

**First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee**  
**Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**January 25, 2022**

**Present:** Jane Cliff (President), Ben LeFort (Vice President), Tony Panciera (Secretary) Rev. Jennifer Nordstrom (Senior Minister), George Bledsoe, Dianna Dentino, Patricia Geenen, Rollie Hanson, Mike Hogan, Mark Miller, Jean Johnson (Director of Administration) and Noreen Gilbertsen (Leader of Finance Team)

The meeting was conducted via videoconferencing (Zoom) due to COVID-19 concerns and was called to order at 6:02 PM by Jane Cliff.

**Pat Geenen recording secretary**

**Second Quarter Financial Reports** (Jean and Noreen)

Pledge fulfillment remains strong at 59% as of December 31.

Total assets balance with total liabilities and fund balance at \$2,212,091.16.

**Monitoring Limitations 4.4.1 (Financial Planning and Budgeting) and .5 (Financial Condition)** (Jean and Noreen)

Compliance with 4.4.1 Financial Planning/Budgeting The “safety net” of 15% of operating expenses (0.15 x \$1,002,517) = \$150,377. Our cash position is \$157K, and in addition, \$1,370K in the General Fund can be transferred as needed to increase our cash position.

Compliance with 4.5.1 Financial Condition To avoid risk of financial jeopardy, the Unrestricted Fund Balance will be at least 30% of expense budget which is \$300,754. The balance in the General Fund is \$1,370K which satisfies the policy.

Tony moved to accept the report as evidence of sufficient compliance. Rollie seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimous in finding compliance with these two policy items.

**Boiler failure & revising interpretation of limitation to Policy 4.5** (Jean and Noreen)

The recent emergency purchase to replace a failed boiler (at a cost of \$20,100) required discussion of two policies:

4.5.1, requiring expense allocations that deviate greater than \$5,000 from budgets and Ends policies to be considered material deviation and brought to the Board for authorization. And

4.6.5, requiring at least two competitive bids for purchases greater than \$10,000 unless waived by the Board of Trustees.

Discussion and disposition: Language for the interpretation of both these policies needs to be changed to reflect greater flexibility of decision-making in emergency purchase situations while still safeguarding the integrity of budgetary checks and balances. Wording changes for 4.5.1 was tabled until the February meeting when Rev. Jennifer will offer revised interpretation wording. Policy 4.6.5 will be changed to

include “an emergency situation” as a cause for waiver of the two-bid requirement by the board. Mark moved to accept the wording change for 4.6.5, Jane seconded his motion, and board approval was unanimous.

In the emergency boiler purchase, Rollie moved for a retroactive waiver of the policy in the case of the boiler purchase. His motion was seconded by Ben LeFort and approved unanimously by the board.

#### **Recommendations for financial audits (Jean & Noreen)**

Following questions voiced in December by the Board of Trustees regarding policy 4.6 and whether regular audits should be scheduled, the Finance Team offered the following response:

“The Finance Team notes that financial reports are reviewed monthly by the Finance Team and produced by an independent CPA with whom we contract. In addition, all expenses are reviewed by the Treasurer as they are approved for payment. Therefore, we recommend an outside audit or review be conducted only occasionally if special circumstances warrant such as a change in the senior minister or a significant financial concern of the Board of Trustees.”

In addition, the Finance Team recommends the following review focus as most important:

- Every Finance Team member receives the procedures as part of their orientation.
- The Finance Team will audit the procedures when key staff changes occur (such as the Director of Administration or Treasurer) or every 5 years.
- If any concerning incident occurs, the Finance Team will engage an independent audit. Examples of concerning incidents are: 1-An expense payment is not supported by approved documentation, or 2- A pledge payment amount is not in agreement with a pledge statement sent to a pledger after discrepancies are investigated.
- The Finance Team will review the financial procedures in fall 2022.

Discussion of this response generated recommendations for more focus on internal controls and individual procedures, as well as more precise language (e.g., “audit” vs. “review”). This item was postponed to the February meeting with a request for more clarification of terms from the Finance Team.

**Minutes of December 14, 2021, BOT Meeting** were approved unanimously with minor corrections. Dianna: motion to approve, Pat: second

#### **Monitoring Report Policy 2: Governance Process (Jane)**

This item was tabled in December to give the trustees more time to review the principles and practices that determine the governing process for the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee Board of Trustees. Trustees complimented President Jane Cliff on the detail and thoroughness of her description of this process. Rollie moved to accept the monitoring report as providing sufficient evidence that we are in compliance with this policy. Mark seconded the motion, and the board approved the motion unanimously.

#### **Sr. Minister’s Report (Rev. Jennifer)**

##### COVID Changes

Restoration of in-person services at the church, postponed because of the surge of the Omicron variant of the COVID virus, has been pushed back until at least March 6th. Staff-led Teams are still allowed to

meet, though most are choosing to meet online during the surge, and member-led ministries will be trained on the new multi-platform technology and vaccination card collection process in February, so they can begin meeting in-person in March.

### Administration

Administrative efforts have been focused on the in-person Christmas Eve services and preparing for multi-platform worship services. Most churches, including ours, have seen a dramatic drop in attendance at RE events

### Membership

The Membership Team is recruiting & training ushers in preparation for in-person church. They are also designing an event for old & new members alike to become reacquainted with all the different ways to get involved at First Church. Seven people are enrolled in the current Journey to membership class.

### Stewardship

The team made the decision to delay Pledge Kickoff until March 6 in hopes that pledge results will benefit from in-person church. We are moving forward on messaging and awareness, with the theme "Remember, Rekindle, Renew."

### Pastoral Care

Rev. Dena successfully launched an online monthly drop-in grief support group in early January. Eight people signed up for the link and 4 attended.

Sadly, we did have a member Laura Williams who died on January 8, 2022 from cancer.

Rev. Dena will be out on Winter Leave from Feb. 5 – March 5, with the other two ministers and the Pastoral Care Associates covering pastoral duties during that time.

### Religious Education (RE)

The largest recent project in RE was creating our collaborative community Holiday Pageant on December 19, 2021. Rev. Kimberlee asked members to share their holiday traditions and memories and over 70 members of our congregation participated by contributing to the Holiday Pageant. Our United Way "Mitten Tree" raised \$850 to purchase holiday gifts for local families. Online RE activities were suspended in January to prepare curricula for dual platform activities that will enable "rebuilding," rather than "returning" to previous practices.

### Strategic Planning Team

The SPT has decided to focus its time and energy supporting the Strategic Fundraising Team (SFT). The SFT co-chairs, Alexis Fielek and Holly Patzer, are meeting with consultant Jim Klote to determine the fundraising campaign timeline.

### Worship

Church attendance continues at one-third to one-half of pre-pandemic numbers. Rev. Jennifer remarked that this matched a trend among other faith communities, and many churches have discontinued their

RE programs. She noted returning will be an effort in experimentation and we need to be prepared for failures along the way.

### **Other Business**

It was surfaced that we need to stay cognizant to something presented as urgent which may still warrant more time, reflection, or deliberation. The bounds of a meeting should not be our ruler.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:07, with the next meeting scheduled for February 22, 2022, at 6:00 pm CT.