

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



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - [APPROVED](#)
March 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; Treasurer Joe Schenk and Secretary Colleen McCourt; Trustees: Wendy Stasolla, Michael Waas, Jim Sanders; Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang and Director of Congregational Life, Robin Pugh. Absent were Trustee Gina Turner and Scribe and Trustee Heather Edwards.

First Hour

Consent Consent agenda (no vote):

General discussion; key points included:

- Vice President Jamie Evanini lifted up the amount of pastoral care being provided and recognized the staff effort in providing such intensive congregational support.
- Treasurer Joe Schenk provided 2 callouts on Finance reports:
 - Incoming \$14,346 bequest in addition to \$55,000 gift received within the last couple of years. Rev. Kim supports it going to the Capital Campaign; there were no objections from the Board. Trustee Jim Sanders noted the importance of having clarity around our gift policy to avoid confusion with unrestricted gifts.
 - At the January meeting there was a question of whether we're now "habitually" in a deficit situation going into next year's budget. There are several factors that determine this; we need to look at income, budget, etc.. On the expense side we seem to be underspending in the short term (lack of snow removal and reduced need for building maintenance, staff benefit cost shift, no current DFM salary) but we need to see whether a pattern of underspending will continue. It will be more difficult to predict finances once capital construction begins. It also needs to be acknowledged that any short-term financial savings due to staff shortages involve a human cost due to increased burden on staff, which is unsustainable. We need to continue to communicate this tension to the congregation while still planning 2 to 3 years ahead as a best practice.
- There was overall discussion about the findings of the Financial Sustainability Task Force, and how their findings should be publicized to the congregation more widely during budget season (e.g. videos, meetings, CrossCurrents, thank you to the congregation for participating in the survey).
- State Senator Shirley Turner Jackson will be speaking at UUCWC to members and the public about rank choice voting, with Geri Khoblis hosting. **ACTION:** Trustee Wendy Stasolla will attend on behalf of the Board.

Board Budget Request for FY23-24

Per President Maria Baratta, we need to consider our budget request for next year, which is currently slated at \$300. After general discussion of needs (e.g. direct Board use, community-building events, etc.), there was a vote to affirm a budget of \$200. In budget discussions, we will communicate that we cut our budget after discernment.

Endowment Committee Update

Maria led discussion on the current Endowment Committee including:

- Getting an understanding of their meeting times as a group as well participation in larger Finance Committee meetings
- Current membership and openings
- Functions of the team include building new funds by generating new donations, and managing grants. Joe talked about the mechanics and investment environment; our portfolio is currently down - we should save some of the money when it's a good year, or change the formula. We would not endure giving funds that lower the amount provided by donors. Per Jim, using a rolling 5-year average flattens out the highs and lows; we are only taking a portion of the earnings.
- Types of endowment tools that can be created to demonstrate to the congregation that Endowment is a vital function, besides grants; Jim may be able to recommend additional messaging based on his fundraising experience. Rev. Kim could also do an annual memorial service and tie it into endowment conversations.
- Per Susan, some members of the team have reached out about the current term lengths in the bylaws for Endowment Committee members, which were recently revised from 3-year terms to 2-year terms not to exceed 2 terms. We need to make an exception based on current team members and openings to make sure we retain enough expertise and participation on the committee. We may need to revisit this bylaws change in the future.

Stewardship Update

Rev. Kim and Susan reported that we have received 24 pledges from 214 friend and member households, so just over 10%. Reminder communications are ongoing, and additional pledges are being picked up and counted. To date there has been low turnout for stewardship discussion sessions; this seems to be part of a larger cultural "energy deficit" and information overload, and is not limited to stewardship. There was an acknowledgement that people may feel stuck and discouraged that they can't give as much as they want to, which is consistent with trends of the present moment overall.

2nd Hour

Slate Openings

The Board discussed the need to fill several committee roles including Finance Chair, and Board roles including Trustees, Treasurer and potentially President. Finance roles are somewhat easier now that we have a controller. We're challenged with having a very small pool for finance roles. We need to seek people with some relevant literacy/experience while messaging that there are support resources available. We need to take a longer-term view, asking some individuals to step into leadership now and others to come on board for a learning period with the goal of leading in the future. **ACTION:** Various Board and staff members will reach out to identified congregants to gauge interest. We will also try to get access to survey results from Congregational Engagement.

DFM Search Update

Per Rev. Kim, we had 4 applicants, 3 of whom will be moved forward to be interviewed by a search committee consisting of Steph Golski, Michelle Downie and Mike Gianella. Rev. Kim will also revisit the notes from the last round when we hired a DFM. We are hoping to have someone in the role by May 1.

Board Goals

- Maria reminded everyone to review Board Goals and provide any feedback before we affirm them as current and official. **ACTION:** Board members should put any input into the Board goals draft which Maria sent out via Google doc.
- Per Joe, the Board as fiduciary should continue to strongly embrace our responsibility to ensure that we are planning to address the budget deficit effectively and establish this as a multi-year goal. **ACTION:** Jim will establish a standing agenda item for the Board to explore specific task force recommendations on a regular basis.
- We need to continue to communicate and leverage the information gathered by the Financial Sustainability Task Force. How can we make this information more accessible and actionable?
 - We should share the information with the incoming Finance team members.
 - We may consider revisiting the idea of an annual Financial theme.
 - These themes should be reflected in the Board goals.

Housekeeping & Action Items

- Joe volunteered to write the next Cross Currents article
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- We will have 2 meetings in April - the 12th would be a budget meeting and the other (date TBD) would be a regular board meeting.
- Maria will not be at the May board meeting; it will be run by Jamie.

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Heather Edwards

Scribe, Board of Trustees

Colleen McCourt

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Appendix: Executive Team, Staff and Treasurer Reports

Executive Team Report - March 2023

With the launch of the Stewardship Campaign at the end of February, a special congregational meeting was held following the Feb 26th service. At that meeting, a State of the Church report was offered to the congregation to share with them accomplishments as well as challenges facing us this year. Of special concern is the burden being placed on staff as a result of the open Director of Family of Ministry role, as well as the lower volunteer participation levels in some key areas including Stewardship. Rev. Kim has played an especially crucial role in putting together a Stewardship team and Susan has provided extensive administrative support to launch this year's campaign.

A big take away message from the State of the Church report was that increased staffing has helped in areas where volunteers were burning out and we are now asking our friends, members and participants to pledge generously to shore up our staffing to lift some of the burden from them. We will know how well that message was received when the results of the Stewardship campaign are in.

There have been follow up questions regarding the Financial Sustainability Taskforce recommendations. These results need to be shared widely with the congregation so that there is transparency in the data and interpreted findings.

Also on Sunday Feb 26th, Maria met with the Endowment Committee as a Board representative. That committee has experienced some uneven leadership in the current year, so Bonnie Gilbert and Janet Hubbard are taking on leadership to fill that void. Mike Hanson is also a member of that team. The three of them plan to continue their roles in the new church year and the committee needs 2 new people to join in order to have a required minimum number of members.

Maria asked if there might be some opportunity for some level of giving from Endowment this year. Bonnie explained the funding formula used to determine with the annual distribution budget is in any given year and that based on the formula there would be no Endowment disbursements this year. That formula has been in place for many years, so she is checking with Joe as Treasurer to see if that is still the most current method of calculating the distribution budget. Maria also asked if the committee would consider some method of distribution other than individual grants, but was told that grant making is the only method the committee will consider at this time. She also recommended that messaging and promoting Endowment to the congregation in ways beyond bequests might generate some sustained interest or attention.

Hopefully, with Bonnie and Janet assuming some leadership responsibilities they will be in a better position to be more active in representing Endowment on the Finance Committee.

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

Celebrate Life (Worship, Pastoral Care)

We continue to see attendance on Sunday mornings increase. The average starting from 7/1 (fiscal year start) is 154; however, the average since Ingathering in September is 170 and the average since just this January is 181, with roughly an 8% increase for in-person attendance since January, possibly related to the launch of the OWL classes. This past month's services included:

- A joys and sorrows service built around the Japanese “Restaurant of Mistaken Orders” and also the launch of OWL for our younger grades.
- The introduction of Article II, the proposed changes to our Principles and Purposes
- Stewardship launch through the story of Maggie Doyne’s empowering story and the necessity of money.
- A lay-led service (from wonderful content to gorgeous music!) reflecting on the last 20 years and dreaming about the 20 to come. (To note: it was interesting to realize that 20 years in the past only brings us into Charles’s ministry!)

Kim reports that there are about 30 congregants receiving active pastoral care right now.

Create Community (Small Groups, Faith Engagement)

This month we started 3 OWL classes for children in grades 1-3, 4-6 and high school. 8 teachers were recruited, 3 parent orientations were held and there have been many emails coordinating the programs. We wanted to offer OWL for all ages this year because our kids desperately needed it. We did not offer OWL during the pandemic. We also wanted to offer OWL classes as a hook to bring our families back to church. There are a total of 30 kids and youth taking OWL . We can feel their numbers on Sundays at UUCWC. We have 18 committed families.

Our 4 part Pathways (new member classes) concluded this week. We had 14 possible new members, 7 have signed and we believe more will in the coming weeks. However, it should be noted that those who did not sign are not disengaged or lack commitment. Some reflect the ongoing impact of religious trauma; others cite a refusal to formally align oneself with a religious organization of any kind; others are still discerning what it would mean to have multiple religious identities (Jewish, Buddhist, and Unitarian Universalist).

From their clear and continuous reflections, it will be necessary to move this and the last Pathways cohorts through an intentional and ongoing time of community, relationship building, and spiritual practice.

Two small groups for people in their 80’s were formed this month. This highlights our aging population and how the church is a unique place to share and process aging.

Faith Forward continues to be a place where visitors and members alike can find out more about our ministries. We usually have a mix of about 6-8 people not including presenters.

We are turning our attention to creating a Family Ministry Team for the new Director of Family Ministry and to help oversee any time that might exist between the OWL program and the new hire.

Lectio Divina continues to meet weekly and while it serves a small group, it continues to be meaningful.

Change the World (Justice & UUCWC structures)

Stewardship Drive launched well, with 214 member/friend packets picked up or mailed, and an additional 42 Participant households receiving information on pledging. As of Monday, we have had a return response from members/friends of about 9% . About 25 people attended the “State of the Church” informational meeting held on Stewardship Sunday; subsequent Q&A meetings have been sparsely attended.

On March 11 we will welcome State Sen. Shirley Turner to UUCWC in a multiplatform event sponsored by Faith Action Ministry and Represent.Us. There have been many challenges with this event, in part because low registration and possible cancellation spurred the addition of the multiplatform option; Represent.Us will provide funding for our tech team. Geri Koblis will host the event, which currently has 21 registrants for online participation, and 32 for in-person participation. It has taken many hours to deal with logistics that were not part of planning and with adjusting expectations. We hope to see a good turnout; Geri Koblis would also welcome a Board member to attend and take part in the welcome/introduction of the Senator.

Building related news includes:

- replacement of our AED (defibrillator)
- testing of our fire alarm systems/extinguishers in preparation for annual fire inspections
- Approval of the Site plans for the Capital project

Roberto Santiago is recovering from surgery to remove basal cell carcinoma from his face (required 14 stitches). We expect him back this week, and are grateful to Mike Muccioli and Adam Czerwonka for providing coffee hour in Roberto’s absence.

Kim is working with numerous CFA groups right now: Faith Action Ministry and how we can support the refugee Syrian Family that recently arrived; Earth Ministry on better understanding how our Financial Affirmation money is collected and used throughout the year; Food Ministry on growing their financial and food resources, presence in the congregation, and better understanding a financial partnership with Fatih Expression Funding Team; Social Justice on helping our legacy work be held in partnership rather than by one family. Kim is also working to highlight their work in the Sunday slides.

Auction preparation is underway: this requires administrative support in webpage updates and uploads, managing weekly communications, creation of lists for upload to the auction website, creation of a special email and list for special offers to newer members, and more. We will continue to support the auction team in all these ways through the next stages of auction planning.

Congregational Engagement notes that they were able to receive just about 100 responses to their survey but nearly all were from the same demographic (the same who responded to the financial survey). Robin and Kim will be working to find ways to engage the younger portion of the congregation around these efforts as they are integral to the volunteer and financial health of the congregation.

Treasurer's Report

As of February 28, 2023

- Year to Date, Net Cash Flow shows a surplus of \$31k (down from \$36k in December and compared to \$50k at the end of August) with highlights:
 - o Year to Date Income is \$8k below budget (compared to \$5k below budget at December's close)
 - o Pledge income recorded is \$20k below budget, year to date (compared to \$16k below budget at December's close)
 - o Year to Date expenses are \$47k below budget (compared with \$26k in December)
- The positive cash flow is very encouraging but is still expected to dwindle, to yield a deficit, by year end

Summary: UUCWC continues to benefit from under-spending which is more than compensating for the minor, \$8k, income variance.

- The largest contributor to the positive expense variance is the Staff line at a total of \$20k. Medical Insurance Expense savings for the Congregational Administrator and savings from the departure of the Director of Family Ministry account for nearly half of the savings with the remainder due to Professional Expense Savings and other small line items.
- Operations accounts for the majority of the remaining savings
 - o \$5k in Building Maintenance partly attributable to deferred expense in anticipation of the impending construction project
 - o \$5k in Grounds which will be partly consumed with springtime activities
 - o \$3k in Utilities

These lines will all be scrutinized as the budget for the 2023-2024 fiscal year is constructed

- **Bank Account Balances total \$1.5 million:**
 - o \$288k Operating combined balances
 - o \$208k Capital Campaign
 - o \$743k TD Ameritrade
 - o \$277k Endowment
 - o -\$5k Exchange (funds awaiting decision)

Year to Date Finances as of 2/28/2022

Income		Expense	
Sunday "Plate"	21,592	Staff	241,685
Pledge	282,094	Operations	51,424
Year End, Other Gifts	61,129	Program	18,737
Fund Raising	419	Denomination	12,644
All Other (SRECs, ARE Fees, Misc)	7,470	Debt Service	16,977
			341,467
	372,704		

Net Income (Loss)

31,237

Final Thoughts:

- **The Balance Sheet includes a \$5k “Exchange” line** – these are funds being held pending Board action on allocation of the remaining \$5k of the Richard Knight estate. During the past budget cycle, the Board elected to hold \$5k for use in memorializing Richard and needs to discern a proper use of the funds.
- **Incoming Bequest:** an additional \$14k is coming in from the Richard Knight estate. The Board will need to determine how to allocate these funds (as we did with the original \$55k bequest)
- **This report shows a \$31k surplus year to date.** With savings on expenses appearing to be sustainable to the end of the year, it is looking increasingly like we will finish the year with a balanced income to expense summary.
- **An additional \$500k has been invested in a favorable interest earning account** The new funds are from the Capital Campaign and will be redeemed when construction starts. Income generated will approximate \$1700 per month for the Capital Campaign. The funds are invested in US Government securities through a mutual fund with a variable return which is presently 4%.
- Financial Reports from the Controller are being added to the pre-reads folder