

## **First Religious Society Parish Board Meeting – May 17, 2022**

**Call to Order:** Holly Cashman called the meeting to order at 6pm.

**Attending:** Rev. Rebecca Bryan, Rob Authier, David Livingstone (Ministerial Intern), **Holly Cashman, Tina Benik, Juliana Beauvais, Lucy Litwin, Vern Ellis, Micah Donahue, Jim Supple, Tim Fountain, Kathy Desilets, Michelle Kimball, Renée Wolf Foster, Annie Maurer, Minnie Flanagan,** Tom Stites, Anne Mulvey, Ministerial Intern Training Team. (Note: Names in **Bold** are voting members.)

**Check-in/ Opening Reading and Welcome:** Reverend Rebecca lit the chalice and opened the meeting with a reading.

### **New Business**

- **End of year Farewell to David Livingstone:** Holly Cashman and members of the training team thanked David for his service to the congregation over the past year.
- **Parish Hall and Afghan Family Housing:** Rev. Rebecca reports that the guest family's father will start a job at the hospital. He has also passed the exam for a learner's permit and is practicing with Yvonne. Another lift is the fact that Religious Education is being offered for the refugee children. This program will be held in the Lower Meetinghouse with two practicing Muslims as teachers. The families are delighted that this is happening. The city is expected to grant a 6-month extension for the families living with us and at St. Paul's to stay as they seek housing. The city is excited to have these families stay in our community and a housing group with many people are working toward this. It is challenging to find a rental housing unit for such a large family as those living with us. Consideration is being given to property ownership. Looking at school issues in Newburyport as well which may be problematic. Also looking at whether there is a way to convert Parish Hall to a rental property for the family now living there. This is simply an exploration, not a decision in that direction. We would need to know if FRS can work with others to create a path for the current residents to pay a reasonable rent and to secure subsidies or other methods (e.g., donations) that will allow us to meet our costs. Currently, IINE is paying for utilities and for cell phones.
- In response to a question, Rev. Rebecca said that this plan would allow the family to pay below market rate rent and that it is likely that subsidies are available. Rob Authier has done an excellent job dealing with the needs of the family. In response to a question, he said that the work up front was intense, and did have an impact on his workload, and that it was rewarding work. We now are dealing with a leak in the roof which is our responsibility due to deferred maintenance. There was also discussion of the question of whether we should spend a large amount of money on temporary solutions. There will need to be a longer conversation with the board and the congregation regarding issues with the Afghan family.

**ACTION:**

Jim Supple moved that the Parish Board approve a six-month extension, to January 15, 2023, for the use of the Parish Hall as temporary housing for the refugee family currently residing there. The motion was seconded by Michelle Kimball and carried unanimously.

Minnie Flanagan moved that FRS explore the feasibility of using the Parish Hall as an income-earning rental unit as one of many housing options being explored for the current refugee family living there and report back for further congregational input before any action is taken. Jim Supple seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

- **Annual Campaign:** Tina Benik offers thanks to all present for their help. Currently we are at about \$504,000 of our projected \$530,000 pledged. There are up to 21 families who pledged last year and with their expected pledges we expect to reach at least \$510,000. We had 289 pledgers last year and 259 this year. John Mercer and Lark Madden made a great round of second calls. This was the first time the pledge drive raised over \$500,000. Reverend Rebecca and the board thanked Tina and Greg for the wonderful work they did.
- **2022-23 Budget:** Tim Fountain reported. Notes are available in Board Packet. Tim recognized the extensive work of Tom Himmel and others in getting the finances in order. Key points on the budget: **Income:** \$510,000 was included as pledge goal in anticipation that final efforts will bring us to that point. The amount for prior year pledges was reduced as was the reserve for unpaid pledges for this year. The biggest hole in the budget is the Verizon cell tower lease. Negotiations are ongoing with Dish, and we may replace that income, but it is not yet certain. Anticipated fundraising income was reduced to reflect a realistic view. **Expenses:** Staffing costs are at the level recommended by the finance committee, allowing for proposed increases. We have a line of \$6,000 for a Ministerial intern. Oil and Natural gas costs are budgeted at a higher level to reflect current trends. The Capital Reserve line was reduced to \$1,000 and the line for Operating Reserve was maintained. There is a deficit of 8,000 now, even expecting the application of an expected surplus in 2022.

The board discussed the state of the budget and recommended minor line-item changes.

**ACTION:** Tina Benik moved that the Board accept the FY23 budget as submitted by the finance committee and agreed upon in this meeting to be submitted to the congregation for approval at the Annual Meeting. Jim Supple seconded and the motion passed with 9 votes in favor and 2 abstentions.

**Other Issues/Strategic Thinking**

- **Annual Meeting Warrant:** Juliana Beauvais told the board that the information from the May 1<sup>st</sup> listening sessions on the pronouns is included in the Board Packet. And reviewed the questions to be included in the Warrant for the Annual Meeting. The order in which

items are listed will be finally decided after the planned meeting with the Parliamentarian we have hired to help with the meeting.

**ACTION:** Julianna Beauvais moved that the Board endorse the ten Articles presented in the Warrant. Tim Fountain seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

- **Auction Update:** Renée Wolf Foster and Michelle Kimball  
Renée recognized Vern Ellis's accomplishments. We are in very good shape regarding donations. Ticket sales will start next week through either Eventbrite or the company we used for the raffle. Tickets are \$35. Renée will send out a sign-up form for volunteers for the day of the event. Board members are asked to reach out to people to buy tickets. Any questions should go to the planning committee.
- **Parish Board Annual Retreat Planning:** Tina Benik reported that an agenda is in process for a board retreat on June 24<sup>th</sup>. Tina will send out the current ideas and welcomes suggestions. Current board members and new members will be invited.

### **Consent Agenda**

- Parish Board minutes - April 19, 2022
- Trustee Meeting Notes - April 20, 2022
- Governance Committee Notes

**ACTION:** Tina Benik moved to amend the consent agenda to include the notes on the May 1 listening sessions that were included in the May Parish Board packet. Jim Supple seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Tina Benik moved that the board approve the consent agenda, as amended. Jim Supple seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

### **Closing**

**Closing Words:** Rev. Rebecca Bryan offered thanks and a brief meditation on taking feelings of love with us as we leave the meeting. Rev. Rebecca thanked the board for their work and noted how people were excited and happy about the auction. She shared closing readings from Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Erica Jung about the nature and value of love. Tina Benik reminded members to sign Process Check Forms.

**ACTION:** Holly Cashman moved to adjourn, and Jim Supple seconded. The board unanimously agreed. Meeting was adjourned at 8:15 and the chalice was extinguished.

Notes prepared and respectfully submitted by Kathy Desilets, Clerk