

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



**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - [APPROVED](#)**  
**April 19, 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 and Treasurer Joe Schenk; Trustees: Wendy Stasolla, Michael Waas, Gina Turner, Heather Edwards, Jim Sanders; Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski and Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang. Absent were Secretary Colleen McCourt and Director of Congregational Life, Robin Pugh. Also present was Michelle Zechner.*

# First Hour

## **Check in on Current Vaccination Position**

Earlier this year, the Board reviewed congregational survey feedback regarding lifting mask and/or vaccine mandates. Based on the responses as well as factors such as local and UUA guidelines, community case levels, etc., the decision was made to shift to a mask optional policy, with a goal of revisiting the vaccine requirement in the spring. To that end, the Board took up this discussion again. Key points included:

- Congregational survey feedback
- The fact that the federal government has declared an end to the emergency status of the pandemic
- Relevant considerations from other local congregations regarding alignment with government agencies
- As a public and open community, we have not made it a practice to check vaccine cards and do not plan to do so
- It is not easy to define what “fully vaccinated” means uniformly now.
- We continue to offer multi-platform engagement and virtual participation is always an option.
- On May 18 UUCWC will be hosting another COVID vaccine clinic from the Mercer County Board of Health, so we can also offer an option for people to come for vaccinations at the church.
- **There was a vote** to approve dropping UUCWC’s vaccine requirement. The result was unanimous consent. **ACTION:** Rev. Kim will prepare an announcement to the congregation to be shared via email and during the service on May 7.

## **Article II Commission’s Discussion**

- Per Trustee Jim Sanders, information was shared in the meeting pre-reads about the proposed Article 2 revisions, which Board members are encouraged to review. Jim provided background on

the history and current status of the Commission's work to revise Article II of the UUA Bylaws, moving from principles to values. There will be an opportunity for delegates to the General Assembly in June to participate in the first review. From there, a 50% vote will be needed to move to a year of discovery before ultimately being voted on at the 2024 GA.

- The process is now open for congregations to solicit proposed amendments to the draft language (if any) by a specific deadline, which delegates will bring to the GA.
  - Congregational feedback is being gathered via multiple means with intentionality but there has not been much response; Rev. Kim will emphasize during the service that a lack of active feedback indicates passive acceptance.
  - On June 4 during the ritual service before the Annual Meeting, Rev. Kim will do a blessing of the delegates and recognize their role as acting on behalf of the congregation. This can also be an opportunity for the Board to publicly affirm support as well.

### **Update on Stewardship Campaign**

Discussion of campaign status; key points included:

- While we still have not heard from all households, we have reached our goal of \$430,000, in part due to a \$4000 gift and still-incoming pledges including a significant pledge that came in recently. However, this goal is not near the 10% increase that we would need to address the upcoming deficit budget.
- The Stewardship team's efforts have been persistent and effective which is how we've gotten such a strong result so far.
- We currently have 16 members of record who have not pledged for this year - potential for \$10-15,000 more based on current pledges.
- The Board discussed various ways of continuing to engage specific members in this effort, considering:
  - Should Board members reach out to congregants for pledge discussions?
  - The goal is still 100% participation and we don't want to take away people's opportunity to be part of that.
  - A pledge of record is needed to vote in the annual meeting.
  - Some people who have not yet pledged are just overwhelmed with other things - perhaps give it a month and then follow up in a different way. These conversations should be invitational rather than pushing people away.
  - **ACTION:** The Board may revisit this at the May meeting.

### **Budget Update**

Treasurer Joe Schenk provided updates to draft budget including adjustments/corrections to items such as:

- Staff benefit costs
- Equipment expenses
- Solar panel credits

- Erroneous inflation factor for building reserve fund leading to a \$6,000 line item discrepancy; this led to a larger discussion of how the building reserve fund is calculated and tracked; **ACTION:** Joe will consult with John Ungar and research tools that can improve the process, and he recommends that we do a full review over 6 to 12 months for a comprehensive view, rather than making a quick line item adjustment or simply increasing the total next year.

General discussion of the budget included:

- Overall the budget reflects a net positive variance of \$2,300 with the memorial gift. In the absence of that gift next year we anticipate a deficit.
- Per Rev. Kim, she is part of a ministers' group in a conversation right now reflecting on a shared experience of passing deficit budgets, and we have the smallest so far - most are around \$80-\$160,000 deficit. We are not alone and are doing relatively well. Other churches are having to look at budget cuts. There are shared trends in the sense that even among churches with growth or stability in membership, and a significant portion increasing their pledges, there are still significant deficits due to the loss of oldest members, who have been the largest donors and come out of a different economic system than currently employed members. Questions being discerned are:
  - How are UU congregations serving more people who are giving generously but still can't support the needs of the congregation?
  - How do we measure success?
  - Joe - wanting to encourage this Board to pay attention to where we are - still have a deficit without the gift, so would recommend us trying to be restrained from looking for major additions to our budget - be very deliberate about how we look at those in relation to our budget
- Joe encouraged this Board to pay attention to where we are currently in relation to the deficit and recommended that we use restraint and be very deliberate when considering major additions to our budget in the future.

Joe also reported the following:

- He met with the financial advisor at Merrill Lynch, and that account should be set up within 2 weeks.
- We have processed the last funds from the solar panel (s-recs) program - we made about \$29,000 from the program as a whole.

### **Capital Campaign Update**

- Per Maria the contract is with her to review and sign; she will send it tomorrow.
- The project should start by the end of May and Wendy will be talking to Jayme Trott about plans for a ground-breaking ceremony.
- The CC team was very thankful for the Board's decision to allocate unrestricted gift funds toward the campaign budget.
- They are still looking at doing a third round of fundraising.

# 2nd Hour

## Preparation for the Annual Budget Meeting and Annual Meeting

Various roles, responsibilities and needs were discussed including:

- Maria will not be here for the annual budget meeting - it will be run by Joe and Steve Saddlemire. John Ungar or Mike Hanson will do a presentation on the Financial Sustainability Survey results as well (15 minutes or so). Reflections from the various committees and ministries on how their budgets were spent this year will also be shared.
- Annual award nominations are being solicited from the congregation and will be reviewed by Joe, Jim and Heather.
- Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang is working on putting together the annual meeting packet and is documenting what needs to be done each year and when. Ideally some of this work will need to be shifted back to the Board going forward.
  - Susan is also working with Maria regarding the details about multi-platform arrangements, Zoom registration and check-in process for members, online polls, etc. The separate budget will be 2 weeks in advance of the annual meeting due to Memorial Day. **ACTION:** Rev.Kim will reach out to the tech team to let them know we'll need more help for both meetings.
  - Maria will review the powerpoint from last year.
  - Susan needs information on names for the slate to collect bios, as well as information on open roles. We are still working on a position for Finance.
- We will need Board members to check people in at the annual meeting - both onsite and on Zoom.

## Housekeeping & Action Items

- The CrossCurrents article for this month will be a joyful look back and an invitation to the annual meeting; Susan will check with Chris Piatek about the due date.
- Per Rev. Kim, the discretionary fund is not something we budget for but something that has come from payments for non-member weddings. Going forward we are going to have a weekly plate going to the discretionary fund (approved by the Finance Committee).
- Mostly non-members and occasionally members who need funds for an emergency situation

Respectfully Submitted,

**Colleen McCourt**

Secretary, Board of Trustees

**Heather Edwards**

Scribe and Trustee