

**Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday, September 4, 2024**

Meeting Conducted via Zoom Video Conference

Minutes – Approved

ATTENDEES

Voting members: Michael Armstrong, Michael DeWitt, Kay Fairwell, Beth Pollard, David Rosales, Pier Sun Ho, Helen Tinsley-Jones, Helen Toy

Absent: Beth Jerde

Ex officio members: Rev. Marcus Liefert, Tess O’Riva (Executive Director), Selene Fabiano (Secretary), Lisa Maynard (Treasurer)

Visitors: Victoria Bowen, Patrick Cullinane, Mary Gardner, Marsha Lanier, Larry Nagel, Francie Pennell Nurkse, Marta Tobey, Karen Tripp

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by Pier Sun Ho, co-president, at 7:17 p.m. Michael DeWitt did the chalice lighting and reading, Helen Toy read the Board covenant, Selene Fabiano read the land acknowledgement, and the Widening the Circle Vision Statement.

CONSENT AGENDA

Pier asked to remove the monthly Treasurer’s report so it could be discussed later in the meeting.

A motion for the following (M _ Beth Pollard _/S_ Michael Armstrong_) passed unanimously:

- Approve agenda
- Approve Board Meeting minutes of July 2024 (no August minutes)
- Accept Freestone Oversight Committee report

MINISTER’S REPORT

Rev. Marcus expressed appreciation for the HIP-sponsored Blessing of the Three Sisters Garden. Religious Education classes will start this Sunday. UUCB staff will be together for a staff retreat at the San Francisco UU church. Reverend Marcus will focus on the following three areas during this church year: 1. Continue to strengthen leadership cohesion; 2. Build capacity for engaging conflict. “The Web We Weave” workshop is scheduled for October 5th from 10AM-

1PM and will be co-facilitated with Sam Wilson. This is a first step to developing an ongoing group for engaging conflict aimed at build skills that can be taken out into the wider community; and 3. Engaging younger folks at church and finding new ways to connect. One experiment will be a Saturday evening church service (Church du Soleil) that will initially be a space that is predominantly for Gen X, Y and Z, and won't be publicized it widely at church. Rev. Marcus sees everything we're doing at UUCB as being at the intersection of arts, spirituality, and justice. Another worship planning potluck is scheduled.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Tess appreciates being able to do verbal reports. She reported that lighting in the Social Hall has been improved which she hopes will make the Social Hall feel more welcoming. Bar height tables in the atrium have been a hit. She has been supporting the chancel and atrium redesign projects. Some plumbing issues have arisen in some parts of the campus. There is a long list of facilities accomplishments that she will highlight in her monthly Beacon article which will start again next month. The "How to Do Stuff at UUCB" has been updated and is on the website.

She will be pulling together two important groups: 1. Safety Council (will be an advisory council that will review the Safety Policy focusing on safety policy and re). We currently have a chair and 4 confirmed members. She hopes to have a policy for the Board to review this fall. 2. IT Strategy group. Need to get in front of IT and determine which subscriptions are needed.

There is a partnership with a new UUCB member who has brought in a trauma workshop on Wednesday nights, as part of an effort to focus on wellness. Dina Griffith (daughter of Jeanne and Ladd Griffith) is coming back to dedicate the memorial plaque for her mother and re-do the plaque for Ladd Griffith in the island of the Ladd Griffith garden.

Highlights: Smiley's birthday party. Some of our partners are back: Kensington Symphony on Wednesday nights and Contra Costa Chorale on Mondays.

Roy Zimmerman coming on the 20th. On September 22nd, there will be a performance of Mozart's Coronation Mass in C Major. Climate Revival on 9/28. We are looking at a potential film and music festival on October 4th & 5th. New Chalice circles will be beginning.

Recognition: Don Wollwage did a lot of weed whacking this year, was up every weekend. Special shout out to Tom Tripp for his work on the hardware on the sanctuary doors. We will eventually have emergency push bars on the sanctuary doors. Phil Maynard and the landscape team for filling up the green bins and making the place look good.

Q: Status of sanctuary speaker change?

A: This is quite complicated because we need a very special 2-person lift that doesn't hurt the cork floors and can be leveled on an incline. The work would also put the sanctuary off limits for a Sunday; so we will need to work with Rev. Marcus and the music team to schedule it and

see if there's a Sunday where we can do worship somewhere other than the sanctuary. All the speaker equipment has been purchased.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LISTENING

Report from Board listening presence: Michael Armstrong reported that there is a lot of excitement about the Roy Zimmerman concert and lots of discussion about climate change and the upcoming Reimagine Together event. The September Good Neighbor is the Read Aloud program. The Rodeo community garden workday is being supported on September 6th

Congregants who wish to speak to the Board: None

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:

a. New Member Welcome

The 10 new members who joined UUCB between March and August of 2024 were invited to this month's board meeting to be welcomed. Three of these new members, Mary Gardner, Marsha Lanier, Francie Nurkse, were able to attend. They shared a little about why they joined UUCB. Two had been very involved in other UU churches prior to moving to the Bay Area; another joined to religious education for her grandchildren.

b. Atrium Task Force - Karen Tripp

Atrium Task Force member Karen Tripp provided a report of the task force's work and recommendations, as well as what led to the formation of the task force. Beginning in March 2024 during the Stewardship campaign, there was some conversation about the number of tables in the atrium, how to address fire and safety concerns, and how to make the space feel open and welcoming. Lots of groups were interested in having tables and Janae didn't want to be the person making choices about which groups should get space. The Atrium Task Force was formed with members from a variety of constituency. Members include Karen Tripp and Cynthia Asprodites (Aesthetics Committee), Christina Creveling (Membership/Welcoming), Kathryn Jay (Family Ministry), Sheldon Jones and Cynthia Greenleaf (Social Justice), and Martha Tobey (Program Council). They met with the Fire Inspector to learn what the fire regulations require. Although Karen stressed that there isn't a "final plan" they have made some recommendations. Their "Atrium Shuffle" plan involves having groups use a calendaring process to sign up for tables in the atrium. Janae will oversee the calendaring. The first calendar session is in September and another is planned for January 2025. They are also encouraging more use of the Social Hall. For example, beginning this Sunday, Dorothy Herzberg will share her space in the Social Hall with the Shaw's DIR items. Marcus stated that the recommendations will go to Tess, under whose purview this aspect of operations falls, and she will then share the policy. Appreciation for Karen and the task force was expressed.

c. Stewardship Committee

Lisa Maynard gave an update on the search for a chair or co-chairs for the 2025 Stewardship campaign. Lisa, Helen Toy, and Patrick Cullinane had volunteered to do this search. They have found one person who is interested in co-chairing. This potential co-chair and the search committee are reaching out in the hopes of finding a second co-chair. They hope there will be two stewardship co-chairs by the next board meeting and that at least one of the co-chairs would be willing to continue the following year, to maintain some continuity.

- d. Ministerial Housing Fund (MHF) – Pier reviewed that the MHF needs to be re-funded. She proposed that the board approve the motion in the agenda and call a congregation meeting for 9/15. Pier reported that she held an in-person meeting to provide educational information regarding the MHF. She also offered some Zoom meetings but no one attended them. Pier is happy to provide additional meetings, if needed.

Discussion

Board members were interested what came up in the education session. Pier and Lisa shared that most of the questions were of a clarification nature and some newer members wanted to know more about the Cope Fund. Some of the questions raised hadn't been included on the initial FAQ document; Linda Laskowski is working on an expanded FAQ.

Motion (M- Pier / S- Helen Toy)

To call a Congregational Meeting on 9/15/24 immediately following the Sunday service regarding the Ministerial Housing Fund. This motion passed unanimously

Motion (M- Pier/ S- Michael D)

To bring the following motion to the Congregational meeting on 9/15/24:

The congregation of UUCB authorizes a loan of up to \$190,000 from the Board-Designated Endowment Fund to replenish the Ministerial Housing Fund, to be repaid incrementally over the next approximately eight years from net proceeds from rental of the church-owned property known as the Lexington Lodge. This motion passed unanimously.

- e. Kensington Fire Protection Department (KFPD) Exit and Next Steps for Lower Parking Lot

Tess reported that KFPD's 2-year lease ends at the end of September. Per the contract, KFPD is obligated to remove the fence and structures it put in the lower parking lot and resurface that lot. Tess believes there could be some advantages to UUCB to keep the two structures (engine garage and mobile building). Good Earth which currently has a waiting list, is interested in expanding into the mobile building. UUCB would like to use the engine garage to store large equipment, as it is often too expensive to rent large equipment to do work on the grounds. If we had space to store it, we could purchase our own equipment and use it as needed. If UUCB were to go in this direction, our offer to the KFPD would be to release them from their obligation to resurface the parking lot in exchange for the engine garage. KFPD's lease for the mobile unit is

currently \$3700/mo. Should UUCB choose to keep the mobile unit, it is likely a new lease agreement would need to be negotiated. The Good Earth School then could take over the negotiated lease; however they probably wouldn't be able to do that until December so UUCB would have to pay the monthly lease for a few months. Another consideration relates to parking. When KFPD took over the lower parking lot, UUCB lost 50 parking spots. Thus UUCB has only experienced a lack of parking a few times per year (e.g. The Messiah sign-along, and the Berkeley Broadway Singer concerts). Tess has reach out to her contacts at KFPD but has not yet received a response. She would like the board to consider the plan she outlined.

Discussion

Q: Could we take over the existing lease for the mobile unit or would the terms of the lease change?

A: The leasing company would probably want to renegotiate the lease. Tess would ask if there was a purchase option.

Q: Could we get a different mobile unit?

A: No. It was very difficult to put in this unit and it would be cost-prohibitive to put something else in. If the unit is removed, it is very unlikely we would be able to replace it.

Q: How long is the mobile unit built to last? What time line? What is it on? Is the foundation sustainable?

A: We need to look at that. Manufactured homes are usually pretty long-lasting. This one is built on asphalt. We would need to see if there is a warranty, as part of lease negotiations.

Q: Does this serve our mission? Are we doing this to make money for the church?

A: We would like to strengthen relationship with Good Earth as their values are similar to UUCB's values. The parents of Good Earth students are millennials, a population that UUCB is trying to attract. Family Ministry could use the building as shared space (e.g. host another congregation for an overnight). There are also some other possible uses for the mobile unit (e.g. housing) should Good Earth close down. Obtaining the engine garage is an investment in growth. Finally, I would like to continue our partnership with KFPD.

Q: Have there been conversations with the Building and Grounds Committee about this? What are their thoughts? How about conversations with the Finance Committee?

A: There is some general enthusiasm by B&G for being able to own and store our own equipment. There are also some concerns about having to work with the City of El Cerrito re making the permits for the structures permanent. I would need to have a deeper conversation with the B& G Committee before making a decision. The Finance Committee has done some research.

Q: Is the KFPD contractually obligated to give UUCB the right to take over the garage?

A: Contract says they need to move everything out and resurface the parking lot

Discussion

Using the area for anything other than parking space is contingent on whether KFPD is willing to change the contract. It's concerning that KFPD hasn't responded.

The parking issue seems manageable. For the few times each year that we need more parking, we can use the overflow parking, do some diagonal parking on Lawson Road down to the stop sign, and encourage car-pooling. Once KFPD is gone, we will also regain 5 spaces where the fire department employees currently park their cars.

Next step: Tess will let us know when she hears back from KFPD and will post in Slack their response to her proposal.

f. Annual Financial Report Update

Tess & Lisa shared a preliminary budget report for FY23-24, and stressed that it is preliminary. Currently it looks as if there will be deficit of almost \$9000; however, Tess anticipates that the interest income will be about \$6000 higher because the currently report doesn't include interest from CD's and because Tess was successful in her request to Mechanics Bank to raise the interest rate on our savings account.

Lisa highlighted the following revenue items: 1. Due to user error when making pledge payments online, it appears that the pledge income for FY23-24 was lower than projected and that prior year pledge payments were a lot higher than expected. However, these numbers balance out. Lisa would like to work on improving that system to make it easier for folks to indicate the correct year for their pledge payments. 2. The plate collections amount is very encouraging. 3. We are on-budget for community-use rentals. 4. We were overly optimistic about "other revenue"; some hoped-for special projects didn't happen.

Some notes about expenses: 1. Salary, wages and payroll expenses were higher than expected for several reasons (i.e. some hiring happened after the FY started, decision to increase hours, and some extra expense for guest ministers give our own musicians some breaks). 2. Some fixed costs (e.g. insurance, utilities, and bank fees) increased. 3. Accounting and other consultants were used to help with improvements in our operations. 4. Some improvements were needed for phones and computers.

A financial audit was not done this year because the new accounting firm was still in review. Tess is going to suggest that bylaws be updated regarding the frequency of audits.

Discussion

Q: Anything you've gleaned from this report that informs the FY24-25 budget?

A: This year's budget included more expenses for property taxes and fire inspection. We have also been able to have conversations with Rev. Marcus about what he sees coming. IT Strategy group is being formed so we can get ahead of maintenance and planning so we aren't caught off guard re IT expenses. Tess and her staff will continue to educate congregants about using the "Friend and Family" option when donating via PayPal so we don't incur so many PayPal fees.

There was a general consensus that the balance sheet should be shared on a quarterly basis.

g. October Beacon article – Michael Armstrong volunteered to write it this month. One topic idea was to report on what happens at a board retreat

BOARD COMMITTEE MEMBER/LIAISON REPORTS

Nominating Committee – begins next week.

Bylaws Committee – starting up in November

Social Justice – Celebration for Graduates event went well. Three students were honored; Three Sisters Garden Harvest celebration was successful and Voting Justice is doing well; The Equity in Berkeley schools project needs volunteers. This Sunday there is a potluck dinner to honor Ray Westergard and Dorothy Herzberg. The Climate Revival will be held on 9/28 1-5PM and considered an all-church event. This is a UUA initiative and three hundred UU churches will be holding Climate revivals.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Appreciation to all church members who attended the meeting and to the Board members for their work.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:39PM

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Fabiano, Secretary

Next Board Meeting: October 2, 2024