

First Unitarian Church of St. Louis
Policy Board Meeting Minutes
10 April 2023 Virtual

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; Susan Lammert, Trustee; Norma Vogelweid, Trustee

Absent: Joel Hickman, Trustee; Rebecca (Becca) McBride, Trustee

Staff: Rev. Kim Mason, Lynn Hunt

Church Council: Cathy Rauch

Special Guest: Margaret Weck

Chalice Lighting: Rev. Kim Mason

Opening Words: Norma Vogelweid

Reading of Board Covenant: Steve Wilke

Process Observer: Erin Milligan

Nominations Update- Margaret Weck

The Nominations and Leadership Development Committee has nearly finished building a slate of candidates to present to the congregation prior to our Annual Meeting.

For the Policy Board:

PRESIDENT: Steve Wilke (continuing)

VICE PRESIDENT: Alison Lamothe

SECRETARY: Sydney Watson

TREASURER: Jeremy Colton (continuing)

TRUSTEE: Chris Kocher

Susan Lammert and Rebecca McBride will continue serving their terms for Trustee, until 2024 and 2025 respectively.

For the Church Council:

Church Council Chair: Larry Dusenbery is considering this position

Facilities Cluster Chair: Tom Finan

Program Cluster Chair: Grace Munie is considering this position

Kevin Kellogg, Lisa Ross and Kathy Wire will continue in their roles as Chairs of the Growth and Engagement Cluster, the Outreach and Social Action Cluster, and the Stewardship Cluster, respectively.

Andrea Berin's term on the Nominations and Leadership Development Committee is ending and Sydney Watson will be joining the Policy Board. Margaret will stay on for another year but does not want to serve as its Chair. This committee important committee needs new members!

Roof DISCUSSION AND VOTE

a. Should we ask for \$95k, \$150k or something in between

An email has been sent to the congregation announcing a Special Meeting on April 23. The Church Council recently voted on a proposal to ask the congregation to approve taking a higher amount of \$150,000 from our endowment to cover a range of needed, water-related infrastructure improvements in addition to replacing the RE roof. The vote in favor was unanimous. The Policy Board attempted to vote by email on this matter but Treasurer Jeremy Colton had some misgivings about asking for such a significantly higher amount shortly after asking for the smaller amount of \$95k, so we postponed the vote until after he had the opportunity to discuss his reservations in greater detail during our meeting. Susan agreed that this was an unfortunate but necessary adjustment. Cathy Rauch offered that it was better to ask once for the larger amount than to come back in the near future and ask for more.

b. Voting on the Council's recommendation

Susan motioned that we vote on a recommendation that we ask the congregation for \$150,000 to be taken from the endowment. Norma seconded. The vote was as follows: AYES: Steve Wilke, Erin Milligan, Alison Lamothe, Jeremy Colton, Susan Lammert, Norma Vogelweid, NAYS: None. **MOTION CARRIED.**

After our vote Steve Wilke had a brief phone call with our financial advisor, Jeff Cary, who confirmed that we had \$270k in cash reserves available. He did not offer an opinion as to whether we should seek either amount from the congregation.

c. Further communications with the congregation

We recently held two informational meetings, one in-person and one remote, regarding taking money from our endowment to pay for repairs. The higher amount was considered during the second meeting but not the first. We decided to have another informational meeting after the April 16 church service to explain the decision to ask for a higher amount and answer questions, with members of the Facilities and Stewardship Clusters also present. Steve will attend, as will Susan Lammert. (Alison Lamothe agreed to attend but later discovered she had a conflict and could not.)

Consent Agenda – read in advance of meeting

- a. Minutes of Previous Meetings:
- b. Report of the Minister – Rev. Kim Mason
- a. Report of the Administrator – Lynn Hunt
- b. Report of the Board President – Steve Wilke
- c. Report of the Council- Cathy Rauch

Norma inquired about the status of the Active Hope Project. Cathy reported that it is not completed yet.

Budget issues- Discussion

We did not reach our goal of raising \$400k but we did have our most successful canvas in years. We are very grateful for the efforts of our Canvas Committee, Sarah Francois and Emily Jaycox. 80% of our members have pledged, and we had 14 new pledges.

It's hard to know precisely what the deficit will be at this moment. We need to present a budget at our Annual Meeting, but it does not require a congregational vote. We will revisit this topic during our May meeting.

Board Training: Good Boundaries- Balancing Transparency and Confidentiality

This month's training was broken down into the following subtopics:

1. Confidentiality and Healthy Disclosures (LeaderLab 02/09/2018)

"Healthy, vibrant systems need as much open communication as possible." There are situations, however, that require discretion. In situations where we cannot communicate details, we can communicate about policies and procedures and assure the congregation that these policies and procedures were followed.

Although ostensibly our Board meetings are open to the congregation, in practice that is not easy to do since we meet remotely and attending requires access to the appropriate Zoom link. Lynn will work on making this link more readily available to members of our congregation.

2. Creating Healthy Communication Channels (Renee Ruchotzke 02/10/2018)

Ruchotzke discusses practices that help to build trust and create a culture of openness and transparency. This is particularly important when there are problems or concerns: "not having healthy communication channels results in unhealthy channels forming."

She recommends that guiding documents be available on the church's website; that we establish regular communications tools (such as our E-news); that we publish summaries of our Board meetings (we do); that we host congregational informational meetings regarding major projects, especially when a congregational vote is required (we are). She also recommends we identify ourselves as Board members during fellowship (our nametags do), and that we might consider hosting periodic listening sessions during fellowship in times of high anxiety.

3. Avoiding "Parking Lot" Conversations (Alban @ Divinity School 10/13/2010)

"In a healthy congregation, it is essential to keep communication flowing while everyone is at the table and in covenant."

The author(s) believes that email and social media constitute "the new parking lots," or covert communications that can undermine transparency. They list the shortcomings of email as a conflict resolution tool and discourage its use for important conversations.

4. The Perils of Anonymous Feedback (UUA Congregational Life 02/28/2018)

"Feedback and concerns are best shared directly to avoid triangulation and pass-through communication-situations where communication is not mutual and not all parties take responsibility for their words."

Triangulation can be described as when person A vents to person B about C and expects B to do something about it. Pass-through communication occurs when A asks B to tell C something rather than tell C directly themselves. This habit can lead to the spread of misinformation and cause conflict.

Unsolicited anonymous feedback is also undesirable because "[a]nonymous others should not be considered when making leadership decisions or resolving conflicts."

Annual Meeting:

a. What business we need to conduct

Aside from our usual business items, we will have to explain why we have fewer Trustees on the Policy Board and that we would welcome others.

b. Values Discussion- VOTE

Community/ Connection

Open Minded/ Welcoming

Compassion/ Service

Knowledge/Learning

At a summer leadership retreat and then at the Midwinter meeting with the congregation, we did brainstorming exercises and identified these as our most commonly cited values.

Rev. Kim shared the example of Eliot Chapel's governance document. Alison had expected a more finished "statement" but Eliot simply listed its values in a similar way to the above presentation.

Alison motioned that we ask the congregation to adopt these values as part of our governance document; Erin seconded. The vote was as follows: AYES Steve Wilke, Erin Milligan, Alison Lamothe, Jeremy Colton, Susan Lammert, Norma Vogelweid, NAYS: None. **MOTION CARRIED.**

New business- Open Discussion None.

Action Items for Next Meeting

- Alison will adapt wording that will allow for the possibility of proxy voting at our Special Meeting on April 15, 2023. She will then submit it to Steve and Erin for review.
- Steve and Susan will represent the Policy Board at our informational meeting after the service on April 16, 2023
- We will make an effort to invite members of the congregation to attend Policy Board meetings, in an effort to promote transparency and perhaps enhance leadership recruitment.

Process Observer check-in: We managed to stay on time! Yay us!

Meeting adjourned at 8:22 pm.

The next Policy Board meeting will be held Monday, May 8, at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Lamothe