

First Unitarian Church of Oakland Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

July 26, 2020, 12:00-2:30 pm, Zoom

Our Mission

We, the members of the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, unite to build a beloved community within and beyond our walls. Guided by individual conscience and wisdom from many sources, we gather in worship and service to nourish the spirit, work for justice, and celebrate the divine in all.
– Adopted by the congregation on March 18, 2019

Present: Rinda Bartley, Hester Green, Tara Noone, Dan Wright, Alanna Kelly, Meri Lane, Kathy Radez, Rev. Theresa Soto, Steve Thomasberger Absent: Guests: Stefan Schneider, Jodie Mathies, C.L. Page, Bill Blakely, Judith Hunt, Janet McFarland	
Timekeeper: Dan Process Monitor: Janet	Readings: Hester Communication Facilitator: Kathy

Time	Duration	Item	Name
12:00	15 min	Open Comment Period All members and friends welcome. 3 minutes per speaker.	<i>Rinda/Dan</i>
Conversation began with a discussion of progressive stacking, which was the subject of an article sent to Board members by Rev. Soto. Rev. Soto: be willing to let someone else go first; ensuring we make space for all voices, openness to hearing that we need to 'slow down'. Comments: Stefan thanks the Board for all the work we're doing at this difficult time, acknowledging the effort. Judith is particularly interested in the year-round stewardship model we're beginning to consider. Rev. Soto asked if we had decided to record board meetings; Rinda confirmed that we have not decided to record at this time, but we will continue to consider that.			
12:15	5 min	Chalice Lighting and Opening Reading	<i>Hester</i>

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Note: Board's six Priorities: Items should be put on the board agenda and time allotted only if they need Board attention this month, as determined by the "Champion". If not, time will be ceded to other priorities, and information can be shared with the Board via a report to the Consent Agenda). Champions should request agenda time by the third Tuesday of the month by informing the Steering Team of the topic/s to be discussed or decisions to be made. Order of items will be rotated periodically.			
12:20	5 min	Board duties this month - Chalice Chatter Board New & Notes August article - Meri	Rinda
Rinda: thanks to Alanna and Kathy for this month's article.			
12:25	10 min	Consent agenda (action) and reporting actions taken since previous meeting - Approved June 2020 minutes - Received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revised Board Policies Version 2020.1 - Minister's Report - Goal 1 Financial clarity narrative - USSB year-round stewardship circle letter - 2020 Annual Meeting discussion document - 2020 budget with shared RE position 7.22.20 DRAFT Board member: Motion to approve the consent agenda and receive April reports	Rinda
Meri moves to accept consent agenda; Alanna seconds. Unanimous approval with no abstentions.			
12:35	10 min.	Minister's Report - Installation?	Rev. Soto
<p>Dan, Kathy and Rev. Soto met to talk about staffing and budget. This conversation is finished. Our current staffing level, as has already been adjusted, is how we plan to move forward. Rev. Soto would like the installation to work like flower communion: on the patio, so it can happen safely and in person. Steve offered to look into closing the street for the installation. The date has yet to be set. We'd like to plan a bit first. September or October might be nice but that's very soon. Jodie: asking about the RE director. Rev. Soto explained that there's a panel of interviewers including clergy from both Churches, as well as representatives from both JTW and Children and Family Ministries (CFM); panel members take turns asking questions. We started with five candidates, including Alex Haider-Winnett. Two candidates have been interviewed; one is still in the running. Two more interviews will be conducted today, and another next week. Rinda: is the idea that CFM activities would be shared activities involving both churches? Rev. Soto responded that it will be all three: their events, our events and shared events. Rinda asked how is the Reverend doing? Rev. Soto responded that they are sad, not having seen Rev. Sean since February. Also, the [U.S.] President's</p>			

proposed new rules to exclude trans women from shelters and detain them at airports was very hard news.			
12:30 (adj)	10 min	Annual meeting - Present a plan (discussion document prepared by Kathy)	Kathy
<p>The main business of the annual meeting will be to elect the slate of candidates that are currently serving in an interim status. Kathy presents her information and suggestions how to move forward and what to pay attention to. (This is written chronologically, so there are some responses 'in with the questions'.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What date might we target? Shall we avoid First Sunday? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The sense of the group is that the second Sunday in September is a good target. 2. Should we begin by targeting Zoom / phone as the platform for meeting? 3. Is there a procedural mandate for how the interim Board members are presented to the Congregation? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Rinda is willing to connect to the nominating committee to get their agreement to be involved in presenting the slate. 4. Technology people: we will need people counting quorum, counting votes. Managing zoom participants. <p>Discussion started</p> <p>Shall we add information about the state of the Church? Yes, supplemental reports and information would be appropriate.</p> <p>Do we want to find an anonymous way for people to vote? Rev. Soto reports voting through Zoom in UU and other business meetings. they're thinking that it's very accepted and that the level of anonymity is probably sufficient because we can make it visible only to the host when voting takes place. Some voices were against absentee balloting. Dan suggested it needs to be a Congregational meeting (as opposed to a Special Meeting) if we want the meeting to have multiple purposes. Meri would like to ensure access is not limited by folks' access to technology; can people without a computer vote?</p> <p>Dan has offered to find technical people to help discover how to do the technical pieces (and willing to do the technical pieces). Who can check the calendar to see whether September 13 is available for a Congregational meeting? Steve will check the calendar and get us on it to reserve the date if possible.</p> <p>Janet McFarland suggested we reach out to UUA, someone could help with technical pieces.</p>			
12:55	25 min	Goal #1 Financial Clarity and Health Revision of 2020 adopted budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motion: Adopt the adjusted 2020 budget - Any violation of Board or Executive policies? 	Hester, Meri, Finance Team
<p>Meri asks whether Steve or Jodie can present the budget. Jodie will present the latest budget proposal & analysis from the Finance Committee. This has been reviewed by the Operations Team. This is a group effort with the Finance Team, Treasurers, Operations Team, and Personnel Committee. Reminder: it is just an estimate of the future. Revenue numbers have not changed since the last time we reviewed the document.</p>			

The wages and benefits have changed because we have more precision on when Rev. Sheri left the payroll; and we changed the estimated start date for the interim RE director position from August 1 to mid-August. That reduced expected expenses to a point where our shortfall is now less than ¼ of our operating reserves.

Please think about the 2021 scenarios. The first is based on the salary level being paid Rev. Sheri before she left; the second is based on continuing the 50% interim DRE at their (currently planned) salary level and time (50%). The estimates assume no increase in stewardship revenue, and a gradually increasing rental program starting in June rather than an immediate full booking scenario. Three detail tabs support the high-level summary. Personnel, G/L, and Trusts and Endowments details. Stewardship will impact 2021 budgeting. Do not forget that we are going to review UUA dues in October and decide what we can give toward 2021 UUA Dues.

Point of clarification of the UUA dues: the UUA fiscal year ends in June. They are now in their 2021 calendar (fiscal year). Rinda discussed our payment with a UUA representative, who suggested that the ½ fair share payment, should we approve it today, be applied retroactively to 2020; but any further payments we make this year be made on the UUA 2021 calendar. (Venue has been waiting for the Board to approve this adjusted budget before making the payment we have been discussing).

Meri: clarifying that when we send the \$14,000 it will be half of the 2020 commitment. We will have paid only half of our 2020 UUA fair share and will move on to 2021 fair share with future payments. Meri supports the proposed budget as a reasonable balance of financial and operating concerns, even though it will produce a deficit which will require dipping into operating reserves. Board policy requires a balanced budget, however, so Meri moves:

Motion to Approve Exception to Balanced Budget Board Policy (Meri): I move that the board approve a limited exception to the First Unitarian Church of Oakland's board policy that "the Executive shall not fail to provide a balanced budget proposal". This exception to the balanced budget policy shall be limited to the Operation Team's proposal and Board approval of the 2020 revised budget proposal under consideration at the July 26, 2020 board meeting. Hester seconded.

Passed unanimously without discussion.

Motion to Approve Revised 2020 Budget (Meri): I move that the board approve the Revised 2020 Budget as presented at the July 26 board meeting at Tab 1 (2020 High-Level Budget with upd), Column D (2020 Mid-Year projection) and at Tab 3 (2020 Detail Budget), Column E (2020 mid-Year Projection). Steve seconded.

Passed unanimously without discussion.

Jodie reminds us that she talked with Rev. Theresa about scheduling a meeting with the Congregation where we would review finances and present a high-level view. It was mentioned that this could take place at the Annual Meeting to be scheduled for September. She will also speak personally with the Haws about the adjusted budget. Dan offered that he has confidence in Jodie to represent the Treasurers and Finance team but if Jodie wants a Board member there, that one of us could be willing to attend, Dan being one of them. Jodie's presentation or something like it would be an important starting point for the year-round model. Rinda commends the team work displayed by the various groups and the quality of information presented to the Board. Let's send a note of thanks to the Finance Team. Tara will do so. Finance team names: Jodie Mathies, Leslie Brandt, Jane Voytek, Meri Lane, Hester Green, Bill Blakely. Jodie would like to recruit one or two more people for the Finance Team. Treasurers have had to dig in and do detailed work which might be nice to have sufficient Finance Team members to do.

1:20	5 min	Break	
1:25	15 min	Exploration: Churchwide Learning Goal selection for church year 2020-21: Transformation Within, Among and Beyond Report from the Beyond Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motion to adopt the learning goal - Discussion and vote - 2019-20 goals included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - #1 Financial Clarity and Health (Treasurers?) - #2 Ministerial Transition (COSM?) - #3 JTW Assessment (Among) - #4 Stewardship (STEWARDSHIP TEAM) - #5 Policy Governance Transition (Among) - #6 Strategic Planning (All three ends) 	Alanna
<p>The Board has been discussing learning goals for several months. A proposal was made last month by an ad hoc committee (Alanna, Steve and Kathy), and folks have been organizing around the proposed plan.</p> <p>Motion (Steve): moves (motion text is downloadable from BaseCamp). Alanna seconds.</p> <p>Meri: I think a shorter motion is preferable because something very prescriptive is not necessary, would rather let a process unfold.</p> <p>Question: who is we, as in who is achieving the ends? Alanna: are we not just reporting on how the Board is doing on this? Rinda: under policy governance, the Board monitors its own and the whole organization's achievements of the goals we've set for ourselves. Rinda prefers then that 'we' means the Board is assessing how the Board, and also how the Congregation, is doing at achieving the desired ends. Hester: can we use transitory language such as progress towards achieving the ends? Dan supports existing language but sees 'we' as Rinda does.</p> <p>Updated motion (Steve): By the 2021 Annual Meeting the Board will present the congregation with an assessment on how well we are achieving the church's mission, vision, covenant, and ends statements. To accomplish this work, we will divide into three teams based on our Ends statement - transformation within, among, and beyond. Second on updated motion: Kathy Radez.</p> <p>Passed unanimously without further discussion..</p> <p>The remainder of the items for this learning goal subject were postponed.</p>			
1:40	20 min	Proposal for Stewardship Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Considering a year-round pledge model 	Rinda
<p>Recap: we were in the process of preparing for the Stewardship drive. We have no one from last year that wants to continue this year. Rev. Theresa suggested Rinda look at the Santa Barbara Church website materials regarding year-round pledging; Rinda posted it for us to read.</p>			

Most Board members have read it. The idea is that rather than one fall campaign, Congregation pledging units are divided into 12 groups; each group is 'canvassed' in a different month of the year, so that all Congregants are still canvassed every year, but pledges don't all renew on January 1.

Along with this is to ask pledgers to agree to continue sustaining at their chosen level until and unless they inform the church that they are changing (increasing or decreasing or discontinuing) it; their pledge is a pledge of ongoing support, with a request to inform the Church if they need/want to increase, lower or discontinue their pledge at any time needed.

There was also information on how to transition from an annual to a year-round model. There are questions so we will have a discussion with a representative from the USSB stewardship team. Rinda asks for a sense of the group. Half are enthusiastic and half question whether this is a good idea for us. Rinda proposes to invite all Board and finance team members. Attend if you're interested in hearing the conversation first-hand. The meeting with Santa Barbara will also be recorded.

First / next steps would need to be discussed before the next Board meeting, attended by folks who attended the SB call. Meri suggests we be flexible; her concern is regarding budgeting. Will this require / result in conservative budgeting, and rule out adding new things / discontinuous increases? Tara cannot attend Tuesday. Tara asked whether this annual pledging model also plan activities to engage all people, and make stewardship visible every month for the whole Congregation? Also, bear in mind that in some other denominations, stewardship work includes an annual finance education service project for members that have trouble budgeting. Steve: I think it's important we have this discussion. My concern is how would we do this "now", when we don't know what it'll be like in 5 months? How do we do an annual budget while we're transitioning, especially with the extraordinary events happening? Also, is there an urban church 'like ours' that follows a similar model? Shall we consider what it means in terms of our mission? How does this model reflect our mission? Santa Barbara has a membership of 432. Their pledge goal was close to ours in dollar terms. Rinda asked for a sense of the meeting: is the proposed way to move forward objectionable? (No objections). The SB call is 7/28 at 10:00, and a follow-up group meeting with the Board, Finance Team, Rev. Soto to discuss the concept and next steps will be scheduled for the following week.

2:00	10 min	<p><i>For the Good of the Order</i> (questions, brief planning, items outside of the 6 Goals, spontaneous items, items pulled from consent)</p> <p><u><i>These are pending items for board action, to be considered when setting goals for the year:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JTW report - clarity needed in charter? - Ops report - fundraising location? Future item - Board member contact information - COSM reconstitution - RE Leadership hiring process - UUA recommendation for virtual operation one year - what does this mean for us? - Stewardship - Policy writing and revision 	ALL
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Rinda question: do we have a JTW liaison? Dan says we haven't selected one for this year but Dan is still serving in that capacity for now.

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Keeping our eyes open for people to be an installation committee; Laila can no longer serve as leader for that group. We are particularly looking for a new leader.			
2:10	10 min	Housekeeping -RACI (indicates who is <u>R</u> esponsible, <u>A</u> ccountable, to be <u>C</u> onsulted, to be <u>I</u> nformed) [RB] review (Kathy) -Next meeting agenda items (Rinda) -Calendar review - duties/events for Board participation in the coming month (all)	ALL
RACI chart (Kathy): status of last year's champions and goals are sort of still to be determined. Recruiting stewardship folks is not finished, so that stays on the chart. The steering team still needs to look at report schedules. (Please refer to the RACI chart) Are there action items around the approved budget? Posting it anywhere, for instance? Dan must post the updated policy document to the website. Steve please check March 14 2021 as a possible Annual Meeting date for next year. Dan will make available a suggestion how to organize and use google drive and BaseCamp.			
2:20	5 min.	Process monitoring	Janet
Inclusivity. Evidence of teamwork and mutual support and appreciation. Collaborative work, processing work during the meeting. Tension around getting to final wording of one motion, and during the budgeting discussion. Stack was well done and both watching of, and flexibility with, time. Some members tend to speak very fast. Is that a cultural behavior people might want to examine? Kathy noted that the process of keeping the stack felt uncomfortable, and wondered whether it was curtailing the ability of the facilitator to keep the discussion moving, and made it harder to be a participant. Various folks talked about their level of comfort with the progressive stack and questioned the reason for its use. Some folks were very happy to have it used, because it reminded them to make space for others.			
2:25	5 min.	Closing Reading and Adjourn	Hester

* Indicates an item for which additional documents are to be filed on Team Drives / Board of Trustees / Meeting Materials/...

Bike Rack Items

- ☐ Church name change proposal
- ☐ Professional/Office duties vs. Volunteer duties (Operations)
- ☐ Use of Zoom as a tool to increase access and promote equity

Policies to revise or create in the new year:

- **Update** existing policy on sharing of collection plate.

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- **Review and revise** existing policy on the management of endowments
 - **Board policy or advisory** to support training locally when possible
 - **Policy on** church sponsorship of ministerial candidates and what that entails. Rev. Soto/Dan Wright/CoSM
 - **Policy** prohibiting hire of church members, except under certain circumstances
 - **Policy around** financial support for community organizations, e.g., Boost
- ☐ **Shall we go to year-round pledging?**

Ground rules:

- Phones on vibrate,
- One person speaks at a time (stack process to be used),
- No side conversations,
- Start on time and if a need develops to go beyond 9:00, check with the group.
- Stick to the agenda: items that run long will either be tabled for the next meeting or, if agreed to by the group, to stay late or table other agenda items.