

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF PORTLAND
Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Minutes, February 28, 2008

Present: Randy Russell (Moderator), Cindy Cumfer (2nd Vice Moderator), Pat Malone (Secretary), Don Watne (Treasurer), Allison Frost, Dave Patterson, Jim Shorr; Dale Wright, Tom Disrud, (Associate Minister)

Absent: Helena Lee; Teri Martin; Marilyn K. Scott (1st Vice Moderator); Ron Yoder; Marilyn Sewell (Senior Minister)

Staff: Candace Clarke, Jan Larson

Guests: Bill Michtom, Camille Wright

Process Observer: Pat Malone

Time Keeper: Dave Patterson

Minutes: Jan Larson

To-do List:

1) Don Watne will draft a policy statement re: how revenues and expenses must reflect the church's commitment to a balanced budget.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

There was a quorum of 8 Board members.

Dale Wright read the Opening.

The January minutes were approved, with the following correction: Dave Patterson was in attendance.

Announcements:

- April 27th, Sunday, is the "Meet the Candidates" Nominating Committee's event during each of the social hours in Fuller Hall.
- May 4th, Sunday, is the "Candidates' Forum" event in the Eliot Chapel, 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. All Board members are encouraged to be present.

Action Items:

- There were none reviewed.

Agenda Review:

- Foundation update added.

Open Mic: Bill Michtom & Camille Wright commented on the candidate nominating process.

Board Agenda:

1. Board Retreat dates are set tentatively for the evening of June 13th (at church) and for the following day, June 14th, at the Kennedy School (if available). Date/times to be confirmed.

2. April 3 is the date if the Board needs a special meeting for annual budget review.
3. Annual Meeting is Sunday May 18th; at 9:15 a.m. One worship service at 11:15 a.m.
4. Date of record is set at April 11, 2008.
5. Petition candidate deadline is April 18, 2008.
6. Meet the Candidates Forum is May 4th, 1:00 p.m.
7. Vote-by-mail mailing is April 21.
8. Vote-by-email: we do not have the practical and technological capabilities at this time. Questions also remain regarding the legality of a vote-by-email process.
9. Foundation update: the Foundation has been focusing on socially responsible investments. Randy Russell, Pat Malone and Cindy Cumfer organized an RFP process, and selected 2 companies to present: Becker, and Portfolio 21. Both have shown very good returns, but Portfolio 21 has a commitment to socially responsible investments. Portfolio 21 was selected as the Foundation's new investments manager. In addition, the Board nominated Cindy or Pat to serve as the Board's representative to the Foundation Board's Nominating Committee.

Church Finances Discussion:

Rev. Tom Disrud began the discussion with the church's current status: the church is growing and has growing programs; we are asking ourselves "how do we fund ourselves in a sustainable manner?"; we have a generous congregation; the congregation funded the Buchan Building; this is the congregation's budget, so how do we better call forth the congregation to ownership, and how do we better share the necessary information regarding the church's operational needs? The current budget has an 80,000 dollar deficit (down from \$200,000, so progress has been made). Staffing accounts for almost 70 percent of the budget. There is a need for increased infrastructure to meet our needs. Increases in fees for programs are one item under consideration (50 percent of the families in the RE program do not pledge.) Ministers, Board members, Committee on Generosity members recently met with fund-raising consultant Martha Richards to discuss sustainable, long-term funding and moving the church toward greater stability.

Board discussion comments follow:

- We have been hopeful and aspirational, but we continue to have budget deficits; our budgets have not had enough "margin for error" – not a big enough cushion for the "unexpecteds" (such as a new boiler).
- Our services and our programs match our vision and our values.
- We are in a time of general economic downturn, so how do we better educate and ask our congregation during our society's critical time? How has the general economy affected budgets in the past? (ex: after 9/11 there was an upswing in pledging but many later could not fulfill their promises).
- Being sustainable takes specific planning; we need to build our capacity. Where are we in our growth curve? We are very busy and challenged to meet the demands of this stage of growth. When businesses are growing they seek our investors and/or borrow. Nonprofits and churches take leaps of faith and ask their members for help, by saying "here's the plan – is this what you want?"
- Our congregation is still paying on Capital Campaign pledges.
- How do we create an aspirational picture for ourselves? How do we keep our strategizing expansive? If we pull in, we constrict the flow of energy and money on many levels. We lose momentum.
- We need to inspire. We need a roadmap that leads forward. We need a budget that is balanced, that has a safety-net, while we work toward sustainability. We need a Plan A and a Plan B if Plan A does not work. Corrective action planning.

- Our commitment is for a balanced budget, but our policy that our revenue is suppose to the lowest reasonable amount while our expenses are suppose to be the highest reasonable amount does not match this commitment. Don Watne will craft a new policy statement addressing this situation.
- If the Board remains active in addressing our goals and in their personal pledging, this demonstrates commitment. Our budget planning is premised on the fact that fundraising is based on relationship.
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Summary: Tom and Candace continue work on the current budget and will present it at the March meeting. Many board members expressed that as leaders they have a responsibility to champion the values of the church in the form of the programs that manifest those values in the world and to support a budget that reflects the possibility that we see in the world--not a budget that's based on fear of what could go wrong. There was discussion that suggested wide agreement, if not total consensus, that the Board's job is to invite the congregants into this vision and calls them into generosity to support this vision. There was also agreement that the board request from the Executive Team a plan to eliminate the deficit, including specific benchmarks that would indicate whether we are moving in the right direction over time. In sum, the Board agreed to keep the church moving forward, to better educate the congregation regarding the church's needs, and to do so in a positive manner reflective of our mission.

Process Observation:

Pat Malone reported that the discussion was energetic, animated – a great discussion with everyone participating.

Closing:

Dale read the Closing.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.