

**Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday, April 5, 2023**

Meeting Conducted via Zoom Video Conference

Minutes – Approved

ATTENDEES

Voting members: Michael Armstrong, Bill Brown, Kay Fairwell, Randall Hudson, Beth Pollard, Cordell Sloan, Pier Sun Ho, Helen Tinsley-Jones

Absent: David Rosales

Ex officio members: Rev. Michelle Collins, Tess O’Riva (Executive Director), Selene Fabiano (Secretary), Carolyn James (Treasurer)

Visitors: Barbara & Patrick Cullinane, Alan Davis, Michael DeWitt, Jean Gleason, Anne Greenwood, Ann Harlow, Albert Kueffner, Lisa Maynard, Anita Mermel, Larry Nagel, Lenore Ralston, Jason Russell, Marta Tobey, Grace Ulp, Dave Wemmer

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by Helen Tinsley-Jones, co-president, at 7:05p.m. Bill did the chalice lighting and reading, Randall read the Board covenant, Carolyn read the land acknowledgement, and Selene read the Widening the Circle Vision Statement.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Executive Director’s report was pulled from the consent agenda and will be presented in the meeting.

A motion for the following (M _Michael_/S_Bill_) passed unanimously:

- Approve agenda
- Approve Board Meeting minutes of March 1, 2023
- Accept monthly Treasurer’s report
- Accept Ministerial Search Committee update
- Approve signatory changes on UUCEF accounts: Kathryn Jay removed
- Approve for congregational affirmation the new Nominating Committee members for 2023-24:

Lynne Cahoon (continuing), Michael DeWitt, Don Klose, Anita Mermel, Sandy Portillo-Robins,

Ariel Smith-Iyer, Terry Stokes (continuing), Andrew Swan, Marta Tobey

INFORMATION ITEM

Minister's Report:

Per Rev. Michelle, much of her work over the past 16 months has focused on Freestone. She praised the congregation for their respectful behavior both during the 3/26 congregational meeting and after the vote was announced. She also praised Helen Tinsley-Jones for her facilitation of the meeting and thanked parliamentarian Stephanie Blythe for her assistance. Rev. Michelle was not able to take a vacation last week as planned and will take vacation next week instead. She will not use one week of her vacation time. Rev. Michelle has done 4 memorial services during the past 6 weeks and another 6 are scheduled in June. A lot of her work now involves supporting the transition process with the new minister.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LISTENING

- a. Announcements – Board Members (none)
- b. **Report from Board listening presence**
Some of the feedback shared with Randall included: interest in having the board's work be more accessible to the congregation; interest in more crafts and fun activities; feeling good about the co presidency; increased demand in Family Ministry and the hope this will be reflected in the budget; appreciation for how engaged the Board is with the WTCOC task force; desire to have Youth Spirit Artworks come to a Social Justice meeting; belief that the majority of the Freestone Oversight Committee should consist of people who are not on the Freestone Committee.
- c. Congregants who wish to speak to the Board on agenda items or other matters: No one came forward at this time.

INFORMATION ITEM/ACTION ITEM

a. FY2023-24 Endowment Payout Recommendations from the Endowment Committee

Anita Mermel reported the Endowment Committee is recommending a 4% distribution for the four funds, totaling \$44,635. One hundred percent of these distributions go to the Ladd Griffith fund. She also reported 2 new large donations to the building endowment fund totaling over \$40,000, at least half of which will be given in FY23-24. The Endowment Committee is also awaiting a bequest of 15% of the proceeds from Marsha Saxton's estate, the amount of which is not yet known. The full Endowment Committee report can be found on the UUCB website.

b. Parsonage updates on renovations, escrow, and a request for an additional \$10,000 for repairs/improvements

Tess reported that the work on the parsonage is coming along and requested to borrow an additional \$10,000 from the Cope fund to allow for a remodel of the laundry room, new kitchen appliances, repairs due to dry rot and fungus, including replacing the back door. The current estimate for this work is \$7600.

There was some discussion. A question was raised regarding the anticipated amount of rent that can be charged for the parsonage if the minister doesn't choose to live there. The answer was \$4500/month. A few board members anticipated that there may be additional unexpected costs during the renovations and suggested authorizing a larger amount of borrowing from the Cope fund to prevent slowdowns in the renovation due to Tess having to come back to the board,

A motion (M Randall / S Pier) authorizing the borrowing of an additional \$18,000 from the Cope Fund for improvements/renovation of the parsonage was made. All voted in favor. The motion passed.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

a. 2023-24 Budget: Executive Director presentation of draft 2023-24 budget

Executive Director's Report: Highlights from the report included: Tess anticipates the need for a Capital Campaign; planning for the campaign will take a year. She is working with the Climate Justice Committee (CJC) on waste management. Some of this work entails working with our rentals vis a vis their waste management. The rental contract has been updated to require compliance with UUCB's recycling policy. The 4-year lease with Good Earth cannot be updated at this time, although they are required to comply with California laws on recycling. New recycling bins have been purchased for all classrooms in the school.

Budget Presentation: Tess highlighted the following items: Relocation costs for a new minister are included in the budget, in case that is needed. There is an increase in advertising costs in the hopes of increasing wedding rentals. Expected a jump in income from trusts. Treasurer Carolyn James reported that the books aren't fully reconciled but a lot of progress has been made.

There were some questions from board members and congregants:

Q: Did the WTCOC receive its budget request? A: Yes. It's in the program budget.

Q: What if UUCB doesn't reach the pledge goal? Will there be an adjustment to the budget?
A: There's a \$15,000 cushion built into the budget. If pledge goal isn't reached, we will need to revise. The Finance Committee will have the final stewardship numbers at their next meeting.

Q: Is there money included for the Minister's installation?
A: There is no separate line item; however, there is a \$6000 line item for hospitality which covers all celebrations and Sunday hospitality.

No action at this time. The board will review the budget again at the May Board meeting and vote then to move the budget forward for the May 21, 2023 Congregational Meeting.

b. Report and Recommendation from the Opening Task Force (OTF)

Patrick Cullinane gave a brief summary of the OTF report. The full report is part of the board packet. He highlighted that the UUCB community has complied with public health protocols for

the past 3 years and as a result there have been very few COVID exposures in the church environment. The OTF which has met every 2 weeks for the past 3 years is winding down its work. In September, the Safety Committee will pick up the mantle and make sure safety protocols include infectious disease procedures. The OTF is requesting the Board make or update pandemic-related policies to fill the gap until the Safety Committee has had time to create its own policies. The OTF's current recommendations are as follows:

1. Masking. The OTF is asking the board to set a policy that would require masking in the sanctuary and optional in other areas of the church.
2. Vaccinations. The OTF is asking the board to update its policy re vaccinations so that vaccinations would be encouraged but no longer required.
3. Sunday check-in. The OTF is asking the Board support continued use of the Sunday Check-In process for membership and administrative purposes and recognize it is no longer a safety procedure

Questions:

Q: What's the basis for the masking recommendation?

A: We've been moving from mandating COVID safety protocols to personal assessment of one's own risk and comfort. Most UU congregations no longer require masking; however, given the results of the recent poll, the OTF decided it should continue to have mandate for masking in the sanctuary.

Q: Would the choir be required to mask at performances and rehearsals?

A: Rev. Michelle defers to Bryan on that issue.

Q: Masking has been handled administratively to date, why should the board step in with a policy?

A: It seems better to have this be a group decision, rather than to put all the responsibility for decisions re masking on Tess.

Discussion and Comments:

1. Only 89 people completed the recent poll. It's important to keep this conversation going and revisit the question down the road. Things could change for better or worse.
2. Appreciate the focus of masking in the sanctuary where there isn't a lot of choice vs the other optional spaces at the church.
3. In the next survey it would be good to ask "Do you regularly attend Sunday service now?"
4. Question/concern re how effectively the surveys are reaching people, especially people who aren't comfortable with electronic surveys.
5. It's good to progress forward slowly because it's harder to have to go back and add restrictions.
6. Matters regarding Sunday check-in are administrative. The board can add support but shouldn't be setting policy on it.
7. Several board members did not feel ready to make a decision on the OTF recommendations tonight and wanted more time to review them and be clear what we're voting on.
8. A request was made to the OTF to write out their request to the board in a few simple sentences so the board is clear what it is voting on.
9. There was support for putting the OTF's recommendations on the May agenda and the board's committing to making a decision at the May meeting, so that the OTF can finish their work.

10. Acknowledgement of the all the work the OTF has done and the research-based information in their report.

Outcome of discussion: Board is requesting additional time to digest the OTF's recommendations and has asked the OTF to write out its requests in a few sentences. The Board will make a decision about these recommendations at the May 2023 Board meeting.

c. Freestone Oversight Committee (FOC) Formation –

The board began moving forward with the phased implementation of Resolution No. 22-1 which calls for the formation of the Freestone Oversight Committee.

i. Call for Committee nominees

The Board is asking for nominations and will not be forming the committee today.

Discussion and Comments

- Dave Wemmer reported that the Freestone Committee was prepared to nominate himself and Alan Davis, and possibly another Freestone Committee Member. He also acknowledged that there is a question as to whether or not Freestone Committee members who are working on Freestone should be part of the Freestone Oversight Committee and thus overseeing themselves. Whatever the decision, it will be important for there to be close communication between the Freestone Committee and the FOC.
- Alan Davis shared his opinion that it's important for someone who is involved in the process of trying to get a conservation easement to be on the FOC, and that he wants the FOC to be independent and transparent.
- A job description for FOC members including the scope of work and meeting schedule is part of the board packet tonight's meeting as well as part of the packet for the 3/26/23 Congregational Meeting. This description will be helpful in informing potential candidates. A link to this document with clarifications and "Draft Charge of the Freestone Oversight Committee" can also be found at the end of Resolution No. 22-1.
- The Board will be sending out a request for nominations to the congregation.
- Important to include in the FOC open-minded people who chose not to support the resolution. The purpose of the FOC is not to advance Freestone but to keep work on Freestone in alignment with UUCB's mission and goals.
- The Board will make the decision as to whether include Freestone Committee members on the Freestone Oversight Committee as they see the composition of the nominees. An argument can be made to include one Freestone Committee member to be on the FOC. For example, the Capital Oversight Committee has one person from Building & Grounds to provide their knowledge.

ii. Conservation Easement Meeting (Karl Kraft, USDA Biologist – Friday, April 14, 2023 at 1PM)

Alan Davis, Randall Hudson, Dave Wemmer, Beth Pollard, and possibly Bill Brown will attend the meeting. Alan Davis encouraged those attending the meeting to review the deed beforehand. The Board asked Alan to forward the deed and to send the link for the meeting to Beth, Randall, and Bill.

iii. Approval of application of Transient Occupancy Tax (before May 10), application for Vacation Rental Permit (must be done between May 10-23), and Fee (\$800 - \$1000)

Dave Wemmer provided the following update related to Freestone:

In a recent meeting, Sonoma County Planner Senior Planner, Hannah Spencer, stated that their legal counsel has recommended that UUCB apply for a vacation rental permit (VRP) to take advantage of an upcoming short window of opportunity (May 10-May 23, 2023) when applications will be allowed for corporate owned residential properties.

Per Dave Wemmer, the Freestone Committee is requesting approximately \$3500 from UUCB to for the following items related to this VRP:

1. Vacation Rental Permit Application must be submitted May 10th
2. Transient Occupancy Tax
3. Hire a home inspector to do a walk-through
4. License (he wasn't sure exactly what this was for)

Discussion:

- Dave Wemmer stated that the Freestone Committee will be fundraising but their ability to raise funds depends on whether or not they are able to get the VRP.
- Reverend Michelle stated that Sonoma County indicated that having a VRP would allow UUCB to use Freestone for programming such as overnight and day use. Thus, it would be important to get whether or not there is any plan to try to rent out Freestone to generate revenue.
- It's not clear if free use of the property will be allowed if we do not get a VRP for Freestone.
- Time is of the essence in this matter. UUCB will not be able to apply for a VRP for Freestone after 5/23/23.
- Treasure Carolyn James stated that the only costs included in the budget for Freestone are the ongoing costs for property insurance and property tax. If this current request for funds was approved, the money would have to be taken from somewhere else and that could be difficult.

- Per the Freestone resolution, ongoing net costs for Freestone should not exceed 10k each year for 2 years. Thus if it is at all possible, UUCB should honor the congregation's will and try to fund this current request.
- We need to find out how/if using Freestone as a rental property will affect the insurance coverage.
- There was some opinion that more than \$3500 would be needed to get the VRP.
- There was a question as to whether the neighbors have any say regarding whether or not a VRP for Freestone was approved, and how that might be a barrier.

Summary and decision: Although there is general support for supporting Freestone, the Freestone Committee was advised to explore all other avenues for raising funds for the VRP application and associated fees, given our current tight budget. We will also check with Tess to see if she can find the money for these expenses in this year's budget. The board will vote on this request at the May 3rd board meeting.

BOARD COMMITTEE/LIAISON REPORTS

The Widening the Circle of Concern (WTCOC) is fully engaged on forming the Education for Liberation Committee and want to make a report to the Congregation in May

This coming Sunday is Easter Sunday, a big event for the church. A lot of outreach has been done.

CLOSING COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25PM

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Fabiano, Secretary

UPCOMING EVENTS AND BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

Next Board Meeting: May 3, 2023