultaneous online streaming for those who prefer to remain at home.

e. Unmasked **outdoor** worship for all 12 and over members, regardless of vaccination status, with social distancing/safety protocols. Simultaneous online streaming for those who prefer to remain at home.

Updates

1. Financial education

Gene's 5th installment of Rubin's Ramblings, titled "Church Finances: Let's Start with Our Endowment," was published in the 03 September 2021 E-News. Lynn reported that 40 people had read the article. Treasurer Kathy confirmed that she was one of them.

2. Committee reports

a. **Cathy Rauch, Church Council.** Cathy reported that the Council discussed various welcoming ideas from the retreat and assigned them to the appropriate committees as follows:

- Membership committee will take on Greeter training and recruitment
- Social Responsibility cluster will take on a Large All-Church project
- Changes to Coffee Hour were discussed and it was felt that we have to see how it will look with Covid restrictions in place to implement many of the ideas
 - 1.Reducing competing meetings should be suggested to all the groups but it's understood some groups can't gather at other times (i.e. groups with parents).
 2. Having table topic tents placed in Fellowship Hall was felt to be a better idea than assigning people to tables.
 - 3.Group outreach during Fellowship Hour was an idea the Council felt was worth trying-various Committees would take on the task of refilling coffee, while answering questions about their work.
 - 4.Ice-breaker activities were felt to be better suited to our Large church gatherings such as Mid-Winter Meeting. Too many competing activities during Fellowship Hour.

b. **Steve Wilke, Committee on Ministry.** The next task of the Committee is Reverend Kim's second evaluation, the deadline of which has been postponed from 1 November 2021 to 1 February 2022. Steve will recuse himself from this process.

c. **Rev. Kim Mason, Livestreaming project.** Rev. Kim reported that the installation of the live streaming system is complete and that we are nearly ready to live stream worship from the sanctuary. The only item remaining is the installation of the screen in the sanctuary which has run into problems. We have some time to resolve the issue as the screen isn't necessary until we have congregants in the sanctuary.

She also reported that we have hired an A/V technician, Michael "Moe" Hurst. Moe comes to us from Ladue Chapel Presbyterian where he has worked as an A/V technician doing exactly what he'll be doing for us. He is on board and learning our system. It is anticipated that his first Sunday and our first live streamed service will be September 26th.

Water Communion/ Ingathering was held the previous Sunday, September 12, 2021. We hosted two services outdoors in our parking lot at 9:30 and 11 am. The 9:30 am service was live streamed. We are considering future outdoor worship services.

d. **RE** Happily for her and sadly for us, our extraordinary Interim RE Director, Claire Weichselbaum, has been awarded a Fellowship in Civic Science and will be leaving us at the end of October. We are wanting a permanent RE Director to begin by 1 January 2022. In order to attract an experienced educator, we need to offer an attractive position. We may need to combine a few part- time positions into one full time position that offers better pay and benefits. This will

have to be run by the Personnel Committee for approval. Kathy Wilke was strongly in favor of this.

Executive Session – (closed door session) The Board supported Rev. Mason's request for a partial medical leave by consensus.

Process observer check-in: Our guest during the Executive Session, Rev. Sharon Dittmar, commended our warm, supportive behavior during this session.

Meeting adjourned at 7:56 pm.

The next Policy Board meeting will be held Monday, October 11, 2021 at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Lamothe