

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



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - [APPROVED](#)
April 12, 2023
Zoom Meeting

President Maria Baratta called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:03 PM. Also in attendance: Vice President, Jamie Evanini; Treasurer Joe Schenk and Secretary Colleen McCourt; Trustees: Wendy Stasolla, Michael Waas, Gina Turner, Jim Sanders; Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang and Director of Congregational Life, Robin Pugh. Absent was Trustee Heather Edwards.

First Hour

Consent Consent agenda (no vote):

Discussion included:

- Brief correction of prior month's minutes regarding a gift going to the Capital Campaign, not Endowment; **ACTION:** President Maria Baratta will send the CC team a note informing them.
- Brief discussion of stewardship campaign status and acknowledgement of ministerial resident announcement
- Treasure Joe Schenk reported that he and Controller Lynne Qunito wrote up a procedure regarding moving money to more protected accounts. Joe will report any movement to the Board monthly as part of his treasurer report and ad hoc as needed.
- Joe also reported on a proposed overall church investment strategy to provide more security and value given the current banking climate. This would involve moving investment away from TD Bank (which was originally started based on interest rates) and investing with a financial advisor at Merrill Lynch.
 - The account would be opened at no charge, and the advisor and Merrill Lynch support staff would provide periodic guidance and administrative help as needed, but UUCWC would remain in charge of all decisions.
 - Joe will serve as liaison, with himself, Lynne and Maria as signatories.
 - The accounts are secured, and the safest investment we can make right now.
 - **There was a vote** to close the TD Bank account and move to a Merrill Lynch investment account: the result was unanimous.
 - **ACTION:** Joe and Lynne will handle mechanics of next steps. Joe will share newly written procedure with Secretary Colleen McCourt and Congregational Administrator Susan Irgang for proper filing.

Budget Discussion for Next Fiscal Year

Steve Saddlemire

Steve presented the draft budget for the next fiscal year and reviewed it in detail, with key points as follows:

- The process was the same as in previous years, with Finance seeking input from the committees and ministries and receiving timely and responsive feedback. The resulting budget has been populated with all known factors to date, with some unknowns noted pending final numbers. Controller Lynne Quinto is closely aligned with Steve on financial reporting against budget items.
- Steve reviewed revenue including plate, estimated pledges, year-end gifts, one-time gift, and auction funds, as well as increased interest due to new investment strategy. Overall income is slightly above last year's projected income.
 - We still need to maintain efforts to bring in revenue based on the Financial Sustainability Task Force recommendations.
- Steve reviewed expenses including:
 - Personnel: Rev. Kim recommended shifting unused funds from professional expenses and putting them toward worship budget, as well as adding a line item for an intern stipend. Staffing costs will decrease overall due to reduced hours, even as Finance recommends compensation increases.
 - Operations: Steve reviewed overall inputs and factors such as utility cost fluctuations, reserve fund, snow plow fund, etc.
- The Board reiterated gratitude for Finance's extensive work in producing a budget that's in the black, while stressing the need for clear messaging to the congregation and how it should be presented. Specifically, that we are only avoiding a deficit budget due to a one-time gift, and that there is a net non-financial human cost to staff that must continue to be understood and considered. Further staff reductions and one-time gifts should not be expected or counted on year after year, so working toward a balanced budget and healthy stewardship is still critical. In the words of Trustee Michael Waas: "A balanced budget is an achievement but not an achievement of our overall goal" [of robust sustainable stewardship for the long term]. **ACTION:** Steve will make a revision to the budget format that more clearly shows the total gift in relation to our bottom line - and how it's the only thing covering our deficit.
- There was discussion of the desire to compensate the oncoming ministerial intern in some way, such as a special collection, as a gesture that aligns with our values even if it's not reflected in the official budget.
- The Board may reach out to specific households to inquire about pledges, but specific plans will be discussed at the next meeting,
- Maria thanked Steve and he left the meeting.

2nd Hour

Additional Updates as needed (Stewardship, Slate, DFM search, Capital Campaign)

- Maria has asked the Capital Campaign team to send a current version of the plans and schedule. We are looking to break ground in mid-May - probably starting with the building interior first. Maria has not been given a contract to sign yet. Susan was able to be at the walkthrough with the contractor and ask questions. There's one last person at the township that needs to review before the contractor can apply for permits, with 20 work days allotted after that for approvals before work can start.
 - We discussed the current need for a Board liaison to the Capital Campaign team, Trustee Wendy Stasolla is working loosely with them in that capacity and Maria is in close communication with the team. **ACTION:** Wendy will work with the team to help plan a groundbreaking event.
- There was general discussion around the job search process for the Director of Family Ministry position and openings for committee finance positions.

Housekeeping & Action Items

- There will be a second April board meeting on April 19 to discuss further business. Prospective Board members will be invited. Agenda items for that meeting were discussed.
- Budget meeting is coming up. Should incorporate messaging from the Financial Sustainability Task Force findings/recommendations as well as overall themes from churches across the country including the challenge that it has become more difficult to define and measure success.
- With Susan's reduced hours and the amount of work that goes into planning the Annual Meeting, some tasks may need to be redistributed to Board members.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Colleen McCourt

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Appendix: Executive Team, Staff and Treasurer Reports

Executive Team Report - April 2023

There was a Council meeting held on March 22nd. It was the first multi-platform Council meeting since the start of the pandemic. There were a variety of brief business updates and many 'thank you's for the continued leadership and support provided by all the committee and ministry leaders. Following the multi-platform business meeting, Rev. Kim led some spoken meditations and thought exercises along with musical accompaniment for those who attended in person. It was uplifting and engaging. In person attendees shared in fellowship and a variety of light desserts at the close of the evening.

Movement is happening quickly with the capital project. The Hopewell Township Planning Board has approved the site plan. A contract with the builder is in the works, after which the township will need to review and approve any permit applications. The Capital Campaign team expects to seek volunteers to help pack up areas impacted in the church building. Ground breaking is anticipated for mid-May. More details to come in the April Cross Currents issue.

Since the Board has traditionally not spent the full amount budgeted for them in the past few years, a reduced budget was submitted for FY24 (\$200 down from \$300 previously budgeted in FY23). While this will not have a significant impact on the overall church budget it does show a commitment to offering a realistic budget for our Board needs in the new year and encourages other committees and ministries to consider reductions in their budget requests.

Congregational Engagement shared a spreadsheet containing responses to the survey they put out this year. Going through it, there are some new names to consider for roles in Finance and other areas. Conversations with some of these potential candidates should be pursued in the coming few weeks.

This month's Board meeting on April 12th is primarily devoted to FY24 budget preparation. In order to cover other outstanding topics, there will be a second, shorter meeting on April 19th.

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

Celebrate Life (Worship, Pastoral Care)

Sunday attendance is holding steady. This past month's services included:

- Marking the 3 year anniversary of being shut down from covid through a meditation service, featuring one of our youth violinists, Stella Evanini
- A service dedicated to mental health and its place in congregational life
- New Member Sunday ritualizing the relationship of 14 new members; the celebration of Food Ministry; Howard Bennett was remembered in brief moments of love; Heather Edwards gave a powerful testimonial on vulnerability; Jane Root invited us into the Stewardship Campaign; we had a quartet to take on the road!
- Returning guest preacher, Rev. Benjamin Van Dyne (note: Benjamin will be leading 2 services this summer while I take some extended time in June & July. If there are any concerns about his delivery or themes, please let me know.)
- Reflections on Easter and Passover with Cecilia Borden singing

We will be recruiting for new Worship Associates and new WA co-chairs in the coming weeks.

Kim reports that there continues to be about 30 congregants - members, friends and visitors - receiving active pastoral care right now. There is a significant amount of physical pain (due to aging, cancer /disease) and mental and emotional health concerns (anxiety/ depression, personal and global financial concern, violence in our politics) within the congregation right now.

Create Community (Small Groups, Faith Engagement)

Twelve people signed the membership book in March, (an additional two people have stated their intentions but wish to sign while in person) upbrining the new member total for this church year to 19. Current membership is at 278 Church Members, 23 Friends, 26 Participants and 26 Attendees; these numbers may shift as we wrap up the pledge drive.

We offered OWL in 4 different children and youth age groups and 1 for parents this spring because our families need it and to encourage families back to UUCWC. We now have an accurate count of what families returned post pandemic. We have 21 families with 40 children and youth. 25 of those children are in elementary school.

OWL is ending at the end of April. Robin has been setting up an early summer program to run from May1-Sept 3. This will give the new religious educator time to onboard, meet the congregation and set up the 2023-24 faith engagement program.

Our new members have been invited to and are joining chalice circles and/or Owning Your Religious Past. This will begin to integrate them into UUCWC.

The Council meeting was a great success with the leadership of Jamie Evanini and Maria Baratta. It felt purposeful to offer worship and music as a way to honor our leaders during this busy time.

Change the World (Justice & UUCWC structures)

The Stewardship Pledge Drive ran for five weeks, from 2/26-3/31. At the close of the drive, we heard from about 75% of member households and are currently doing second follow-ups with the 26 households with previous pledge history, as those are most likely to consider a 23/24 pledge. In addition to new member pledges, we received at least 4 new “Friend” pledges. Looking only at households with pledging history,

- 15% reduced their pledge, many citing financial constraint
- 41% maintained the same pledge level
- 45% increased their pledge
- Overall 6% average increase for those with pledging history

We will continue follow up efforts and hope to increase the total pledge amount for fiscal 23/24. One challenge noted is the concurrent communications about the auction and the request for contributions by the same deadline as the pledge drive; the timing of both efforts creates communications overload for some people. Improvement on this for next year is challenging, as neither the pledge drive nor the auction can easily shift their timing and publicity.

Please note: We are requesting Board volunteers to make phone calls to about 30 members who have yet to pledge. Some will need a reminder; others will need to be asked what their relationship to the church is. We should leave this meeting with a plan and/or allocation of names to contact.

With the township approvals received, the Capital Campaign Project start date may be weeks away. Once the contract, in the last stages of negotiation, is signed, the construction company will apply for building permits, a process that takes about 20 work days. Once those are received, the work can begin on a mutually agreed upon schedule; a mid-May start is anticipated. Prior to that, packing and storage of the offices, kitchen and Crossings Room needs to be organized. There are questions about the need for, cost and assignment of charges for movers and external storage if needed; there will be other issues that arise that will generate questions of “whose budget does this come from”.

Please note: If we do not already have a Board Liaison, this should be considered at this April meeting. This liaison will need to be hands on and clear about the needs of the church, as well as the goals of the Capital Project Team.

Personnel updates include the addition of Lisa Schilansky to our staff team beginning in August ‘23. Lisa will serve as our two year, half-time, Ministerial Resident. Given the state of our finances, but the strength of our congregation, Lisa has agreed to join our leadership team without pay. We of course hope we will be able to offer some kind of stipend, if possible.

An offer has been made for the next Director of Family Ministry. We are currently in contract negotiations and internal Personnel Committee discernment that I hope will be resolved before the Board meeting. This process has highlighted some process questions to work out and reflect on once this is completed.

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:
 - Year to Date Income is \$8k below budget (compared to \$5k below budget at December's close)
 - Pledge income recorded is \$20k below budget, year to date (compared to \$16k below budget at December's close)
 - 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
 - \$5k in Building Maintenance partly attributable to deferred expense in anticipation of the impending construction project
 - \$5k in Grounds which will be partly consumed with springtime activities
 - \$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:**
 - \$288k Operating combined balances
 - \$208k Capital Campaign
 - \$743k TD Ameritrade
 - \$277k Endowment
 - -\$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
	372,704		341,467

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