

Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday, December 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, Selene Fabiano (Secretary), Lisa Maynard (Treasurer)

Visitors: Jean Gleason, Anne Greenwood, Don Klose, Albert Kueffner, Susan Lankford, Greg Lemieux, Dwight Merrill, Bob Moore, Larry Nagel, Ariel Smith- Iyer, Marta Tobey. Tom Tripp, Karin Werner, Dave Wemmer

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by Pier Sun Ho, co-president, at 7:19p.m. Kay Fairwell did the chalice lighting and reading, Beth Pollard read the Board covenant, Lisa Maynard read the land acknowledgement, and Michael DeWitt read the Widening the Circle Vision Statement.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion for the following (M -Michael DeWitt/S-Helen Tinsley-Jones) passed unanimously:

- Approve agenda
- Approve November 2024 Board Meeting minutes
- Accept Executive Director's Report
- Approve signatory changes to UUCB's Mechanics Bank accounts: Marcus Liefert, Elizabeth Pollard and Anne Greenwood (remain) Teresa Snook O'Riva (removed)

MINISTER'S REPORT

Rev. Marcus reported that the staff has been working hard regarding Tess's transition. Tess has done a tremendous amount to help with the transition. Peter is hiring a temporary facilities assistant who will start by the end of this week. Janae has increased from 32 hours to 40

hours/week. The Staff Structure Task Force are looking at current staffing and what is needed. Rev. Marcus met with a small finance team in preparation for Tess's departure (Lisa Maynard, Carolyn James, Diana Steinbach, and Janae Heard) to review UUCB's financial processes and look ahead to the budgeting processing.

Kathryn Jay has put together a wonderful advent calendar. Kathryn's has done all the steps to become a minister except for being ordained. She feels ready to take that step. The congregation would need to vote to ordain Kathryn. Rev. Marcus will bring this to the January board meeting and ask the Board to add an item to the agenda for the next congregational meeting asking the congregation to vote on ordaining Kathryn. If the congregation approves this motion, the ordination would be done during a regular Sunday service, as Kathryn doesn't want a separate event.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LISTENING

Board or Staff Announcements:

- Next Board Meeting postponed to January 8, 2024
- December staff appreciations. Helen Toy is heading up a drive to gather contributions for staff appreciation bonuses. Lonnie will put an announcement on the website. Please bring cash.
- Social Justice Council (SJC) Meeting on December 11. The congregation is invited to help choose the Good Neighbor organizations for the coming year. Representatives from fifteen organizations will present at the 12/11 meeting. SJC is happy to have endorsed the pride project as a SJC-sponsored project.
- Farewell Party for Tess this Sunday, December 8. We'll honor all Tess has done to serve UUCB as ED. Tess has requested that there be no speeches or open mic. Instead there will be time to talk one-on-one with Tess and complete the memory book.

Report from Board listening presence: Much gratitude around having an established minister and on being able to rely on UUCB as a place of support during a difficult time in our country.

Congregants who wish to speak to the Board: None

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:

a. First Freestone milestone

Tom Tripp, co-chair of the Freestone Oversight Committee (FOC), presented the FOC's report. The report provided context for the FOC's recommendation, which considers the effort underway to find well water to sell Lots 1 & 2 to raise necessary funds. The FOC recommendation is: 1) That the Board list the entire Freestone properties (Lots 1&2 and Dome lot 4) for sale if the one well is unsuccessful or on April 1, 2025, whichever comes first. 2). If water is found, Lots 1 & 2 are sold and \$250,000 is raised by April 1, 2025, then the listing of the entire Freestone properties would not proceed on April 1, 2025.

Tom reminded us that Congregational Resolution 22-1 states *"in the event that the BOT determines that any of these significant milestones have not been sufficiently met after*

consultation with the Freestone oversight committee, then the BOT is authorized and directed to list the entire Freestone property for sale. Although the \$250,000 was not raised by 12/1/24, the FOC acknowledges that the Freestone Committee has done a lot of work to try reach this milestone. Specifically, the Freestone Committee listed Lots 1 and 2 in February 2024 and received a valid offer. In June 2024, the offer was withdrawn due to concerns about lack of proof of well water to support development of the lots. The Freestone Committee secured donated funds to drill another well. The well drilled on Lot 1 in August 2024 came up dry. The Freestone Committee was able to secure an additional “angel” donation to drill another well. The most recent well-drilling was scheduled for November 2024 but had to be delayed due to wet weather. Given that plans are in place for this drilling, and if water is found the sale of lots 1 and 2 would allow the Freestone Committee to meet the \$250,000 milestone, the FOC is recommending that the board wait a little longer before putting the property on the market to give time for the well to be drilled. The FOC chose the date of April 1st because the realtor advised waiting until January 1, 2025 to list the lots even if water is found sooner. If an offer is received, it could take 60 days for the sale to go through. The FOC stressed that they want to comply with the language of the resolution and want the board to allow time for the proposed well to be drilled. The FOC also stressed that they will continue to oversee the process.

Discussion/ Questions

Waiting to list the Freestone lots so that UUCB can get a better price makes sense.

We want to be on record acknowledging the milestone.

It will be important to have the FOC report any updated info at the next board meeting.

Q: Are we confident the well can be drilled soon?

A (Dave Wemmer): It's weather-dependent so it's not a sure thing but the 15-day weather forecast showed no rain through the end of next week. According to the grading contractor, it usually takes about a week after a heavy rain for the ground to be dry enough for them to grade.

Q: Could we get another driller who isn't so busy?

A: We would need a new contract and would probably need to get a new permit from county.

We like the method of drilling that the driller we chose uses.

Motion. (M-Beth Pollard; S- Pier) Beth moved that 1.) The Board list the entire Freestone properties (Lots 1&2 and Dome lot 4) for sale if the one well is unsuccessful or on April 1, 2025, whichever comes first. 2.) If water is found, Lots 1 & 2 are sold and \$250,000 is raised by April 1, 2025, then the listing of the entire Freestone properties would not proceed on April 1, 2025; 3.) All the subsequent milestones in the resolution would remain as written and approved.

Yes votes: 7; No votes: 1. **The motion passed.**

b. Building & Grounds (B &G) Report and Recommendation on KFPD structures
Tom Tripp reported on discussions regarding whether UUCB should try keep one or more of the structures the KFPD is using in our parking lot. After a tour of the buildings and discussion, Buildings and Grounds is recommending that UUCB stick with the original contract with KFPD which did not include UUCB's keeping either of these buildings. The reasons for this

recommendation include: There is no foundation for the engine garage; these are temporary structures; it would cost at least \$20K to get electrical power for the engine garage, and costly permits would likely be required by the city of El Cerrito. The conclusion was that our money would be better spent building appropriate storage. No board action is needed.

Discussion/Questions

Q: Does the KFPD contract require re-paving?

A (Tom Tripp): No. The contract language says, “Tenant shall restore the surface of the parking lot including re-striping.” UUCB will need to enforce the contract to be sure that KFPD does restore the surface of the parking lot, recognizing that doesn’t necessarily mean re-paving it.

c. Congregational Meeting Date Adjustment; Board election process and timeline – Michael Armstrong proposed changing the date of the 2025 February congregational meeting. Since the second Sunday in February is also Super Bowl Sunday, that may affect attendance at the meeting. Changing the date of the February 2025 congregational meeting would also give the Nominating Committee a little more time to set up the announcements and meetings that need to happen before the board election. UUCB bylaws states that the board can alter the date of a congregational meeting and that the changed date must be within 14 days before or after the listed date. He proposed that we move the February 2025 congregational meeting to February 23rd (i.e. 14 days after the listed date of February 9th).

Discussion

As reported earlier, there were some plans underway to add an agenda item to the February 9th Congregational meeting asking the congregation to vote on whether to ordain Kathryn Jay. If that passes, there was some discussion of scheduling Kathryn’s ordination for a Sunday later in February. In order to provide enough time for the vote on ordination to happen before the ordination is scheduled, it was suggested that the board could call a one-item congregational meeting in January 2025 for the vote on UUCB’s ordaining Kathryn Jay.

Motion Beth Pollard made a motion to change the 2025 February congregational meeting from 2/9 to 2/23/25. Second: Helen Toy. **The motion passed unanimously.**

d. UUCB membership reconciliation and certification

At the November board meeting Rev. Marcus reported that the staff had done a large review of the membership rolls. The goal is not to remove individuals who want to continue as members but to ensure that we have an accurate count and that we aren’t counting people who have moved and/or no longer want to be involved. Seventy-two individuals who are not active did not respond to several attempts to verify their interest in remaining as active members. To complete the reconciliation, Rev. Marcus asked the board to approve changing the status of these 72 individuals from “active member” to “former member.”

Discussion/Questions

Q: If 72 members are moved from active to “former member” status, how many members would that leave us with?

A: Our books currently list active 330 members. Removing 72 members would result in a count of 258 members.

Q: Would this sudden decrease in our member numbers be a red flag to the UUA? A (Rev. Marcus): No. Many UU churches have delays in doing membership reviews.

Motion (M - Beth Pollard; S- Pier Sun Ho): To change 72 “active members” to “former members, based on the outreach to and feedback from those individuals. The motion **passed unanimously**.

e. Task Force on Staff Structure

Beth Pollard reported that the Staff Structure Task force (Suzette Anderson-Duggan, Carolyn James, Beth Pollard, Marta Tobey, Tom Tripp, and Rev. Marcus) has met twice thus far. Kudos to Carolyn James for jumping in to address financial matters that needed immediate attention. The purpose of the task force is to be a resource, to advise Rev. Marcus, and to be available to think through how to fill in staffing gaps and consider how UUCB might do things differently. Much gratitude to Tess for putting together the transition document

Rev. Marcus asked for the board’s approval to hire Sharon Dolan as a part-time interim executive director. Sharon is a member of the Oakland UU church, a longtime UU, and a nonprofit leader with much experience of providing leadership as an interim executive director. Rev. Marcus met with Sharon and she expressed interest in working with UUCB as an interim executive director. Sharon is available to start at UUCB on the second week in February. A half-time position would work for her and us. If hired, Sharon’s role would be to take the lead on analyzing UUCB’s human resource and financial infrastructure, work in the operations of the church, and make recommendations regarding a path forward. UUCB is not in a position to hire a full-time executive director right now and Rev. Marcus believes that having the leadership of a half-time executive director will be reassuring to the congregation. The Staff Structure Task Force is excited about the idea of hiring Sharon Dolan.

Questions/discussion (Answers by Rev. Marcus and Beth Pollard)

Q: Has she done work on building staff capacity? A: As noted in her resume, she has extensive experience in support and comprehensive of our staffing structure and compensation

Q: Have you discussed the idea of bringing in an interim ED with the staff? Yes

Q: Is a half-time interim ED enough? A: We’ll be evaluating how much of Tess’s work our staff can take on, and what is needed going forward.

Q: Will the task force be communicating the process and plans to the congregations? A: Yes. We’ll develop a statement that will be sent out with the Week Ahead next week about the task force, how current staff are stepping up, and the idea of the part-time interim ED.

Q: Would Sharon’s role be primarily to figure out what we need to do, rather than doing project management or other individual tasks that Tess was doing? A: Yes. She would primarily be coaching and supervising staff and analyzing the system regarding what needs to be shored up.

Q: How can the staff feel like they’re part of this process. How can they feel like they’re being carried? Having a new supervisor can be stressful. How can the staff be supported? A: Sharon is very warm and good at building trust.

Q: Will there be any reference checks? A: Yes. Rev. Marcus will reach out to 2 previous organizations where Sharon worked.

Motion (M- Michael Armstrong; S- Helen Toy): To support Rev. Marcus' proposal to hire Sharon Dolan as a half-time interim executive director to help with the transition process. The motion **passed unanimously**.

f. Stewardship Theme – Greg Lemieux and Ariel Smith-Iyer

Greg Lemieux and Ariel Smith-Iyer have graciously agreed to co-chair the 2025 Stewardship Committee. They have been meeting to talk about the Stewardship campaign and have consulted with Lisa Maynard, the 2024 Stewardship Chair. They report they got a lot of good ideas from attending the UUA Stewardship101 training sessions. They are proposing a stewardship theme based around the concept of “love languages,” given that love is one of the core UU values. Their idea is to have speakers over 5 Sundays who best fit with each of the 5 love languages (i.e. acts of service, quality time, words of affirmation, receiving gifts, and physical touch). The hope is this could promote a large conversation about the many ways we show love. Ariel has been working on an announcement to the congregation in order to build some excitement before the pledge drive begins. The next step is to build up the stewardship team. They may also reach out to the board regarding some ideas put forth from the UUA Stewardship 101 sessions.

g. Beacon Article Recommendation

In light of some recent changes (i.e. upcoming new US President, change of executive director at UCCB), one suggestion for the next Beacon article was change, its challenges, and where to find support at UUCB.

BOARD COMMITTEE MEMBER/LIAISON REPORTS

Family Ministry (FM). FM will provide Christmas cookies and cider at the early Xmas Eve service. Feel free to bring a tray of cookies if you're coming to that service. Kathryn Jay is planning an OWL program 4-6 grades and has been reaching out to the trained facilitators. There are now enough children on Sundays to split RE into 2 groups. More than 12 youth attended the last youth group gathering.

CLOSING COMMENTS

We appreciate the board and all the people who attended tonight's meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:13PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Fabiano, Secretary