

## Freestone Oversight Committee (FOC) Summary

**Formation:** The **Freestone Oversight Committee (FOC)** was formed from the congregation's **March 2023 Resolution No. 22-1** establishing a process and milestones to determine whether UUCB's Freestone property could be made safe and financially sustainable. It called for fundraising and renovation benchmarks that would demonstrate Freestone's viability; if those conditions were not met, the Board of Trustees was authorized and directed to sell the property.

**Purpose:** The FOC's role is to **oversee, monitor, and report** to both the Board and the congregation on the progress of the **Freestone Committee**, which carries out the operational and fundraising tasks defined in the resolution. The FOC serves as an independent accountability body to help ensure transparency, compliance, and responsible financial management.

**Loan Fund:** The FOC was also assigned responsibility for managing a **\$12,500 Contingency Loan from UUCB's General Fund**, intended to support early-stage work, which was fully spent on:

- Securing a **Vacation Rental Permit** and **Transient Occupancy Tax License**
- Obtaining **engineering, mapping, and groundwater testing**
- Hiring engineering consultants for support of well drilling and planning of access road safety improvements.

**Composition:** The Board appointed **Beth Pollard, Tom Tripp, Susan Lankford, and Larry Nagel, as well as David Wemmer and Alan Davis from the Freestone Committee**. In **August 2024**, **Freestone Committee member Bob Moore** replaced Alan Davis.

**Early work:** Conceptual level engagement with a **structural engineer** on the Dome building repairs and **civil engineer and fire professionals** on road safety and egress.

**Conservation Easement:** To meet the first milestone—raising **\$250,000**—the Freestone Committee's initial fundraising initiative involved applying for a **federal conservation easement** to preserve part of Freestone's land in exchange for grant funds. The FOC tracked this effort, but the application was ultimately **unsuccessful**.

**Sell Lots 1 & 2:** The Freestone Committee then recommended, and the FOC endorsed, **selling undeveloped Lots 1 & 2**. The **Board approved listing the lots in January 2024** for **\$300,000**.

**Search for water for lots sale:** Prospective buyers were concerned about obtaining **well water** for development. With FOC approval, the remaining contingency funds were used for a **groundwater survey**, which confirmed very **limited groundwater potential** - resulting in no successful purchase offers.

**More testing & drilling:** A **donor** funded a **first well** (August 2024) which was drilled to 200 feet but produced **no water**. Further **geological study** identified a more promising location, but drilling was **delayed** by wet weather and difficult site access. After lengthy delay the second well was drilled in May 2025, (280') but also produced no water. Subsequently a new hydrogeologist was hired to offer a new independent opinion on a drilling location that might produce a wet well.

After receiving that recommendation, which was not optimistic, it was decided to not drill a third hole.

**First Milestone Extension:** Under Resolution 22-1, the first milestone required **raising \$250,000 by December 1, 2024**. With the second drilling still pending in November, the FOC recommended—and the **Board approved—a conditional extension to April 1, 2025**. The condition was that if the new drilling came up dry, the Board would prepare to list the **entire Freestone property for sale**.

**Congregational Vote to Extend Milestones:** By **March 2025**, drilling remained incomplete. As the FOC advised that only the congregation could extend the imminent milestone, the Freestone Committee petitioned for a congregational vote to extend the first milestone to **September 30, 2025**, and to extend all other milestones by 10 months from their original dates. On **April 27**, members voted **77 in favor, 74 against** the extension, with the Board retaining authority to sell the property if the revised milestones were unmet.

**Purchase Offer:** In **August 2025**, congregants Dwight & Glory Merrill **offered to buy Lots 1 & 2**. The terms in the offer relaxed and modified Resolution 22-1 and provided less than the \$250,000 required for the first milestone. The **Board** discussed the offer but ultimately **declined** it as being **contrary to the authority and direction of the congregation** as established in Resolution No. 22-1.

**Revised Offer:** The **Freestone Committee** revised the offer to address the Board's concerns. After receiving suggested edits from the **FOC** for clarity and consistency with Resolution No. 22-1, the Freestone Committee submitted it to the **Board on September 27**. **The offer included:**

- Purchase of **Lots 1 & 2 for \$130,000** by the Merrills
- **\$20,000** toward **roadway** improvements from the Merrills
- **\$40,000 donation** from the Merrills and **\$60,000 donation** from Bob Moore, both pledged for **January 2026 and supported by promissory notes**

**1<sup>st</sup> Milestone:** The FOC advised the Board that the offer sufficiently **met the \$250,000 milestone requirement**, while noting that it was **not qualified to provide legal counsel**.

**Board Action:** At its **October 1 meeting**, the **Board opted to consult a real estate attorney** on the offer. On October 24, the Board announced it was **rejecting the offer** and would be recommending that the **congregation vote to sell the Freestone property**.

**Next/Permit Milestone:** While the offer was in process, the Freestone Committee lined up an architect and a structural engineer to prepare dome repair plans to obtain a building permit by the milestone date of **March 31, 2026**. With the Board's October 24 decision, contracts for design services have not been executed and thus plans for the imminent work were stopped.

**Communication and Continuing Oversight:** The FOC continues to issue **monthly updates** in The Beacon and to the Board of Trustees.

**FOC contact info:** [FOC@uucb.org](mailto:FOC@uucb.org)

**Freestone Property Location:** 10635 Barnett Valley Road, Sebastopol

November 1, 2025