

First Religious Society Parish Board

Meeting Minutes

February 10, 2021

via Zoom

Present: Maureen Adams, Juliana Beauvais, Rebecca Brodish, Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Holly Cashman, Micah Donahue, Vernon Ellis, Judy Fayre, Sadie Fountain, Tom Himmel, Rich Johnson, Michelle Kimball, Forrest Speck, Renee Wolf-Foster

Absent: n/a

Call to Order

The monthly meeting of the First Religious Society Parish Board was called to order by Rebecca Brodish, Parish Board Chair, at 7:05 pm on February 10, 2021.

Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting

Rev. Rebecca Bryan lit the chalice, followed by a reading from Joy Harjo's poem "Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings" and a short meditation.

New Business

Update from the Reopening Team

Judy Fayre says that they are meeting every two weeks. Most recently, they talked about the future, what they imagine the future might look and what the reopening timeline might be until we are not virtual only. (They acknowledge that the virtual will stay beyond the reopening.) Recognition that there may be an issue around protecting staff R&R time over the summer; awareness around that issue is important.

Possibility of using some of our space for a food pantry that needs to be expanded.

Discussion of an increasing casual-ness around groups entering the church, meeting face to face, and the need to be aware of the need to maintain covid protocols.

Update from the Mission Vision Core team

Renee Wolf-Foster shared that the core team met on Feb. 7 and will meet every other week beginning on Friday, Feb. 19. The core team is discussing next steps and plan to bring strategic objectives to the congregation at the annual meeting.

Update on the Annual Campaign

Forrest Speck shared that they are working on connecting the Vision Mission Ends with testimonials for the service on Giving Sunday. He reported that he has seen a mockup of the annual campaign brochure, which they are editing for readability. Jill Porter & MacKenzie Rafeldt are the campaign co-chairs; they plan to use phone calls, Zoom meetings, etc. to carry out the trainings for stewards and to drive the enthusiasm/communication around the campaign. He added that \$520,000 is the pledge goal, which Tom Himmel will talk in more detail later. Finally, he added that they are planning for several different ways for members and

supporters to make pledges, including people being able to drop their cards off in person outside the church, which would need to be carefully controlled for social distancing. Rebecca Brodish encouraged all the members of the Board to be stewards.

Update from the FRS Anti-Racism Group

Vern Ellis shared that the core group meets once a month and the three other groups (among, within, beyond) are meeting every other week. A plan will be going up on the website for the congregation to read. Vern added that the anti-racism core group will be running the service on March 14 and that one person each from within, among & beyond will speak. There will also be participation from youth and the blessing a multiracial Little Free Library.

Update on the Nock Middle School Conversation

Rev. Rebecca wanted to make sure that the Board was aware of the on-going conversation in the community (including in the local newspaper) about a racist incident at a local graduation ceremony in the 1940s involving person after whom the Nock Middle School is now named. The issue, which has been taken up by the school board, arose during the conversation after the FRS service in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. at which Frank Cousins Jr. gave the sermon. FRS is not directly involved except for in being the place where the conversation started, but there might be a public hearing about it and as Board members we should be aware.

Update on Staffing

Rev. Rebecca shared that there is a person for the multimedia specialist contract position to whom they have offered the position. He is working at another church (in Danvers). He just graduated and has lots of experience. Rev. Rebecca was not comfortable sharing his name at this point because he hasn't accepted the position yet.

The DFO position yielded 15 applicants, but they did not identify a candidate and are starting over. They have refined the position, particularly with regards to the new relationship that would exist between this DFO position and a minister who is both the spiritual leader and the CEO. The committee members were disappointed by the lack of diversity in the applicant pool. They are asking that we once again try reaching out to anyone that we know who might be interested and qualified. Tom Himmel has agreed to continue in the interim position. Tom added that the 0.8 position was brought up by a couple of the candidates. It was asked whether it might be important to point out to candidates that the \$60,000 was the 0.80 FTE not the 100%.

Rev. Rebecca was asked about the ministerial intern she met with who was considering an internship as FRS. She decided to go to Haverhill rather than come FRS, in part because she wanted experience in an urban congregation.

Update on Swasey Orphan Fund Recommendations

Rebecca Brodish brought everyone's attention to the details in the Board meeting packed about the 5 proposals from the SOF team that we have not yet considered and discussed.

The following motion was made by Judy Fayre and seconded by Rich Johnson

Motion: “I move that the Board endorse recommendations 3-7 in the Swasey Orphans Fund Team Recommendations, dated January 7, 20221.”

Vote: The motion passed unanimously

Open Issues/Strategic Thinking

Preliminary Budget & Campaign Goal

Tom Himmel shared his screen with the upcoming year budget. The small amount of spending increases are primarily owing to the salary. Salary is up and benefits is decreased because of health insurance and retirement plan contributions. (We have some newer employees who aren't eligible yet.) The main increase in the budget is due to losses in income as a result of covid (e.g. fundraising is projected to be significantly down, rentals as well) and the cell tower lease. There will be some income from the PPE loan, a portion of which was used during the current budget year with the remainder PPE money being able to be applied to the next budget year.

Tom shared that to bring the whole budget into balance, the annual campaign goal will need to be just over \$520,000, which is an almost 16% increase from last year or about \$70,000 more than last year. Rev. Rebecca shared her screen with the draft of the annual campaign brochure. Juliana Beauvais pointed out that the new goal is \$15/month per member to reach the additional \$70,000 (based on 400 members).

Tom invited questions and stated that they are looking for the Board to endorse the budget and the campaign goal. There was a brief discussion of strategies for balancing the budget if the annual campaign goal is not met including the possibility of reducing the percentage from the plate collection that goes to a community organization and the restrictions and concerns around use of the endowment. The other option would be to look at the HR subcommittee's salary recommendations because the Board opted for the highest aspirational budget proposed by HR subcommittee after not being able to do a cost of living increase last year.

The following motion was made by Maureen Adams and seconded by Rich Johnson:

Motion: “I move that the Board vote to endorse the preliminary budget and campaign goal for 2021-2022 presented by the Finance Committee.”

Vote: The motion passed unanimously

Strategic Staffing Conversation

Rev. Rebecca shared with the members of the board that Kristen Miller has offered her resignation. She will not be returning after her leave of absence ends. She did everything she

could for this not to have happened, but she was not able to prevent the demographic trend impacting young church that she saw when she started eight years ago.

Rev. Rebecca also shared that she is planning to meet with Sharon Broll tomorrow night with Rebecca Brodish.

The following motion was made by Renee Wolf-Foster and seconded by Tom Himmel:

Motion: “I move that the Board approve the Separation from Employment policy proposed by the HR subcommittee.”

Vote: The motion passed unanimously

At 8:20 pm Rebecca Brodish made the following motion and Rich Johnson seconded.

Motion: “I move that we go into executive session.”

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

The executive session ended at 8:24 pm.

Consent Agenda

- Parish Board Minutes 1/16/2021 1
- Finance Committee Minutes 2/4/2021
- Community Human Service Committee Minutes January 2021
- Food Drive Update

The following motion was made by Rich Johnson and seconded by Renee Wolf Foster:

Motion: “I move that all items on the Consent Agenda be approved.”

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

Closing words

Rev. Rebecca Bryan shared closing words of reflection from poet Joy Harjo.

Judy Fayre reminded everyone to do the process check (link was copied into the chat) and emphasized how helpful it is that everyone to fill it out.

Adjournment

Rebecca Brodish moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm, Rich Johnson seconded and it was approved unanimously.

Minutes submitted by Holly Cashman, Parish Clerk