

All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church of Watertown NY
Board of Trustees Minutes
Thursday, October 28, 2021

Board Members Participating

Heather Winn, President; Robert South, Vice-President; Eleanor Allen, Treasurer; Patricia Sutherland, Secretary; Trustees: Shannon Starkweather-Burke, Rebecca Carr, Catherine Burns, Joanne Harter

Others Participating

Harriet McMillan, Angelo Guarino (Bookkeeper)

Preliminaries

The Covenant was read, Harriet McMillan agreed to be our Process Observer, and the Meeting was Called to order at 9:30 am.

Acceptance of Agenda

With the addition of the possibility of using hydroelectric power in the church under New Business, the Agenda was accepted.

Officer's Reports

Minutes - Patricia

On a motion from Robert seconded by Eleanor the Minutes from our September meeting were accepted as written.

Treasurer's Report - Eleanor

A request was made by board members to receive this report earlier in the month, giving the members time to review it before the Board meeting. Angelo prepares the reports. He explained the difficulties that occur when Board members request changes to the format listing, such as what categories items are listed under. The Board hopes to work with the present format for perhaps 6 months and reevaluate it. Eleanor would welcome questions and concerns from members.

Eleanor described a \$105 deposit mistake made recently when our Collector went to our bank. She provided copies of the paperwork as well as an email sent from the Collector which explained the mishap and how he caught it and contacted the bank. Our Bookkeeper also reviewed the paperwork and accounts and verified this with the bank. The bank has corrected the error. Our Collector, our Bookkeeper, and the bank are satisfied with the result. The Board is also satisfied.

The NYS Department of Labor notified the church of an error in quarterly payroll tax filing from the 3rd quarter in 2020 which could now cost us a fine of \$1,055. Our records show no error in filing and Angelo, as our Bookkeeper, is protesting this fine. Eleanor assumes this

will work out and will let us know. Angelo stated that he was the one who filed the tax form and stated he would accept responsibility for the fine as defined in his contract with the church if it does turn out he made an error. (Angelo left the meeting)

Vice President's Report - Robert

An Alcoholics Anonymous group has requested the use of our Social Hall and Informal Lounge (for child care) on Thursdays from 6 - 8:30pm. The Board agreed to schedule this group with no fee. Donations from the group would be welcomed. The AA group expects to reopen in person in November and plans to follow our Covid - 19 Reopening Policy requirements.

President's Report - Heather *

This report was emailed to members and is copied at the end of these minutes. It included her report from the Executive Committee. There were no questions.

Finance Report - Eleanor

A meeting of the Finance Committee with Bill Couch, our financial advisor from UBS, and Angelo Quarino, our Bookkeeper, is being planned to focus on having both an investment and an endowment policy. They want to figure out the amounts that can be planned on as available for the monthly expenses of the church. This is a topic coming up in the next Policy Evaluation Committee on November 3, followed by a presentation to the Board.

Social Action Report - Eleanor

No report.

Buildings and Grounds Report- Rebecca

She is still working on getting furnace maintenance done. The snow plowing contract is also in the works. She talked about asking that we agree to have a Board email vote once she has the snow plowing proposals to choose from. No motion was made. She has raised the mailbox, as requested by the mail carrier. She expects to have the kitchen grease trap cleaned out soon. Some maintenance is needed for the sewer drainage traps to prevent odor.

Outreach Committee - Catherine

The Gun Buy Back was rescheduled to next year. Rev. Flag from Emmanuel church would like to coordinate doing Dollar Dinners with us, using our kitchen, but their dining space. She is still talking with Bianca about next year's Juneteenth and pride celebrations. The Board decided that with the ongoing pandemic it would not be safe to have a Thanksgiving dinner at our church this year.

Worship Committee - Eleanor

They meet monthly and are working on the upcoming services.

RE Report - none

Ad Hoc Committee - Robert proposed the following motions from the Ad Hoc Committee on Policy Review:

1. **I move the board policy titled "Audit" be renamed "Accounting Review" and the text**

be revised to read as follows: **The Board of Trustees shall appoint a committee of church members to review financial records at the close of the fiscal year using guidelines provided by the UUA. Neither the collector nor anyone with authority to sign checks should review the accounting books.** Eleanor seconded the motion. In discussing this it was clarified that our Bookkeeper's review of the records would take the place of hiring an annual audit, as we have done in the past, while the purpose of the church members' review would be to keep the congregation informed. **Motion carried unanimously.**

2. I move the board policy titled "Bookkeeping Rules per Audit" be renamed "Financial Safeguards" and the text be revised to read as follows:

(1) Account Security

All checks written during the month will be reconciled in the QuickBooks checking account to the bank statement by the bookkeeper. The memorandum section on each check shall contain invoice numbers or the purpose or both. All investment and savings accounts will be reconciled monthly by the bookkeeper. The bookkeeper shall issue a monthly balance sheet as part of the Treasurer's Report.

(2) Collection Plate

Immediately following the worship service donation collection, two people who are unrelated and not the treasurer, collector, or an authorized check signer, will secure the collection plates in the office and lock the office door. Following Sunday worship services, they will count and double verify the total amount of collected donations and income received during the week using the Plate Collection Record. This document shall be given to the bookkeeper for recording and filing. Eleanor seconded this motion.

Rebecca moved to amend the previous motion to read as follows:

(1) Account Security

The memorandum section of each check shall note the invoice numbers or the purpose or both. The bookkeeper shall reconcile all checks written during the month from the QuickBooks checking account against the bank statement and all investment and savings accounts for the month. The bookkeeper shall issue a monthly balance sheet as part of the Treasurer's Report.

(2) Collection Plate

Immediately following the collection of the worship service donations two unrelated people will secure the collection plates in the office and lock the door. The Treasurer and Collector or authorized check signers cannot perform this service. Following Sunday worship service the two unrelated people will count and double verify the total of Sunday donations and income received during the week. The values will be recorded on the Plate Collection Record and the document shall be given to the bookkeeper for recording and filing. Eleanor seconded this motion for amendment. Discussion followed.

Joanne called for the Question. There were 2 yays and 4 nays with one abstention. **Motion failed.** Since both Robert and Rebecca were part of the ad hoc meeting designed for revising these policies, the subsequent board discussion revolved around the process of the ad hoc meetings, with board members requesting that the smaller group come to a united presentation when presenting their recommendations to the Board. Heather recommended this discussion be tabled for now and plans to come back to it in the next ad hoc Policy Revision Committee meeting set for November 3rd. Robert called the question on his original motion. There were 5 yays and 2 abstentions. **Motion carried.**

3. **I move the board policy titled “Collection Plate” be repealed, as its provisions have been incorporated into the policy titles “Financial Safeguards.** Eleanor seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The vote was 7 yays, 0 nays. **Motion carried.**

4. **I move the board policy titled “Expenditures” be renamed “Expenses” and the text be revised as follows:**

The expenses by any committee exceeding \$200 shall be presented in a proposal from the respective committee chair to the Executive Committee. Committee expenses of \$200 or less that are within committee budget shall require only committee approval. Patricia seconded the motion. Patricia asked if our committees actually have budgets. Eleanor, as church Treasurer, explained that while committees have not been listed by committee names in the church budget, their budgets are included under other topics. She is planning, for the next fiscal year budget, to meet with our Bookkeeper and actually discuss the budget for each committee. **Motion carried unanimously.**

5. **I move the board policy titled “Finance” be renamed “Investment Accounts” and the text be revised to read as follows: “Any withdrawals or transfers from investment accounts require board approval.”**Eleanor seconded the motion. After a brief discussion the vote on the motion was 7 yays, 0 nays. **Motion Carried.**

6. **I move the board policy titled “Loans to Members” be renamed “Personal Loans” and the text be revised to read as follows: “The church does not make personal loans.** Eleanor seconded the motion. **Motion carried unanimously.**

7. **I move the board policy titled “Reimbursement” be renamed “Expense Reimbursement” and the text be revised to read as follows:**

“Permission from a committee is required prior to making purchases; Board approval may also be required. When a congregation member purchases items for the church and requests reimbursement, the reimbursement form must be completed and submitted with the receipt to the church office. The expense will be refunded with a check within a month of the request. Tax exempt forms are available; taxes will not be reimbursed. Purchases and acquisitions given to the church should be reported to the Treasurer for determining the operating costs of the church. If the purchaser does not request reimbursement, it will

be considered a donation to the church. Eleanor seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **Motion carried unanimously.**

8. I move the board policy titled “Email Etiquette” be renamed “Personal Contact Information and Email Etiquette” and the text be revised to read as follows:

“Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) will be used for all email messages sent from All Souls accounts. Excessive use of mass emails should be minimized. Other than recurring church publications and the Sunday morning worship invitation, any special announcement should only be sent to the entire congregation once authorized by the executive committee.

Messages sent from All Souls accounts that do not represent the voice of the church as a whole will be signed with the name of the author. Personal contact information (ex. telephone number, email address, home address) shall not be provided to anyone

contacting the church without that person’s authorization.” Eleanor seconded the motion. A question was raised to clarify the term “All Souls accounts” in the sentence “Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) will be used for all email messages sent from All Souls accounts.” Discussion followed.

Pat requested that this be clarified by the ad hoc committee before we vote on it. Catherine requested this motion be tabled. Robert stated that the Democratic Rules of Order which are used by the Board does not allow this. It was then suggested that the vote simply be postponed. Robert called the question. **The motion was defeated unanimously.**

9. I move the text of the board policy titled “Requests for Assistance” be revised to read as follows:

Non-members requesting financial assistance shall be directed to contact their home church, the Urban Mission, and other local assistance organizations. The Office Manual contains suggested wording. The minister or the Executive Committee should be made aware of each request. Church members requesting assistance should bring their request to the minister or the Executive Committee. Eleanor seconded the motion.

Heather asked for discussion - there was none. **Motion carried unanimously.**

10. I move the board policy titled “Telephone Numbers” be repealed, as its provisions have been incorporated into the policy titled “Personal Contact Information and Email Etiquette. Eleanor seconded the motion. Heather asked for discussion. Catherine questioned doing this since the referenced policy (#8) was defeated. Robert called the question. **Motion carried unanimously.**

11. I move the text of the policy titled “Alcohol Consumption on Church Property” be revised to read as follows:

Outside groups using the church facility and intending to use alcohol must provide proof of insurance for that alcohol use. Catherine seconded the motion. Following a brief discussion the **motion carried unanimously.**

12. I move the board policy titled “Item Storage Policy” be renamed “Storage Policy” and

the text be revised to read as follows:

“Our church does not have room for storage of personal property. Groups that meet on a recurring basis may be provided limited storage areas for equipment and supplies. Group items shall be stored in those areas neatly. Items abandoned will be placed in a designated lost and found and disposed of periodically. The church refrigerator is for temporary storage of food prior to an event, not for leftovers or for long term stockage. Everything left in the refrigerator on Sunday mornings is the property of All Souls, to be used for coffee hour or disposed of. Eleanor seconded the motion. Heather asked for discussion. It was suggested that the last sentence end with “All Souls.” Robert and Eleanor both agreed to this change. **The motion with this change was carried unanimously.**

13. I move the board policy titled “Smoking Policy” be revised to read as follows:

The building and areas within 25’ of the building are smoke free. Catherine seconded the motion. **Motion carried unanimously.**

New Business

1.Heather - Rev. JJ Flag has volunteered to help us in any way he can while we are without a minister. He is also interested in doing more Sunday services with us, and would consider being half time at both churches. Currently he has a time conflict getting to both churches on Sunday mornings. He expressed feeling comfortable with UU theology. Heather is asking the board for feedback on this situation. We now have a new Transition Committee. How would we go forward? We should talk with our UU District Representative, Evin Zeimer. Rev. Flag is currently a member of the UU Church of the Larger Fellowship and the UUMA, and is pursuing being recognized as a UU minister. He is scheduled to preach at our church on Nov. 28. We are planning to move our service that day to begin at 11:30, and find out the reaction of our congregation to the time change.

Eleanor mentioned that the church in Utica has reached out to see if we would be interested in working with them in sharing a minister. We also need to consider Emmanuel Church and how they would feel about this. Harriet, a member of our Transition Team, would like to meet with Heather and Evin together. Rev Flag would prefer we keep this possibility private until/if it is settled and until he has talked with Emmanuel Church. Eleanor noted that Rev. David Weissbard has also offered to help us however he can while we are without a minister.

Rev. Flag would also like our church to combine with Emmanuel Church for the OWL training for our young people if possible.

Robert asked if the board is in agreement to move the service to 11:30 on 11/28 for Rev. Flag’s service. The consensus was to go ahead with this plan and let the congregation know of this change for the worship service on 11/28.

2. The topic of considering the use of hydroelectric power in the church was postponed due to

the length of this meeting. Eleanor said she could send out an email to the board with information to think about this proposal from Kelly, which will be postponed to a future date.

Process Observer - Harriet

Harriet stated that even though the policy discussions at times became a little bit heated, we treated each other considerately.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia J Sutherland, Secretary

* Heather's Report

President report/Executive Committee report/Policy Review Committee report

The policy review committee worked on communication, finance, and general building policies. All Souls saw it's first in person service in a long time and the hybrid service showed us just how far we have to go. We will get there together! The next policy review meeting is scheduled for November 3rd at 11:00. We will be looking back to the 2 pieces of the Finance Committee that we were unable to finish, which are Financial descriptions and Guest Speaker's pay. After that we will look at Building Use and Public Events. That will leave us with:

*Personnel: evaluation, hiring, and ministerial compensation.

*Security: computer use, key/code, office access/key, and policy regarding disruptive behavior.

*Special programs: leadership training funds, memorial garden, and religious education.

*Youth and children: adult supervision, child abuse training, child care, and safe congregation.

*Appendix: Code of ethics for those working with children

On October 21st I met with Evin on zoom along with Robert South, Frances Mercer, Sarah O'Connell, Harriet McMillan, and Eleanor Allen. In a previous meeting Evin had suggested that we appoint a Transition Team. The Executive Committee asked Frances, Sarah, Harriet, and Eleanor to be the Transition team. Evin assisted us in writing an email to ask for a consultant to work with the Transition Team and the congregation. The Transition Team has been tasked with interviewing any candidates and reporting their choice back to the board for final approval.

Reverend JJ Flag contacted me to see if we could have a conversation about partnering with Emmanuel Church in some outreach initiatives. We also met on October 21st via zoom. Robert South and Catherine Burns attended the meeting with me. Reverend Flag is looking for ways to get his congregation more involved in social justice and other community events and feels like partnering with All Souls would be a good way to do that. Reverend Flag has also stated that he is willing to make himself available for pastoral care and whatever else we might need while we are without a minister of our own. He also said that he was interested in leading more services but when he is coming from Emmanuel, our 10:30 start time makes it very tight.