

First Religious Society Parish Board

Meeting Minutes

April 14, 2021

via Zoom

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

Absent: n/a

Guests: Pam Sharrio

Call to Order

The monthly meeting of the First Religious Society Parish Board was called to order by Rebecca Brodish, Parish Board Chair, 7:02 pm on April 14, 2021.

Opening Reading and Chalice Lighting

Rev. Rebecca Bryan lit the chalice, followed by a reading Thich Nhat Hanh out of the hymnal "Let us be at peace with our body and our minds".

New Business

Review Draft Warrant

Rebecca Brodish introduced the task of reviewing the warrant and approving it. The warrant needs to be published in advance. The annual meeting will be virtual again by Zoom at 10:30 am in place of our normal service. Sofia Lyons's ordination will be in the afternoon the same day. The goal is to make the annual meeting feel more spiritual this year. We will still need to have a quorum this year. Last year we had well over the quorum at the annual meeting.

Board members took turns reading the articles of the warrant.

Article 8 was questioned because no other business can come before the Parish without being approved by the Board. The overwhelming majority of Board members indicated they were comfortable with removing Article 8.

Article 3 was discussed, for example including that virtual participation/engagement "counts", and clarifying what counts as engagement in the life of the church. Could this be spelled out in some place other than in the bylaws? Do we know who is watching the online services? (No, particularly on YouTube.)

Article 4 was discussed – This article has come up a lot, but we hope to resolve this next year, change the bylaws, so we don't have to keep voting to suspend the bylaws.

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

Motion: “I move that the Board approve the proposed Warrant for the May 23rd 2021 Annual Meeting with the removal of the proposed Article 8.”

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

Nominations for next year

Rebecca Brodish introduced Judy Fayre to update the Parish Board on her stepping down from being the next board chair. Rebecca Brodish announced that Holly Cashman will be taking over as Parish Board vice chair this year and chair next year.

Maureen Adams announced that they need a Treasurer and an Auditor, both big shoes to fill. She does not know whether the names will be identified before the next meeting. Also, a new Parish Clerk will to be found to replace Holly Cashman. The clerk position was discussed. Lucy Litwin will be the new youth Board member. Bill Clary, Cecilia Healey and Susan Ricker are the nominees for the Trustees positions. We will vote on the nominees in our next meeting. We do not need the names to be voted tonight for the warrant. The motions and the explanations will need to be in the annual report. Anyone who wants to be a delegate for the UUA annual meeting should reach out to Maureen Adams, Micah Donahue, or Renee Wolf Foster. Rebecca Brodish thanked the Governance Committee for their work.

VME Update

On behalf of the core team, Renee Wolf Foster shared that they have had meetings open to the congregation following the passion action fair. They are meeting to discuss the goals that have been set out, thinking about the language, making sure the intent is clear, and thinking about how to engage the congregation. Rev. Rebecca added that they will be taking each of the goals and meeting with the congregation about each one. They will be open to everyone, but invitations to specific groups related to each of the goals will be made.

Reopening Team Update

Rev. Rebecca shared that there was a reopening team update in the Steeple. They are focusing on creating as many outdoor opportunities as possible. The team is now working on how reopening the building in the fall will work and what that will look like. Come to the outdoor service on Sunday! Sadie shared that the youth group has discussed whether there will be anything for the graduating seniors in the youth group. Rev. Rebecca said yes and that she believes it is on May 30.

Ordination Planning

Rebecca Brodish updated that Sophia Lyons’s ordination will be May 23 at 3 pm. There is a planning committee and they are working on music, history, and other wonderful elements for the event.

FRS Operating Cash Reserve

Art Henshaw shared that the operating cash reserve has been accumulating some unfavorable operating results in the past years. Rather than “rainy day fund”, the term “operating cash” was

preferred by the Finance Committee. Our attention tends to be focused on the annual budget, giving us an annual mindset; however, the balance sheet “keeps score” from year to year. The net operating cash flow over the past 10 years has had many negatives, with a total negative that is significant. We do not have a “cash management policy”, so it is unclear how we should proceed in this situation to manage the “looming cash shortage” that will be coming in a few years. There may be some reconciliation work ahead for June 2021.

Art asked what the Board would like to do and/or how we would like the Finance Committee to proceed. We landed on continuing the conversation next month when the Board has had time to digest the information and we can discuss it in more detail.

Recommended Changes to the Employee Manual Regarding Comp Time

Holly Cashman presented the comp time policy developed by the Human Resources Subcommittee. Julie Fornin and Holly Cashman collaborated to create a draft of the policy, which was discussed with the subcommittee, along with Rev. Rebecca, Rebecca Brodish and Tom Himmel. Lori Clark, an FRS member who is an employment lawyer, reviewed the policy to ensure accuracy and legality; her suggestions were incorporated.

The highlights of the new policy include the establishment of a written agreement about a core work schedule and hours (revisited annually) and comp time requiring written approval from the staff member’s supervisor. The policy also puts limits on the amount of comp time an employee may accumulate and how/when the can/must be used.

Renee Wolf Foster thanked the committee for their work as she has worked on this and it is a challenge. Art Henshaw questioned whether comp time was another hole in the accounting system; Rev. Rebecca added that this does not involve pay over and above what is budgeted for a given position.

Campaign Update

Forrest Speck shared an update from the annual campaign. The campaign is still short about \$30,000. They are still following up with the folks who have not responded at all. The stewardship committee is trying to make up a matching fund to make up the difference. The donations to the matching fund are doing well, but the next work will be asking those who have already pledged to consider pledging more. They are moderately hopeful that between the pledges still coming in and the matching fund we will close the gap of about \$30,000. The matching fund will be announced on Sunday and Juliana Beauvais will be at the outdoor service.

Stewardship Update

Vern Ellis shared about the online raffle. He has received the permit approval from City Hall. The Massachusetts laws are not up to date on anything related to online fundraising in the covid era, so they have had to jump through a lot of hoops. There are additional costs because of the online company and the use of charge cards. The biggest change is that the fundraising will all be carried out through social media and emails, not by volunteers selling tickets. Forward any questions related to the fundraiser to Vern.

Open Issues/Strategic Thinking

Finance Update

Tom Himmel presented the budget document that was sent out to the Board prior to the meeting. We do not have a spending problem, we have an income problem. The costs are increasing (e.g. health insurance costs, the UUA 'ask', endowment payment) that are out of our hands. There is furnace work in both buildings that we will need to do before next winter to the tune of maybe \$10,000.

Art Henshaw asked whether the furnace work should be added to the warrants for the annual meeting. Tom explained that the furnace situation is all just coming about in the last 2-3 days, so there has not been a final decision yet. The warrant might be premature.

Juliana Beauvais asked if there were any thoughts about cuts in the budget if the annual campaign is short. Rev. Rebecca said we are not there yet; Art said the Finance Committee is having a meeting a week from tomorrow. Sadie Fountain pointed out that the \$2,000 for the youth trip is not going to be used this year.

Budget: Pre-planning

Consent Agenda

- Finance Committee Minutes 4/1/2021
- Finance Committee Minutes 4//8 2021
- Program Council Minutes 3/23/2021
- JAM Update - March 2021

The following motion was made by Vern Ellis and seconded by Rich Johnson:

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

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

Closing words

Rebecca Brodish 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.

Rev. Rebecca Bryan shared closing words of reflection.

Adjournment

Rebecca Brodish moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:57 pm. The motion was seconded and it was approved unanimously.

Minutes submitted by Holly Cashman, Parish Clerk