

Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday, June 4, 2025
Meeting Conducted via Zoom Video Conference

Minutes – Approved

ATTENDEES

Voting members: Michael DeWitt, Kay Fairwell, Kristen Jensen, Beth Jerde, Carla McCasland, David Rosales, Pier Sun Ho, Helen Tinsley-Jones, Helen Toy

Ex officio members: Rev. Marcus Liefert, Selene Fabiano (Secretary), Lisa Maynard (Treasurer)

Visitors: Peter Barnholdt, Victoria Bowen, Jean Gleason, Lynn Hammond, Janae Heard, Kathryn Jay, Marta Tobey

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by Kay Fairwell, president, at 7: 17p.m. Selene did the chalice lighting and reading, David read the Board covenant, Kristen read the land acknowledgement, and Carla read the Widening the Circle Vision Statement.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion for the following (M _Pier_/S __Helen Tinsley-Jones) passed unanimously:

- Approve agenda
- Approve May 2025 Board Meeting minutes
- Accept Interim Executive Director's report
- Accept Operations Director's report
- Accept monthly Treasurer's report
- Accept monthly Freestone Oversight Committee's report

MINISTER'S REPORT

Rev. Marcus reported that the official church year ended this past Sunday with the Flower Communion. There is a focus now to try to move from welcoming new members to helping them become involved. Laura Palin and Charis are helping to organize a 6-week class on UU Theology and spiritual practice that Rev. Marcus will lead in September. The Social Justice Council (SC) will co-sponsor two events this month: 1. Right of Return Pilgrimage with Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity and 2. The No Kings March on 6/14.

He and Rev. Kathryn are preparing for his upcoming parental leave and have identified “building the common good” as the overall theme for the 2025-26 church year. UUCB will be hosting the ministers' chapter tomorrow with 30 ministers from all over. Rev. Marcus will not be in the pulpit from 6/15 – 8/3, and will return on 8/10. Rev. Kathryn and some guest ministers will be preaching. Rev. Marcus will be back in the office and for Chalice Camp the first week of August. He will be unavailable from mid-June to August except for emergencies

We have hired Eliza Cantwell as a half-time administrative assistant and are saying goodbye to Sharon Dolan, IED, who is retiring and moving to Mexico. Charis is updating on the UUCB website, working with external consultant Naomi Moon who has specializes in helping religious organizations with their website. This is building on our work with rebranding and creating new logo and applying that to our website. We expect the changes to be live this summer. The website is primarily a gateway for newcomers to show them about UU and our church; a secondary focus is to support our members in finding information. Eventually there will be a way for members to submit forms when they see something that needs to be updated or tweaked on the website. The design is being tested for mobile phones.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LISTENING

Board or Staff Announcements:

Treasurer Lisa Maynard noted that the fiscal year ends June 30 and reminded everyone to complete paying their pledge for FY24-25 by the middle of June and to submit any reimbursement requests for the current year by mid-June.

Helen Toy shared that the Appreciation Committee will be sending a lot of appreciation note this month. Helen will send to Rev. Kathryn a list of all the volunteers who have been thanked this year.

Report from Board listening presence (Helen Toy):

4 people would like the kitchen budget to be higher. One person is happy with bagels.

Congregants who wish to speak to the Board: None

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:

- a. Capital Campaign Consultation Proposal. In October 2024, Rev Marcus spoke with the consultant, Kay Crider, a consultant with Stewardship for Us about her availability to help UUCB with a capital campaign. The need for a capital campaign at UUCB is clear. Rev. Marcus worked with Ms. Crider during his tenure at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Marin and thought she did a terrific job. Her consultation proposal consists of four phases. The first phase is the Next Steps Consultation in which the consultant would review the church's finances and come for a weekend to meet with church leaders and make a presentation. Ms. Crider is available the weekend of September 5th- 7th. If the board wants to go forward we could book her for that weekend. Please note that there is an error in the written proposal received; the reference to a "new social hall" is a remnant from a proposal to another church and should be ignored.

Staff will provide the consultant with most of the information she needs prior to the in-person meeting. Rev. Marcus would like the board to approve \$3000 to go ahead with the "Next Steps Consultation" (phase 1) for the in-person visit during the September weekend.

Questions

Q: How long a period of time would the 4 phases entail?

A: Rev Marcus thinks we would launch the public campaign as a joint stewardship/capital

campaign next spring, but we would only do that if we felt that the congregation was on board. If there were big questions to work out, we would extend the timeline.

Q: How would the board's work on envisioning figure in? Do we need to do that visioning work first in order to decide what capital projects to pursue?

A (Rev. Marcus): I'd like to see a visioning task force of the board working alongside the capital campaign; the visioning doesn't have to be done before. However, the alignment is important because there needs to be a clear and compelling reason for why we want to keep the buildings in good shape.

Q: Should we get bids from other consultants?

A: Stewardship for Us is the agency the UUA recommends. Rev. Marcus also got a bid from local consultant Bud Swank who was the consultant for UUCB's last capital campaign at UUCB. Bud Swank's rates were higher and many people weren't that happy with the results from that capital campaign.

Q: Do we have the money for this first phase?

A (Lisa Maynard): There isn't a line item for this in the budget per se but the assumption is that the capital campaign would fund it. There shouldn't be a cash flow problem with spending this.

Q: How much would the hotels and airfare cost, in addition to the \$3000?

A: Probably another \$1000.

Discussion

- Concern that scheduling Phase I in September doesn't give the board enough time to do more visioning work/establishing our goals.
- Capital Campaign is focused on addressing issues with the physical plant for which there are already some very clear needs.

Motion (M- Helen Tinsley-Jones; S- Pier Sun Ho): The board will move ahead with the Stewardship for Us organization to take on Phase 1 of their consultation proposal, to occur during the weekend of Sept 5-7, 2025. The **motion passed unanimously**.

b. Freestone Drilling Results - On 5/27/25, drilling of a second well was done at a depth level was 280 feet and came up dry. The well driller and geologist agreed that it wasn't useful to drill any further. The Freestone Committee is reconsidering their options regarding next steps.

c. Playground Project as Final Endowment Project – Rev. Kathryn Jay asked the board to authorize the use of the Endowment Project funds for playground repairs at a minimum of \$35,000. The numerous deep gopher holes, holes where the ground is cracking, exposed nails and bolts, and rotting sandbox are safety hazards and a potential liability for UUCB. In addition, the playground appearance detracts from our physical plant and sends a message to children and families that they are not important. An official licensing the Good Earth School noted the gopher holes and asked if they were going to be fixed.

Rev. Kathryn and Facilities Manager, Peter Barnholdt, have received one bid so far: for \$94,000, a playground company in the Bay Area would level the playground by digging down 12 inches, put in gopher abatement, and add back at least 6 inches of playground-quality wood chips. Rev. Kathryn is committed to getting three bids.

Discussion

- \$35,000 is the maximum amount left in the Endowment Project Funds.
- The annual rent from the pre-school is a huge part of our budget. Approving up to \$35,000 to make the playground safe and ensure the preschool's licensing isn't jeopardized seems reasonable.
- Larry Nagel from the Buildings and Grounds Committee (B&G) stated that the topic of maintenance of the playground has not come up in B&G meetings, although he's not sure why. He wondered if the previous pre-school renters took care of the playground.
- We need to design the playground so that it is easy to maintain and doesn't require regular costly repairs.
- Input from B&G should be solicited for reviewing bids. We need some expertise to lead us in this project. There are lots of possible designs and solutions.
- Maybe we can do some immediate remediation to make it safer and then come up with a grander plan as part of the capital campaign.
- We need a better understanding of what the problem is before we try to fix it.

Motion (M- Helen Tinsley-Jones/ S- Michael DeWitt) The board approves setting aside \$35K for the purpose of making the playground safe. At the same time, staff and B&G will consult with one another and continue to get bids and then come back to the board with their findings.

d. Vote to Adopt Policy on Care for Material Resource to be included in the next revision of the Governance Manual

Sharon Dolan came up with this proposal based on boiler plate language from Dan Hotchkiss' book and Rev. Marcus introduced this at the last board meeting. Rev. Marcus noted that the reference to the global delegation section in the policy mistakenly labeled it as section 2.1 (from an earlier version of the governance manual), but it's really in section 4.1.

Discussion

- It would be clearer if the policy was broken into different sections – spending authority and other things not related to spending like accepting gifts.
- There was a question as to whether there should be a footnote that says volunteers may be doing these tasks along with staff. Rev. Marcus felt this wasn't necessary because of how authority is delegated: When the board delegates its authority, the people it delegates to (e.g. staff) can delegate authority to other people, like volunteers.
- If board members agree with the basic content in the policy, the board could vote to adopt it and the Governance Manual Taskforce can work out the exact language and details.

Motion (M-Helen Tinsley-Jones; S- Pier Sun Ho) to adopt the policy on Care of Material Resources to be included in the revision process of the next Governance Manual passed unanimously.

e. Official Adoption of revised Bylaws. The secretary will sign off after it is reviewed to ensure there aren't any typos and then post it on the website.

f. Governance Manual Revision Taskforce - David Rosales, Lisa Maynard, and Pier Sun Ho agreed to work on this. David will convene the taskforce.

g. Summer Board Meeting Schedule. We won't have a July board meeting.

h. Beacon Article Ideas - July Beacon article (Helen Tinsley-Jones) - Discuss new staff structure, board members & their pets; capital campaign consultation (or put that in the August Beacon)

BOARD COMMITTEE MEMBER/LIAISON REPORTS

Social Justice Committee (SJC) – Helen Toy thanked Marcus for announcing the Right of Return Pilgrimage on 6/8 and the No Kings Day on 6/14. UUCB will have a table at Frank Ogawa Plaza for the No Kings Day in Oakland on 6/14. Pride group had a very successful gathering. Beth Jerde reported that Blessing Bag Assembly will happen on 6/8; youth will be helping. We are working with a new non-profit (Operation Ground Zero) and will give them some of the blessing bags to distribute. Beth encouraged board members to take blessing bags and distribute them.

Family Ministry- Had a wonderful gathering at Rev. Kathryn's house. There will probably be a Coming of Age group this fall as well as OWL for K-1.

CLOSING COMMENTS

We had a full agenda and we got through it. Appreciation for the strong leadership and communication skills of this group.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:26PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Fabiano, Secretary