

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



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - [APPROVED](#)
May 10, 2023
Zoom Meeting

Vice President Jamie Evanini 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, Heather Edwards, Jim Sanders; Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang and Director of Congregational Life, Robin Pugh. Also present were Denny Rodgers and Karen Kent. Absent was President Maria Baratta.

First Hour

Consent agenda (no vote):

General discussion including:

- There will be a need for a new Board liaison to the Capital Campaign Committee when the new Board term starts and Trustee Wendy Stasolla becomes President, especially as construction is getting underway. Wendy will continue in the role through the groundbreaking. **ACTION:** We will revisit this with the new Board next term but should think about proactive, flexible and creative solutions and prepare a short description of the role.
- Based on input from Congregational Administrator Susan Irgang regarding her attendance at a workshop on financial strategies for congregations, there was discussion on how to continue messaging to the congregation about deficit, need, vision, etc. and what would be most motivating - e.g. how to lean into our mission of changing the world. **ACTION:** This should be an agenda item for the fall Board retreat.

Treasurer Report

Key points included:

- Clarification of minor questions about auction revenue and notations of actual vs. budgeted amounts
- Discussion of budget line items that are still showing no expenditures as of April. Some of that is due to expenditures falling late in the fiscal year (e.g. adult RE programming content, etc.). However, some of this should be looked at further to ensure that we're not building too many "buffers" into the budget and only budgeting for what we think will be necessary. This may be partly why we have historically shown surpluses. Finance Chair Steve Saddlemire recently reached out to the committees and ministries to ask about their spending plans throughout the

rest of the fiscal year and plan for the future. **ACTION:** We should have a mid-year check-in on budget expenditures as a regular practice, and a multi-year audit on projected vs. actual needs. This would represent a more proactive approach than in the past.

- Per Treasurer Joe Schenk:
 - The budget surplus continues to shrink, though modestly. We were expecting a \$30,000 or so deficit but likely the budget will remain flat or show a small surplus, largely due to personnel shifts in hours and benefit costs.
 - We should not expect the same net outcome next year. While we are passing a balanced budget, without the offset of a large donor gift next year, we will likely see a deficit, especially because we will essentially have a doubling of our mortgage. Joe encourages the Board and Finance to be cautious about taking on any substantial new costs over the next few years. Absent the factors that saved us money this year, our position would not be as positive; we still need to look at increasing our pledging for future years.
 - We have officially moved investments from Northfield Bank to Merrill Lynch and are earning 4.86%. Northfield Bank contacted Joe to clarify that they are still our primary bank per our contract.
 - Joe talked about preparations for the upcoming budget meeting and annual meeting and the materials and information that will be shared from Finance and the Financial Sustainability Task Force.
 - Joe reported that Controller Lynne Quinto has the ability to report and present data in sophisticated ways which can be leveraged for future congregational meetings, as well as the fact that Lynne's allotted hours are sufficient and her performance is excellent.
 - Joe said that when he moves off the Board, Wendy Stasolla, Denny Rodgers and Lynne will have the ability to sign checks.

Annual Meeting and Budget Meeting Prep

As part of an effort to shift some annual meeting responsibilities back to the Board and away from Susan's portfolio for a more balanced and collaborative process, Susan has compiled materials documenting tasks, timelines, responsibilities, etc. General discussion included:

- Finalizing the pre-reads and agenda order, confirming speakers, etc.
- Reviewing the slate for confirmation
- **ACTIONS:**
 - Wendy and Vice President Jamie Evanini volunteered to assist with remaining tasks; Susan will set up time for them to meet.
 - Secretary Colleen McCourt will share the annual meeting resource folder with the full Board and staff.
 - Trustee Heather Edwards will help check people in online, and Trustees Jim Sanders and Michael Waas will do so in person.
 - Jamie will facilitate providing bagels for attendees.
 - Regarding a slate opening for Endowment, we will inform the congregation via the weekly email that there is an opening for those interested. Maria and Rev. Kim will

provide appropriate messaging at the meeting regarding the slate, state of leadership, etc.

2nd Hour

Review/Vote on Awards Submissions

Jim, Heather and Joe plan to review the award nominations and present recommendations to the Board for a vote via email this week, so that Susan has enough time to prepare certificates, slides, etc. Colleen will assist with editing verbiage if needed.

Slate Updates

Covered earlier under annual meeting prep discussion

Additional Updates as needed (Stewardship, Capital Campaign)

- Susan and Rev. Kim have identified a list of members we have not heard from to see if there are pastoral or other reasons that we should not actively pursue pledges from at this time. There are 7 remaining people who are regular pledgers who we have not heard from this year, though the Stewardship team has already reached out to them twice. **ACTION:** As part of the Board's formal and informal fiduciary responsibility and commitment to responsible stewardship efforts, various current and incoming Board and staff members (Susan, Jamie, Jim, Joe, Heather and Denny) volunteered to make gentle follow-up/check-in calls with relevant members.
- Next Tuesday Farzad and the representative from the contractor (project manager) will be doing a second walkthrough of the church with updated plans, and potentially start talking about start dates, timelines, etc. The rough estimate is that construction will start in mid-June. Susan is already preparing for the move and will reach out for helpers in anticipation of packing beginning in the first week of June. The Capital Campaign team is strategizing around a third round of fundraising. It will not necessarily be tied to groundbreaking. They are aiming to ensure it doesn't overlap with any other financial asks to the congregation.

There were no other reports from various committee liaisons.

Housekeeping & Action Items

- Wendy is writing the next CrossCurrents article for May/June.
- During checkout, the Board expressed gratitude for all those who are supporting the church and all the good work that is happening, as well as the positive position we are in as we approach the annual meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Colleen McCourt

Secretary, Board of Trustees

Heather Edwards

Scribe and Trustee

Executive Report - May 2023

- The Board of Trustees held 2 meetings in April. One of April 12th was dedicated to working out a draft budget for the new fiscal year beginning on July 1st. The second meeting on April 19th, was to cover non-budget related business.

APRIL 12th

- The FY24 budget developed by the Finance Committee and Treasurer will be presented to the congregation at a meeting on May 21st. The Stewardship campaign was successful and slightly exceeded the goal set by the Stewardship Team. While the new budget incorporates some of the expense of the increased monthly mortgage payments due to the capital project, we will begin to realize the full impact of those increased payments in FY25.
- The one area of concern raised with the new budget is that while we will realize reduced personnel expenses due to Susan and Robin cutting back their hours, it will leave Kim as our only full time staff person. At the annual budget meeting, the Board wants to make sure the congregation understands that this is not a long term tenable situation.
- The Board approved a recommendation from Treasurer, Joe Schenk, to work with a financial adviser and move our savings funds to a managed account with Merrill. They will provide professional advice and support, but will not take any action regarding our funds without approval from us in advance.

APRIL 19TH

- At the Board's April 19th meeting, Jim Sanders shared the history and significance of UUA's Article II Commission work and that congregational delegates have taken many steps to solicit input from church members as to their views regarding this work so that they may best represent our congregation when it comes to making recommendations for incorporating or modifying language regarding Article II of our UUA bylaws at the June 2023 General Assembly.
- Given that COVID-19 public health emergency restrictions are being lifted around the country and state, the Board held a discussion and came to consensus that dropping vaccination requirements for onsite church activities was a responsible action to take. We continue to strongly encourage all attendees to be vaccinated and also we will continue to make masks available for those who feel a need to be masked while onsite.
- Annual Meeting
 - Preparation for the annual meeting is in full swing. Susan is providing an outline of what goes into planning the annual meeting based on all the legacy information she has. Going forward, Board members will be taking on more responsibility for preparation of the agenda, pre-reads and other content involved with the annual meeting.
 - Bios for new prospective Board members have been solicited in preparation for presenting a slate at the annual meeting.
 - Annual Awards - solicitations for annual awards have been requested from Congregational members.

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

Celebrate Life (Worship, Pastoral Care)

This past month's services included:

- A Joys & Sorrows service on allowing growth and unfolding in our own self understanding; this included a goodbye ritual to Sallie & Eliot Dunner
- An Earth Day service, purchased by the Earth & Climate Ministry team at last year's Auction
- Guest preacher Alia Shinbrough
- Shared service with emilie boggis, and the dedication of Otis Wildszewski

New Member Karen Damato, and Andrew Condouris will be joining the Worship Associate Ministry this June.

Howard Bennett will be memorialized in a private committal ceremony on May 29th. Kim will make space during the June 4th service to honor him and David Hughes. For both men, their families did not wish to hold a larger, congregation-wide service.

Create Community (Small Groups, Faith Engagement)

Current membership is at 276 Church Members, 26 Friends, 23 Participants and 26 Attendees; these numbers may shift as we reach out to those who have not responded to the pledge drive.

Preparations are underway for both the 5/21 Budget Review meeting and the Annual Meeting. Notices for the former will go out next week, and the official invitation to the Annual Meeting will be sent on May 25th. Templates and timelines, as well as the pieces for the growing packet (invitation, slate, leader acknowledgements, financial reports), have been created and uploaded to a new shared folder with the Board. We hope for a Board subcommittee to partner with the Administrator in Annual Meeting preparations in light of reduced hours next year; this year is a good time to test this collaboration.

Susan attended a virtual workshop on Communications Strategies for Congregations with Budget Deficits offered by Peter Bowden, a well known UU consultant. She shares his suggestions:

- People aren't inspired to give when the focus is on the deficit (i.e. what we don't have), but will be more motivated by "vision-casting": noting who we are and what we are called to do in the world as a congregation.
- Frame deficit periods as an opportunity to relaunch our vision, with the help of congregants' pledges and donations, to take our church to new levels.
- In all communications, lightly acknowledge but leap over the budget gap, keeping the focus on what we want to do, not what we can't do if we don't have the money; this, he asserts, will inspire increased giving.

Robin set up an early summer program to run from May1-Sept 3. We have a dire need for teachers, especially those who do not have children under 12. Parents have been tapped dry for teaching this year. Kim and Robin have tried different methods to communicate that this is more than the typical plea for Faith Engagement teachers.

New members continue to be oriented and assigned to chalice circles. Robin is working with congregational engagement to set up a system of member (including new members) to leader for congregants.

We are looking to create and nurture intentional bonds within new member classes. There will be a table at the June 11th picnic for our newest class to sit with one another.

Change the World (Justice & UUCWC structures)

Stewardship Update

The Stewardship Drive has exceeded the pledge goal of \$430K by approximately \$2700 to date. There are 7 remaining households that need a follow up call, having already received 2 reach outs from the Stewardship team. Board members willing to make one or more calls should contact Susan for names and contact info.

The Capital Campaign project looks to be ready to start mid June due to additional reviews and permitting required. The contract has been signed and another “walk through” is scheduled for May 16th; we will know more after that meeting of our people, the architect and the contractor’s project manager. We anticipate packing up will begin in early June. We will likely need to pay for movers but may be able to avoid external storage costs while maintaining four classrooms for faith engagement classes and meetings. **Question:** who will take on the Capital Project liaison role when Wendy Stasolla moves to the Board president position?

Julie Rigano has officially been hired as our new Director of Family Ministry. Julie, who uses she and they pronouns will begin on May 15th. Kim is reflecting with the Personnel Committee on our hiring process and practices.

Treasurer's Report

As of April 30, 2023

- The Merrill Lynch account has been established and funds moved from the TD Ameritrade account which will be closed this month after residual dividends and interest are collected and moved
- Year to Date, Net Cash Flow shows a surplus of \$21k which continues to decrease month over month (down from \$36k in December and compared to \$50k at the end of August) with highlights:
 - o Year to Date Income is on target at 82% of budget
 - o Pledge income recorded is \$9k below budget, year to date (compared to \$16k below budget at December's close)
 - o Year to Date expenses are \$62k below budget (compared with \$26k in December)
- The positive cash flow is very encouraging but will likely dwindle somewhat by year end
- It is increasingly possible to end the year at or close to budget (vs. the projected \$38k deficit)

Summary: UUCWC continues to benefit from under-spending which is more than compensating for a minor income variance.

- The largest contributor to the positive expense variance is the Staff line at a total of \$30k. Medical Insurance Expense savings for the Congregational Administrator and savings from the departure of the Director of Family Ministry account for the majority of the savings.
- Operations accounts for the majority of the remaining savings - \$24k below budget
 - o Some of these savings will be consumed with spring grounds work (tree removal)
- **Bank Account Balances total \$1.5 million:**
 - o \$538k Operating combined balances
 - o \$730k Capital Campaign
 - o \$290k Endowment

Year to Date Finances as of 4/30/2023

Income		Expense	
Sunday "Plate"	28,465	Staff	297,777
Pledge	343,085	Operations	63,922
Year End, Other Gifts	61,229	Program	25,259
Fund Raising	4,779	Denomination	18,966
All Other (SRECs, ARE Fees, Misc)	10,922	Debt Service	21,221
	448,480		427,145

Net Income (Loss)

21,335

Final Thoughts:

- Funds from the Richard Knight estate have been transferred to the Capital Campaign accounts per Board vote in April – a total of \$19,346.
- Invested funds (US Treasury Money Markey Funds) are now yielding 4.75% - a combined (Capital & Operating accounts.) Over \$3,000 per month.