

2016 Annual Meeting Minutes

5/15/2016

Agenda

Call to Order

President Karen Noorani called the annual meeting to order at 11:43 am. Rev. Hilary shared the opening words of Denise Davidoff- Breathe deeply, relinquish control, learn to pray, play fair, temper narcissism, read poetry, internalize patience, listen intently, admit errors, and breathe deeply.

Opening Words- Karen Noorani/Rev. Hilary

60 voting members must be present at the meeting (20%) to establish a quorum. A quorum was established, with 76 voting members being present.

Announcement of Leadership Slate

Karen Noorani introduced the nominees for the BOT next year. Christine Organ will serve as President-elect and Kathy Hillyer will join as a new Trustee; all other members except for Alan Greenland are continuing in their current positions.

Noel Zak moved to accept the new slate for the Board of Trustees and Greg Blus seconded. The motion carried with no dissenting votes.

Karen introduced the nominees for the Endowment committee next year/ Tony Pretto has been nominated as the new member for a 5-year term. Mike Berry, Kay Gredell, Fran Mueller and Lois Phillips will continue in their current positions.

Judy Ball moved to accept the new slate for the Endowment committee and Gloria Kinney seconded. The motion carried with no dissenting votes.

Karen introduced the nominees for the Nominating committee. Bruce Bezella, Jessica Gardner and Jeff Phillips as new members, w/ Debbie Lee, Peggy Simonson and Tim-Reuter Bowers continuing in their current positions.

Mike Gilley moved to accept the new slate for the Nominating committee. Marty Farrington seconded. The motion carried with no dissenting votes.

Karen recognized Trustee Alan Greenland, Endowment committee member Karen Greenland and Nominating committee members Angelina Huntsha, Siri Laurin and Laura Mandell, who are all completing their terms of service on their respective committees. Rev. Hilary presented gifts to the board, and the board members presented outgoing trustee Alan Greenland with a gift.

Recognition of staff

Karen recognized and thanked staff members Lisa Vanderbleek, music director Alison Vernon, DRLE Jules Jaramillo and administrator Laurie Lantz.

Future Initiative Updates

Rev. Hilary described how we have set staffing appropriate for the size and needs of our congregation. In response to the Strategic Plan and the changes facing contemporary faith communities, we are focused on social action and spiritual and intellectual growth as our two principal directions for a ministry of wholeness., with offerings of themed ministry (monthly theme shared by worship and small groups, joining w/ 7 other local UU congregations for this), full-week faith (study program) and multigenerational community (Pathfinder program) being implemented in the coming year.

DRLE Jules Jaramillo described plans for lifespan education in the coming year. She is looking forward to being able to unite all areas of worship, study and service into cohesive ministries while continuing our current programming and is looking forward to partnering with other UU congregations in the Chicago area.

Music director Alison Vernon said that she was thankful to be on our staff and was enjoying working with the choir. She reminded the congregation that conflict itself is not all bad, but rather apathy, and also described potential opportunities for incorporating music into the RE programs and expressed hope that we can further develop a youth music program at CCUU. She also said that the music program was fortunate to have very little attrition and was very healthy, which reflected a healthy congregation in general.

Admin Laurie Lantz described working on efforts to increase kinship with a theme of Fun, Food and Fellowship featuring the work of the hospitality teams and how they have been working on a true ministry approach to hospitality to increase member participation.

VP and Ministry Council chair Sheryl Skifstad recognized outgoing Ministry Council members duRee Bryant, Jeff Philips and Carol Swiegert. Sheryl described the Council's goals of visibility, working on prioritizing the budget, establishing a roadmap for long-range planning and helping to communicate the successes of the ministries and committees. They will be kicking off next year with the Ministry coordinators and committee chairs refining their draft plans and communications for 2016/17. Sheryl laid out the draft timetable for brining activities for next year together.

Strategic plan update

Karen described how the BOT has been working to simplify organizational structures and encourage routines that encourage an integrated approach to planning and empower staff and volunteers to follow through to action. She described how an executive team has been formed to improve coordination and efficiency in planning, and setting up routines and info sharing tools that can carry over so information is not lost in the year-to-year transitions in volunteer leadership. The Board has worked to synthesize the material for the strategic plan presented at last year's minute into actionable items to shape the long-term strategic plan. She also described our review of the policy manual, which is ongoing, to make sure that our guidelines and operating rules remain as clear and transparent as possible. She described how CCUU expanded its outreach options by establishing a partnership w/ Wellness House and has been exploring options for use of the north property.

Goals for next year include: Continuing to streamline organizational structures, update policies, solidify the budget-building/stewardship processes that connects the church's mission to pledging, and working with the Ministries, Board committees and congregation to build a sustainable future, and develop a calendar that supports long-range planning, more effective integration and coordination amongst

groups and includes regular assessment of progress towards stated goals. Karen noted that we have successfully dealt with the staff transitions we have faced in the last year or so and stated that we are now fully-staffed and prepared to approach and move forward with implementing the Strategic Plan.

Operating Budget

Stewardship update

Treasurer Mary Johnson introduced Gary Labeledz as comptroller and head of the Stewardship committee. Gary described the work of the Stewardship committee and gave a review of the church's revenue situation, and described how with Rem Stokes' efforts, we were able to canvass nearly every member of the congregation for stewardship and fundraising. Gary mentioned that our initial budget goal was not met, but we do expect to meet our minimum goal of \$410,000; currently we are approximately \$1,000.00 short of that level. Gary also recognized Tom McTavish's efforts at recruiting new pledging members.

Mary Johnson gave more details of revenues for next year. We had budgeted \$467,000, but as Gary mentioned, we only reached \$410,000, which is down 5% from last year, and budgeted plate cash is down 30% from last year. Building rental income has increased by 3%. Net revenue from the north property remains flat, and we retain approximately \$16,500 net after taxes and utilities and major repairs. Next year's budget includes a \$15,000 transfer from the Operating Reserves, which indicates a budget shortfall. Finally, we obtained a new source of income from the UUA to pay the salary of our ministerial intern.

Looking at expenses, we have budgeted expenses of \$482,411, a decrease of 1% overall. The Buildings/Grounds budget has been reduced by 4% despite rising costs. Capital Reserve funding has remained intact, but most interior/exterior maintenance allowances have been reduced. The Office budget has increased by 8% to account for copier lease and bank service charge costs. Phone costs have come down due to installation of VOIP system last year. All ministry budgets have been reduced by 10% from last year. Personnel expenses are up by 3% due to intending to hire a part-time pianist and adding the ministerial intern (whose salary has been offset by the UUA grant). No pay increases for existing staff are budgeted. Mortgage remains flat and we look to refinance/renew in 2019. The budget includes no funding for the national UUA dues, but does include local and regional dues payments. Mary said that we do expect finish the current year with a surplus of ~\$15,000 due to not having a DRLE full-time last year, however, she recommended leaving this surplus alone as emergency funding for unforeseen future events, rather than allocate it to current areas. Mary also described how the funding and activities of the ministries and RE programs was laid out and allocated.

Budget overview and balance sheet review

Mary reviewed the balance sheet as of 3/31/16 and reiterated that the Operational Reserve should act as an emergency fund for situations such as payroll shortfalls, emergency repairs, etc. She also said that we have contracted for \$21,000 of masonry work repairs, that will be paid from the Capital Reserve. Mary invited Rem Stokes to address the congregation further about the budget situation. Rem talked about how as a church and congregation, we have always been open and transparent about talking about money. He indicated that he planned to support the budget despite some reservations, and encouraged members to be more liberal with their pledging and support. He shared his views on

some of the risks he saw in the proposed budget, including reiterating how the budget draws from the Operating Reserve as a result of pledging shortfalls, which is a potential risk when refinancing or renegotiating our mortgage. He also described that a small group of senior members alone account for a significant amount of pledging for the budget, and reminded the members to remember that those pledges are not guaranteed in the future. He also mentioned that some members have not responded to stewardship's outreach efforts, and indicated that this is another potential risk. Finally, Rem indicated how not satisfying our membership dues to the national UUA is a risk, as it makes it more difficult to receive supplies and assistance from our national association.

Karen shared her own thoughts regarding Rem's comments, and reiterated that we have gone through several years of staffing transition, and also recognized that our membership has dropped very slightly as well, but this loss is in line with our normal attrition over recent years. Additionally, we have not had the staff or volunteer outreach necessary to recruit new members in the last year that we have had in the past, and we have not made up the difference in membership as a result. However, Karen anticipates that this membership shortfall will not continue next year. She described upcoming efforts to build a sustainable future. Some of the things that need to be considered are the privileges and responsibilities of membership, stewardship of time and money, building membership, funding of outreach beyond our walls, funding staff and programming necessary to do the things we say we want to do, maintaining our fair share of membership in the UUA, and maintaining our grounds and facilities. Additional factors include catching up the funding of the Capital Reserve and maintaining an ongoing funding of the reserve at a more realistic level, having more equitable funding of the operating budget across all generations, looking at the role of the north property in the future, and reducing fixed expenses by looking at how solar and water could be used to reduce our utility costs, as well as continuing to pay down the mortgage. All of these areas needed to be considered if we are to build a sustainable future for Countryside. Karen invited the membership to attend the upcoming board retreat on 6/18 and to bring their ideas for shaping future budget development.

A member of the finance committee (Bob Spielman) echoed Rem's thoughts and concerns, and indicating that he was increasing his pledge.

A member of the congregation (Noel Zak) shared her concerns that the budget did not include increases for professional staff and asked what level pledges would need to be increased to provide an increase for professional staffing costs.

Karen and Mary shared results from a budget team's meeting that discussed potential budgetary additions/reinstatements, including UUA national dues at 1/3 (\$5,800), increasing professional expenses for them music director and congregational administrator, adding \$5,000 to the capital reserve, re-instating 5% of cuts to the ministries, and finally reinstating another 1/3 of UUA national dues. However, making up for the \$15,000 shortfall is our top priority.

Member Ken Bobbe shared a concern that the budget does not adequately describe the costs of individual staff members. Karen said that we have just now gotten a full staff. The Board rejected the finance committee's proposal to cut staffing costs at this point, believing it was important to give the staff time to implement their plans and ideas for future growth. Even if cuts have to be made at some point in the future, it is preferable to work with the staff in determining how to deal with cuts; rather than losing staff, they might opt for a pay cut or cutting back hours.

A member shared her concerns about where our congregation fits in with the national trends of financing struggles that congregations across the country are facing. Rev. Hilary mentioned that these concerns have been addressed as part of the budget, and mentioned that we have been understaffed for many years, and that the congregation's success has been due largely in part to a core group of volunteers from the congregation. We don't necessarily want to staff for growth, but we do want to staff in a way that can support the goals that the congregation has said they want to achieve.

A member (Leslie Peet) requested to see a line-item breakdown (per member) of personnel costs. Karen said that staff's salaries are at mid-level of UUA guidelines and include professional expenses, retirement, benefits, etc. Mary Johnson said that this information is available.

A member (Robin Labeledz) said that although we tend to look at each pledge unit being equal, maybe we need to have some kind of info that breaks down for the congregation of how our pledges are spread out (ie how much comes from \$200/year, \$500/year, \$1000/year, etc), and requested that we publish a list of pledge ranges from the congregation.

A member (Greg Blus) described his past work on the finance committee and as a board member and president. He stressed maintaining a balanced budget, and only spending money that comes in. He said that we took fundraising out of the operating budget in 2012 and cut UUA dues in half to make up for that difference, which was controversial. We restored UUA dues funding in 2013, but in the last 2 years, UUA dues have been cut again.

A new member (Jackie) of the church shared that they turned in their first pledge form today and that they had been attracted to the church by the strength of our RE program. She said that she had sought out Unitarianism in general, but wondered more about what sort of outreach programs we were looking at to make us more visible. Board member Jeanie Michalec briefly mentioned the Tiger Team approach that we are looking to take in the next year and said that this would be discussed in more detail at the upcoming Board Retreat in June.

Board member Joy Simon asked if we could re-examine our policy of giving away all of our funds raised at fundraisers to the Outreach groups. Karen said that we would have to formally re-evaluate that policy at a later time and no decision could be made on that today.

Chris Smith moved to accept the budget the board has presented as-is; Yvette Johnson seconded. The budget proposal passed, with 59 members voting in favor and 9 members voting against.

Karen re-assured the members of the congregation that the Board will act upon the members' requests and the board's intent to insure sustainability.

Mike Berry presented the report of the Endowment Committee and encouraged members to consider the Endowment Fund when making legacy gifts. Recently, the Endowment Committee has been looking to divest from investment in fossil fuel funds and screening for socially responsible investment opportunities while maintaining an overall conservative investment strategy focused on long-term growth. In the last year, the endowment fund grew 9%, to bring the value to \$60,200. A "Donate Now" feature on the church's website has been installed to make donations easier to make.

There was no report from the Outreach Steering Committee. A written report was contained in the annual report packets submitted to the congregation.

Rev. Hilary thanked the passion of the members of the congregation.

Tom Curtis shared a proposal from the 5/14 Climate Conference held at CCUU, requesting the congregation explore installing solar panels at CCUU this year. Karen said that this is something that we are eagerly looking at exploring as a way of reducing our utility costs in the coming years.

Karen adjourned the meeting at 1:52 PM without a motion.