

Unitarian Universalist Church at Washington Crossing
Board of Trustees
268 Washington Crossing-Pennington Road
Titusville, NJ 08560



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - [APPROVED](#)
Feb. 8, 2023
Zoom Meeting

President Maria Baratta called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:04 PM. Also in attendance: Vice President, Jamie Evanini; and Secretary Colleen McCourt; Scribe and Trustee Heather Edwards; Trustees: Wendy Stasolla, Jim Sanders, Gina Turner; Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang and Director of Congregational Life, Robin Pugh. Absent were Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Treasurer Joe Schenk and Trustee Michael Waas.

First Hour

Consent Consent agenda (no vote):

Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang and Director of Congregational Life, Robin Pugh provided an update on membership numbers vs. how many people we serve; 271 members but overall 351 participants (a participant is someone who is going to Sunday service and also participating in church life in other ways such as small groups or ministries). This represents a change in how people have historically accessed our services. Discussion included:

- Financial impact; the goal is to have people engage in pledging, but we have not systematically targeted this group
- Language; do we need to think about alternate language for membership to reflect changing perceptions and norms, and potentially appeal to more people (e.g. sustainer, supporter, stakeholder, shareholder)?
- Ties into staff/resourcing challenges as more work that had previously been done by committees is being shifted to staff. There is also a heavy pastoral need, and staff is working at full capacity. As of July 1, Rev. Kim will be the only full-time staff member at UUCWC.
- The Board discussed how we can better communicate these issues throughout the congregation, including the need for pledges and volunteers, in a way that makes people comfortable committing what they can without feeling overwhelmed. Ideas included crystallizing messaging around incentives/benefits of membership; ensuring that people understand that the goal is to have 100% of people engaged in pledging, but only according to their means (e.g. something is better than nothing); emphasizing that having a stake in church ownership and stewardship is meaningful; and delivering these messages throughout the upcoming stewardship season and beyond. **ACTION:** Susan asked for 2 Board members to participate in the March 15 stewardship session; Board President Maria Baratta and Trustee Wendy Stasolla will attend.

DRE Search and Intern Discussion

Maria reported that we have one applicant and they are available to start in July. We discussed the potential difficulty of recruiting for this position since we are asking for a lot and not able to pay very highly.

Regarding the potential intern opportunity, Maria updated the Board on the latest report from Rev. Kim: the candidate had asked for money toward travel and professional expenses (totalling about \$3,000). Due to existing budget constraints and potential onboarding demands, Rev. Kim plans to advise the candidate that we do not have the money. **ACTION:** The Board affirmed support of trying to find a solution if there is still mutual interest here.

Slate Update

- Maria reported that the Board and staff are working on recruiting people for open roles; some people have been approached already.
- Congregational Engagement is trying to get more people to fill out their survey to find out what people are passionate about. Per Susan, Congregational Engagement created a grid of the different committees, where the need is, and a synopsis from each committee about what they do, when they meet etc - this is available online under Governance - Opportunities to serve on the website
- <https://www.uucwc.org/governance/opportunities-to-serve-at-uucwc/>

2nd Hour

Endowment Update

Trustee Jim Sanders reported that there is a disconnect regarding the Endowment Committee; while they are part of Finance, they do not currently attend Finance meetings and have not reported/communicated to the Board in some time. It was also one of the Financial Sustainability Task Force's findings that the congregation is not very familiar with the work of the Endowment team or how it ties into overall church finances. Discussion points included:

- Endowment is a standing committee in the bylaws and needs to be actively operational or taken back into Finance somehow.
- There are multiple openings on endowment for this year - 3 year terms which are all elected - this is a concern because it is a committee of 5 so there will not be any continuing institutional memory; **ACTION:** Susan will reach out to Congregational Engagement to see how many openings are coming up.
- We used to do our own investment weekly via Ameritrade but now it's maintained by the UU Common Endowment Fund through the UUA. Endowment created the grant program in order to let people see it's a living part of the congregation; we need education for the congregation that we have an endowment, what it is, how it works, and promoting planned giving and estate planning.

- The last push we had was a matching gift, with a \$50,000 challenge if we got \$50,000 in cash or intentions; these things have not continued so the endowment is not growing.
- This is a good opportunity for endowment to get back on track since there is new energy behind Finance right now and also the Financial Sustainability Task Force findings show the need for education about endowment.
- There has been a lack of communication, but we need to give them a chance to respond and provide an update on their current status. We are obligated as a Board to reach out to them and see what they would need from us to start fulfilling their obligations as a committee - and support the need for education.

Housekeeping & Action Items

- Trustee Heather Edwards volunteered to write the next Cross Currents article
- Maria reminded the Board to put their input into revising the Board goals which she sent out via Google doc.
- Can strike off fellowship hour and congregational engagement/nominating evolution from parking lot items
- The meeting adjourned at 8:51 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Heather Edwards

Scribe, Board of Trustees

Colleen McCourt

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Appendix: Executive Team and Staff Reports

Executive Report - February 2023

Discussions were held in the later half of January regarding Food Ministry's funding structure, how it might be folded into FEFT (Faith Expression and Funding Team) in the future, and how that aligns with the One Church - One Budget model UUCWC has been aspiring to achieve for several years. Since the Food Ministry has its own version of fundraising for their projects, it is important for FM and other leadership members of Finance and the Board to have conversations with individual donors and other stakeholders about moving away from earmarked funds for one project area and consider requesting that the bigger donors to FM fold in their donation to FM as part of a larger pledge to UUCWC. FM's budget can then be addressed as a line item within the whole budget of the church. While there will not be a hard cut over to fully funding FM through FEFT in this upcoming cycle, it should be something we work toward in the next couple of budget cycles.

During an Exec Team meeting on February 2nd, Kim was encouraged to consider using her outreach event at The College of NJ on Feb 8th as an opportunity to promote the open Family Ministry position among the students and attendees at the event. Given that unemployment rates are so low across the state and that the open position we have at UUCWC is part-time and requires a unique skill set in order for a candidate to be successful, the reality is that the position might not be filled quickly.

There have been multiple discussions among Exec Team people and staff regarding potential members to recruit for key positions on the Board and within other committees that make up the slate at the annual meeting. Congregational Engagement is using a gift card prize promotional campaign to seek more input from friends and members as a way to get more people to respond to their survey of member/friend interest.

The kick off for Stewardship Sunday is February 26th. In response to findings from the Financial Sustainability Taskforce, the Board will offer an open meeting to the congregation for a State of the Church presentation following the service. Maria and Kim are in discussions about what this will look like and how it will be presented. There will be several focus group meetings offered to members to learn more about the Stewardship process and giving in general.

Jamie Evanini will work with Robin to develop an outline for the upcoming Winter/Spring Council meeting. One agenda item of import will be sharing some of the detailed findings from the Financial Sustainability Taskforce. It's likely there will be discussions regarding preparation for the 2023-2024 budget as well.

Capital Campaign folks have confirmed with Northfield Bank that our current construction loan terms are still good (no updated at this point). Assuming all approvals through the township come through soon, work should start in May and end about 6 months later. While the CC

accounts have just over \$700K in the bank, total expenses are projected to be about \$922K (\$966K less a \$40K UU Chalice Lighter grant). We'll need to make up the difference with the construction loan, that we should tap sometime over the summer. Some pledges are still coming in. There will be a phase 3 campaign with a 50% match. Any remaining balance will be converted to the 20-year long term loan as per terms of the loan.

**Shared Report from Kim Wildszewski, Robin Pugh and Susan Irgang
February 2023**

Celebrate Life (Worship, Pastoral Care)

Throughout January we continued to see healthy attendance on Sunday mornings with an average of 165 people. Our in person attendance is only slightly higher than our online participation. This past month's services included reflections on Martin Luther King Jr, a child dedication that celebrated 4 generations of UUCWC members, a pulpit swap (Kim was in East Brunswick, our preacher was from Montclair), and a lay-led service on Love.

The choir is energetic, joyous and showing its talent. Our Worship Associates are committed to their presence and content. The Hosts seem to have confidence and competence in their new role. Our multi-platform Faith Forward program continues to serve online and in person attendees (members and visitors alike). We are greeting visitors who are becoming attendees and participants.

Kim reports that there are about 30 congregants receiving active pastoral care right now. Active meaning, these people are making appointments to meet about the acute or ongoing need. Pastoral care of course also occurs in many informal spaces and times. Death, divorce, mental health, life stage transitions, interpersonal conflict and more are filling Kim's time. By early January there were no available appointments until late February which some felt frustrated and isolated by.

Create Community (Small Groups, Faith Engagement)

Without Robin stepping in to oversee (and see through every detail of) OWL, we would not have a faith engagement program for the children and youth this spring. Susan, Rachel and Kim have all chipped in in important ways, but it is Robin's leadership that has made this happen. Once the program is fully up and running we will shift Robin back to Congregational Life entirely.

Back in August, we planned to offer 4 different OWL programs (3 beginning in February) this year.. This is part of a strategy to bring families back to the congregation. We are seeing that it is fruitful.

Susan is working with Congregational Engagement to create Opportunities to Serve bulletin boards in the church lobby and online to improve our ways of helping people connect by volunteering at UUCWC.

Robin is working with Bud Johnson and Ron Iannacone to establish two 80's small groups which will be up and running this month. Currently there are 14 people joining, 7 in the online group and 7 in the in person group. We are thankful that Ron and Bud recognized the need for an 80's group.

Kim has finished two of four pathways classes for 16 potential new members. It should be noted that though most, if not all, of these participants are already engaged in UUCWC as an organization and its community, they may not be "joiners". The question arises: how do we invite and celebrate their commitment, even if they are not members?

Change the World (Justice & UUCWC structures)

Not unlike all other congregations right now, there is a glaring shortage of volunteers in all areas of the congregation. Worship Tech is in desperate need of another remote volunteer. Our PreK/K class is without teachers and assistants. When looking at the slate, we are all feeling the pressure to find replacements for our finance roles, building and grounds, and more. This is not to say that we don't have strong, committed volunteers. Only that we have more programs than people; more need than what many are able to do or take on right now. There is a stress on the system because of this imbalance that is complicated and tender.

Susan has been invaluable to the Stewardship Committee and process, essentially taking over the chairperson role as this large, but new, team learns and rethinks what it means to do a successful campaign. She will be looking for 2 Board members to help with a small group Stewardship Q&A meeting on Wed. 3/15 at 7:30pm; script to be provided.

Susan has been working with FAM and Represent.Us to bring State Sen. Shirley Turner to UUCWC on 3/11 at 2pm for a speaking engagement on Ending the County Line Ballot and Ranked Choice Voting Bills. This event however did not follow normal planning processes, creating confusion and logistical issues; future proposals for events should follow the [UUCWC Policy Starting a New Program or Project at UUCWC](#) requiring a written proposal to the Board with logistics, costs, etc. and a sponsor within UUCWC before approval.

Susan and Lynne Quinto in conjunction with Kim are preparing the rollout of Venmo as a payment option; find us at @UUCWC in the Venmo app. Kim will share about Venmo on Sunday 2/12, and we will have QR codes in and around the lobby and Sanctuary; the info is already on the website as well. Note that Venmo takes 1.9% and \$0.10/transaction in fees.

venmo



We currently have one applicant for the Director of Faith Engagement position. She will have a first round interview with Kim on February 13th. This applicant is a seasoned DRE and cannot start until July or August if hired.

Kim participated in the rally for reproductive rights at the State House in January. She is speaking on a panel with two other clergy / spiritual leaders at TCNJ this evening.