

FRSUU Parish Board Meeting – June 18, 2025

Present: Tina Benik, Tom Himmel, Kathy Desilets, Jim Supple, Laurie Evans-Daly, Bob Higgins, Sarina Kahn Reddy, Andy Lobb, Liss Larsen, Renee Wolf Foster, Lori Clark, Minnie Flanagan, Reverend Rebecca (names in bold are voting members)

Call to Order: Tina Benik called the meeting to order at 6:08pm.

Welcome: Reverend Rebecca opened the meeting with a reading from Fred Lamont encouraging love and focus on what we want rather than what we are against. Board members were moved by this reading and many asked for a copy.

Covenant Reading: Minnie Flanagan read section 5 of the Board Covenant which focuses on community building, Board work as holy work, and coming to meetings prepared.

Minister's Report: Rev. Rebecca provided an oral report. Discussion included:

- No change in staffing. Still seeking a facilities manager and a person or firm to take over fiscal responsibilities now carried by Bart Bracken, Bob Higgins, and Betsy Latham.
- Summer staff schedules are as follows:
 - Nick Place has completed his time as facilities manager. His role, in addition to music for worship and church events, will be special events (mostly featuring music) both inside and outside the church. An example is the Community Sing events. Nick will set his own schedule for the summer.
 - Donny Rogers will manage facilities until a contracted person is engaged for this role.
 - Diane Carroll will cover her regular duties, and the business office will be open from 9:30am to 1:30pm on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.
 - Mara Flynn is working at Theatre in the Open for the summer as established.
 - Elisa Scully will continue the communications work she has been doing.
 - Rev. Laurel Gray will be on vacation, and she and Rev. Rebecca will both be back for Yankee Homecoming.
- Notice on Rev. Rebecca's sabbatical grant expected by the end of August.
- Major changes are in process at UUA which could impact the parity and choice of ministers.

HVAC Installation: Bill Clary reported that HVAC installation is expected to begin the week of August 20 and finish September 10. Next steps will be to finalize a contract with the installer with details such as how we resolve disagreements, warranty which will guarantee workmanship, and a description of the specifics of the work. This can be based on the roof contract. We will also reach out to Caswell Mechanical to see if they have a contract format that can be used. We have the capital reserve fund, the futures fund, and other sources which we can borrow from if necessary. If funds for the project deposit are not available as needed, the Board will need to reconvene to determine the sources of funds.

ACTION: To ensure availability of funds needed to cover the deposit for work on the HVAC system in the Lower Meetinghouse.

Motion: Jim moved that the Board approve the use of funds from the building reserve fund and some portion of restricted funds on our balance sheet to pay the deposit on the HVAC work in the Lower Meetinghouse. The motion passed without opposition.

The closing on the sale of Barbara Owen's house is delayed for technical reasons. We need these funds to cover the 15% deposit Caswell is requesting for the HVAC system work. Lisa Mead's firm is working on the closing on the house.

Finance Update: Jim Supple

- We currently have an operating surplus of close to \$10,000.
- Some large expenditures are still outstanding.
- Diane Carroll is working on collecting uncompleted pledges.
- Some funds were moved in the budget to Young Church.
- The Capital Campaign committee will make recommendations for the extent and cost of this endeavor including the size, scope, and nature of the campaign.
- It is unclear who will monitor the HVAC work on behalf of the church. At this point we are looking for someone to take on this responsibility.

Safety Team: Bob Higgins

Members of this team are Reverend Laurel, Nick Place, Stephen-Wolf Foster, and Bob Higgins. The team was formed to look at long- and short-term goals for improving the safety and security of our spaces and operations. The following areas are under the scope of the team:

- Review and update Young Church policies.
- Update First Aid needs including equipment and procedures. We have taken some actions already, including installation of a defibrillator and training for Rev. Laurel on its use.
- Establish Active Shooter procedures.
- Establish a fragrance-free zone (done).
- Establish an evacuation plan (in process).
- Review strategies for accessibility.
- Consider a system of monitors (in addition to ushers) for safety at services and events.
- Ensure data controls for security and privacy.
- Consider installing exterior cameras. (We have two donors who would be willing to help; Lark Madden is willing to loan a camera to the church.)
- Nick Place will speak with our fire alarm system vendors to determine whether there are additional steps we should take.
- Bob Higgins will continue to work on these areas. It would be helpful to have someone with more expertise and time to take leadership.

Governance Committee: Tom Himmel

- The Annual Meeting went smoothly, and all items passed. The most discussion was on the upcoming HVAC system project.

- Looking for identification of a location for the most recent versions of official documents on our electronic systems. A SharePoint drive could be established which would be shared and public facing.
- Leslie Lawrence will take over as Governance chair for the 2025-2026 church year, and Tina Benik will join the committee. A meeting will be scheduled soon to orient the new members and to begin to define plans for the upcoming church year.

Stewardship/FUNraising: Renee Wolf Foster

- **Raffle:** Despite our best efforts, the raffle did not bring in the amount budgeted. The raffle is in the budget for next year but may not be a viable event. We need a broader view. Thanks to all for their efforts, especially to Paula Renda who was a great asset.
- **Book Sale:** Tina Benik and Paula Renda will chair this event. There is lots of volunteer support. Book donations are still wanted. Michelle Kimball will work with Paula on on-site promotion. Volunteer signup is on Eventbrite.
- **Yankee Homecoming:** Nick will lead another Sing Out community sing event. FRSUU will enter the annual bed race and sell apparel. We have established a church Venmo account to accept payments.
- **Auction:** A good group of volunteers has begun planning this major annual fundraiser.
- The next meeting of the committee is July 2.

ACTION: We need a vote on Barbara Owen’s house to enable completion of the sale.

Motion: Jim Supple moved that the Board approve the certificate of vote that was distributed at this meeting. Minnie Flanagan seconded and the motion passed without objection.

Question about establishing a building committee for work on Parish Hall. A member of the congregation expressed interest in establishing such a committee now. The Board heard the recommendation and accepted the opinion of the Capital Campaign Committee that this is not an appropriate action at this point because we have not yet fully defined the process.

Consent Agenda:

ACTION: Approve the minutes of the May meeting as amended.

Motion: Minnie Flanagan moved that the Board approve the minutes of the May meeting amended to exclude Lori Clark from the list of members in attendance. Tom Himmel seconded and the motion with no objection. Lori abstained.

Notes:

- The Peace Vigil is still being held on Fridays from 11am-12pm and is planned to continue through the summer.
- Rev. Rebecca is working with a group that is going to the Detention Center in Burlington on Wednesdays at 11am to protest detention and plans for deportation of refugees.

Departing Board Members:

Rev. Rebecca led the Board in acknowledging the work of Vern Ellis, Tina Benik, Laurie Evans-Daly, and Minnie Flanagan. Tina was specifically recognized for her leadership, and Laurie for her work on the 300th Anniversary celebration events and book. Rev. Rebecca led a ritual acknowledging with gratitude specific work done, forgiveness for any regrets, and taking joy in what each person was taking away from their service.

Closing: Rev Rebecca looked back on the year, thanked Board members for their service, and wished everyone a good summer.

Motion: Renee Wolf Foster moved to adjourn the meeting and Minnie Flanagan seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Desilets, Clerk

CERTIFICATE OF VOTE
of
PARISH BOARD OF
FIRST RELIGIOUS SOCIETY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

I, Kathy Desilets, duly elected Clerk of the Parish Board of the First Religious Society Unitarian Universalist Church, incorporated under Chapter 44 of the Acts and Resolves of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (the “Acts”) of 1793 (the “Church”), do hereby certify that:

1. The Church is a corporation, duly organized and validly existing in good standing and in the full enjoyment of its powers and franchises under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
2. Attached hereto as Exhibit A is full, true and correct copy of the votes adopted by the Parish Board of the Church (the “Board”) on June 18, 2025.
3. The execution and delivery of the documents referred to in Exhibit A and the performance of the transactions described in such documents will not contravene any law, rule, regulation or any provision of Chapter 44 of the Acts of 1793, Chapter 6 of the Acts of 1800, the Church’s Constitution and Bylaws, or any other document evidencing the Church’s establishment or governing the conduct of its affairs or any agreement to which it is a party or by which it is bound.
4. That the aforesaid resolutions have not been revoked by any subsequent action of the Parish Board of said Church and are still in full force and effect.

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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have duly executed this Certificate as a sealed instrument as of this 18th day of June, 2025.

Kathy Desilets

Clerk of the Parish Board

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Essex, ss.

On this _____ day of June, 2025, before me, the undersigned notary public, personally appeared Kathy Desilets, Clerk of the Parish Board of the First Religious Society, Unitarian Universalist of Newburyport, and proved to me through satisfactory evidence of identification, which was a driver's license, to be the person whose name is signed on the preceding document, and acknowledged to me that she signed it voluntarily for its stated purpose, not individually but in her capacity as Clerk of the Parish Board as aforesaid, duly-authorized.

Bethany Raffa, Notary Public

My Commission Expires: 07/22/2027