

Final Draft
First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee
Minutes of the Meeting of Board of Trustees

Tuesday, December 19th, 2023

Present: Pat Geenen (President), Sarah Richards (Vice President, recording secretary), Joe Riepenhoff (Secretary), George Bledsoe, Stacy Koenen, Tony Panciera, Stacey Thieme, Dana Brooks

Also Present: Jennifer Nordstrom, Elizabeth Lentini, Dave Becker, Jean Johnson, Steve Sieck.

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM.

1. Opening Sequence

2. Review/Consent Agenda (Pat)

-Minutes from November Meeting – Approve

Moved to approve the consent agenda: Tony. Seconded by: George. **Passed:** Unanimously.

3. Endowment Fund Trust Agreement (Elizabeth and Dave)

Moved to approve the language of the working draft of the endowment trust document in principle: Tony. Seconded by Joe. **Passed** with seven votes in favor; zero against; and one abstention.

(Overview of discussion.)

- EFTF representatives/chairs acknowledged that the trust document is very complicated, and the BOT is now wrestling with the language that the EFTF has spent one year debating and developing. And we can expect that the congregation will need time to understand this, as well, and maybe some information sessions will be needed, with the task force offering to lead discussions.
- Sticking points of discussion: Fund could potentially be depleted rapidly if there is a serious financial crisis. This was not explicitly explained to the congregation during the campaign, instead there was a strong emphasis on principal protection. The document's solution is the limitation on 4-5% that can be distributed per year, over time protecting the principal.
- EFTF reps emphasized that there will always be a conversation between the endowment trustees and the BOT and the congregation, to be able to adjust depending on conditions. The EFTF and BOT must work to establish the culture that the endowment trustees will be acting in the best interests of the church through on-going checking in and conversations between these entities.
- The point was made that it is very important for the BOT to speak with one voice and acknowledge that we represent the congregation and must answer to our Sources of Authority and their broad diversity of understanding and/or background with endowment funds and the language of investments and trust documents.
- BOT extends deep gratitude to the members of the EFTF for their hard work and the amount of time and effort they have invested in this process.

4. Monitoring Limitation 4.6 – Asset Protection (Jennifer)

Moved, based on the evidence presented, to determine compliance with

4.6: Dana. Seconded by Tony. Passed: Unanimously.

(Overview of discussion.)

- All changes made to limitations since 2021 are in “track changes” in the document.
- It was stated that this seems like an incredible amount of work that is going into the monitoring of policies, especially for such a small organization. Ample evidence of compliance.
- Discussion about what aspects of this process the BOT might not need to hear about each year or what SM and DA might not need to spend time attesting to in such detail.
- The point was made that the BOT might find such a report useful for educating members of the BOT on how these processes work, and could we find a happy medium?
- The Safer Congregations plan will be the next big piece of what needs to be done.
- DA Jean Johnson noted that in January, we’ll see the first “financial process flow-chart.”

5. Senior Minister’s Report (Jennifer)

(Summarize)

- Documents on vacation and sick leave policy have now been uploaded to Dropbox as of the date of this meeting. Changes have been noted and approved by FUSM Personnel Team. Plan is to introduce this to staff in January.
- Highlights:
 - o We are filing an employee retention tax credit with the help of expert congregants.
 - o Pledge team is working diligently to plan annual stewardship campaign.
 - o History of the Leaders event: SM doesn’t know the inception, but it is traditional in many congregations and non-profits to invite leaders/most committed to be engaged with the campaign and to participate early in the pledge drive. Ripple-effect outward from there.
 - BOT recognizes the importance of inviting leaders who give time as their investment (time, talent, and treasure.)
 - A question came up about equity with such an event. A point was made about the return on the investment of the interpersonal interaction from a smaller event.
 - o Upcoming Journey to Membership class enrollment is 19
- Question about staffing transitions resulting from departure of Membership Development Coordinator (MDC). Still early in the process and SM is waiting to withhold judgment on the transition for a few more months. BOT is encouraged to use all three staff as points of contact/connection plus lay leader at Member Services table each Sunday.
 - o RE Program has a new vision, mission, and goal for 2023.
 - o Average weekly attendance at Worship Services is over 300 (in-person and online) and should be celebrated.

6. Scheduling Issues (Pat)

(Summarize)

- BOT agrees to meet via Zoom in January, February, March 2024.
- Board training (what and when?) Some discussion from training with Julica Hermann de la Fuente. What is the most pressing issue? What is actionable for us? Anti-Racism training for BOT specifically. How does this body (BOT) intersect with white supremacy culture? What might be more sustainable—language inclusivity. Aspirations for this community and our BOT are greater.
 - Rev. Jennifer – where are we going to make the biggest impact? In the Ends – these are the outcomes that we want the entire ministry of the church to run towards.
 - Re-do the Ends process
 - Training on White Supremacy culture – using the AR Team Rubric
 - BOT making decisions about risk
 - Struggle lies in continuing the “necessary task work” while trying to reframe and incorporate the generative work
- Board Retreat in June or August? TBD
- Congregational Meeting set for May 19th

Moved that Annual Congregational Meeting will be on May 19, 2024: Tony. Seconded by Dana. **Passed:** Unanimously

7. Task Group Follow Up (Pat) (Summarize.)

- Anti-Racism Team – March 9 with Nurturing Diversity Partners (will be a 101 about Milwaukee and this community); MLK National Day of Service – will be communicating about event at The Table
- Treasurer Position – Plan for continuous operations for Tom Briscoe and current role of Treasurer.
- Annual Survey – No updates currently. Plan to meet after the New Year.
- Feast for Funds Plan – Stacy K will be sending out the sign-up list in January for our event (which will take place in February).

8. Other Business

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at **8:03 PM**.

Next Meeting: January 23, 2024