

First Unitarian Church of Des Moines

Board of Trustees Minutes - Draft

Thursday, March 18, 2021

6:03 p.m.

In attendance (all via Zoom):

Board Members: Sue Huber, Mike Lauer, Patty Notch, Heidi Mannerter, Sara Jensen, Andrea LeMeuse, Greg Nichols, Fern Stewart

Staff: Charles Lewis, Director of Finance and Administration

Timekeeper: Heidi Mannerter

Process Observer: Sue Huber

(Several church members also participated.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Board President Patty Notch. The chalice was presented and a reflection was provided. Check ins were made.

Patty Notch moved to amend the agenda to include Misti Craig's request to use the church parking lot, seconded by Sara Jensen. Adopted via voice mail vote. It was moved by Andrea LeMeuse, seconded by Mike Lauer, moved adoption of the amended agenda, and approval of the February Board Meeting Minutes and adopted via voice mail vote.

Executive and Administrative Items

Rev. Amy Shaw was thanked for the more extensive Executive Report. It was noted the report from AMOS was exceptional. Discussion included the need to encourage members to read the document. Barb Royal posted on the church FaceBook page.

Financials and Dashboard

Charlie Lewis responded to questions regarding the expense report running under budget, clarifying in terms of expenses yes, as it was based on an estimate. We are doing very well this year due to the building's idleness. He also addressed a question regarding whether having staff working from home once the building was open for evening meetings, would help keep costs down. He stated it could, but would be dependent on the season. Sanitation costs regarding opening the building had been included in the budget.

Discussion/Decision Items

1. Board Committee Reports

Financial Oversight Committee – Barb Royal reported the recommendations on the draft budget had been submitted for review. She stated the draft budget had since been modified and that the committee and Charlie had worked well together.

Governance Committee – Mike Lauer no official report, Bill Brauch brought up review of the by-laws regarding reference to the ends which expire this year. He explained thoughts included forming a separate committee to review the by-laws, however this was mostly conjecture at this point.

Nominating Committee – Sue Huber reported three applications had been received for the board positions. She stated they are struggling seeking applications for the Endowment Committee and Financial Oversight Committee. She requested the item be placed on the April agenda.

Ministerial Review Committee – Heidi Manner reported it was coming up and that they would be using the same format and sending it out in mid-April for completion in May. The format goes to Board of Trustee members, staff, and committee chairs. She explained if members desired to comment, the comments could be sent to her.

Lens of the Future – Margaret Schultz stated we were at Level 1 and as of Tuesday, Polk County is at 4.95 percent, overall state showing 4% or less as reported in the Des Moines Register. Small groups outside can begin. The youth group is very excited to finally get together.

2. Miscellaneous Updates

Endowment Committee – Deidre Fudge, acting chair, reported the Endowment Committee had approved the \$60,000 to be spent on the lift project. The \$40,000 requested for the kitchen has not been discussed due to a lack of a quorum at last night's meeting. Robert Vance is leaving the committee, so no formal leader has been elected at this point. She stated she had sent out an email to members, and while it doesn't appear to be a problem, she will need formal approval by members. It was suggested that the Kitchen Committee prepare some preliminary proposals that could be presented at the annual meeting allowing a yes or no vote from the members, provided it was approved by the Endowment Committee.

Kitchen Committee - Patty Notch reported Ann Mowrey, Misti Craig, Laura Dammerell and Sue Huber had volunteered to serve on the Kitchen Committee. It was moved by Greg Nichols, to appoint the named individuals to the Kitchen Committee with Patty Notch serving as a board representative upon Sue Huber's term expiration, seconded by Mike Lauer to approve. Adopted via voice mail vote.

It was noted that Susan Jellenger and Theresa Miller were interested but did not want to serve on the committee. It was agreed that the Kitchen Committee could add additional members to the Committee. Upon approval from the Endowment Committee, Sue Huber will send out meeting information.

3. New Business

Call for the Unsung UU Award – As board vice president Greg Nichols, will be in charge of the award. Forms will be posted on the website and updated to new website.

Presentation/Discussion of Proposed 2021-2022 Budget – Charlie Lewis explained the proposed budget was created with a baseline assumption that we would not be in the building with full activity until January 2022. He stated the use of \$48,000 in reserve funds, an amount that had been reduced thanks to stewardship pledges, was necessary to make the budget work. He confirmed expenses for updated equipment and band width capacity to allow hybrid events and multiple meetings were included in the budget. It is hoped that with the opening of the building and return to what members love, the stewardship will increase resulting in less dependence on reserve funds.

Sara Jensen, as a member of the Financial Oversight Committee, stated there are set, non-negotiable expenses which require the use of the reserve funds. She encouraged the Board to challenge the community to increase funding versus reducing expenses. She noted if you cut, cut, cut you don't have a church left. She thanked Charlie and the Financial Oversight Committee for their work. Charlie noted we have fund-raisers included in the next year's budget, including the Fabulous Food Fair and the newly offered art and music festival which total \$15,000 thus bringing down our need to use reserve

funds.

Charlie responded to questions regarding the January reopening date, explaining it was a baseline for establishing the budget, however if things continue to go as they are we could be open much sooner. Rev. Amy stated decisions would have to be made prior to opening, including vaccination issues, installation of safety plexiglass, food and fluid serving recommendations, formation of a tech team to mention a few. Charlie added if we open before January, it would include bringing furloughed staff back, hiring Jane's position as well as a bookkeeper and youth group coordinator for approximately \$2,500-3,000 a month. Use of additional reserve funds would cover it for next year. Zoom is here to stay, church has changed across denominations, people like to participate from home, geographical boundaries are limitless. Charlie concluded by saying church may not be the same as it was, we are building something new. We need the best of the old and the best of the new to carry us forward. This budget gives us a foundation.

Rev. Amy explained they had spent time with Devon to recreate the RE program. They stated they had also met with Chelsea Hayes and things are looking good. Rev. Amy requested we can't judge this past year on the RE program success, hybrid school/too much screen time had an effect on participation. They acknowledged that Lyra has helped us grow over the past year. Lyra and Devon were new on the job right before this started, once in the building the playing field will be open.

Discussion regarding cutting staff resulted in noting that we have cut staffing in the form of the part-time intern minister position that was eliminated because we didn't have reserves to cover a two year commitment. This would have gotten us into the same spot we had with Rev. Erin. The Board voiced support for maintaining the level of staffing with this budget. It was pointed out that without pledges to cover, we can't make it happen. The current 60-80 hours a week Rev. Amy is working is not tenable.

Charlie addressed the revenue increases and decreases. He noted that every church loses membership when a minister leaves and was surprised it didn't happen immediately. He reported the decrease in revenue continued into the second year with Rev. Jennifer. Revenues and membership have been declining the last few years, however, we have plateaued at this point with some increase. He also noted when Rev. Amy and Lyra certified in February, they spent a week clearing out people who should have been cleared out a year or two before. This resulted in the significant drop of 48 people. This year it didn't happen, we expect growth and increase in funds.

It was reported that the Stewardship Committee will be sending an email going to those who have not pledged. Last year COVID arrived just as the stewardship drive kicked off, this year the drive is ahead of last year. We are one third of the way done on receipt of pledges. The Board expressed their gratitude to those maintaining and increasing their pledges.

It was moved by Andrea LeMeuse, seconded by Heidi Mannerter to accept the draft 2021-2022 budget as presented. Adopted via voice mail vote.

Request to Use Parking Lot – Misti Craig requested use of the east parking lot for use by her parents to park their recreational vehicle overnight for a period of days. Discussion ensued regarding the neighborhood concerns and zoning issues. It was moved by Sara Jensen, seconded by Andrea LeMeuse to allow a one time use, for a seven day period surrounding April 17 because the church is closed. Adopted via voice mail vote.

Budget Forums – Rev. Amy and Charlie will meet now that the Board has accepted the budget.

Spring Retreat – The Board's spring retreat will be held on a Sunday afternoon in April 4 from 3:00-5:00 p.m.

4. From the Congregation – No items.

5. On the HorizonGA Delegates – It was requested to move this to the April agenda to allow Nominating Committee to complete their process. The Board agreed as both the GA and Mid-American meetings will be on line and travel arrangements would not be necessary. Possible inclusion of a GA participant in a future service was discussed.

It was moved by Heidi Mannerter, seconded by Sara Jensen to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m. (Submitted by Fern Stewart, Secretary)