

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



**Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes - [APPROVED](#)**  
**Feb. 13, 2024**  
***Zoom Meeting***

*President Wendy Stasolla called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 7:04 PM. Also in attendance: Vice President, Jamie Evanini, Treasurer Denny Rodgers and Secretary Colleen McCourt; Trustees: Karen Kent, Maria Baratta, Michelle Zechner; Senior Minister Rev. Kim Wildszewski, Congregational Administrator, Susan Irgang, Director of Congregational Life, Robin Pugh; Absent were Trustees Gina Turner and Michael Waas, and Ministerial Intern Lisa Schilansky.*

# First Hour

**Consent agenda (no vote):**

- Update on Finance Chair opening: Sandee Steinberg has agreed to shadow Jim Sanders for the next 6 months and then take over the role at the end of his term.
- Endowment will have money for the first time in years to disperse as grants.

**Construction Update, Change of Lawyer & Board Minute**

*Construction Update and Change of Lawyer*

- President Wendy Stasolla reported that Farzad Shadzik was able to negotiate substantial cost reductions, and the latest phase of the Capital Campaign raised a lot more than expected (almost \$300,000). As a result, the gap between expected costs vs. pledges is now down to \$38,000.
- The bank loan/line of credit will cover gaps through construction, with a built-in \$100,000 buffer for overruns. Treasurer Denny Rodgers indicated that he believes the new loan has been signed and finalized but we should confirm with George Faulkner.
- The second phase of the proposal is done and negotiated with Mizu and the contract has been signed. Mizu has been great to work with. Specific to the Capital Campaign only (with the recommendation of the CC team and approved per an email vote by the Board), we have shifted legal representation to Stark and Stark due to their experience in this area, particularly given some of the financial complexity with the original contractor.
- Farzad did an amazing job handling the proposal negotiations for phase 1 and 2 as well as liaising with the lawyers, which is a lot of work for one individual; **ACTION:** Wendy will check in with him to see if he needs any support.

- There is a lot of great news and momentum with construction, though members of the Capital Campaign team are fatigued as a result of the long and shifting process; they deserve our support and gratitude and we should continue to check in with them.

#### *Board Minute*

Rev. Kim discussed the need for volunteers to participate in upcoming “Board Minute” slots at Sunday services; March could be a good opportunity to share construction updates with the congregation.

**ACTION:** Trustee Maria Baratta will do March 3rd.

#### **Review and Moving Forward of Retreat Document**

Rev. Kim put together a summary of notes and action items based on our retreat discussions; **ACTION:** she asked the Board to re-review the document and sign up for various tasks. There was discussion around the messaging and timing and having cottage meetings and construction stakeholder meetings. As discussed at the retreat, we identified that such meetings are essential for rewriting the narrative about our financial health, and also helping members feel like the Board is accessible. Details captured include:

- We should aim to begin meetings in mid-March so that we have time to gather and ideally share information at the Annual Meeting.
- Stakeholder meetings: over the next 5-6 months, we will invite a small group of impacted stakeholders to explore: what do we dream the use of the building will be once construction is done?
- Cottage meetings: Running parallel to these will be in-person and virtual cottage meetings, which can go into the summer; the concept is to welcome people’s ideas, hopes and dreams about their future with UUCWC.
- Looking for 2 people to lead each meeting; we should consider asking a non-Board member to lead with us, as a way of recruiting people to Board work.
- Rev. Kim and Congregational Administrator Susan Irgang are available to answer any questions about logistics and messaging for the meetings.

#### **Sanctuary Use Policy**

Susan reported that since the sanctuary is getting used more for various reasons (coffee hour, concert fundraisers, etc.), we are running into some challenges with scheduling, logistics, equipment use, etc. This necessitates an addition to the Facility Use Policy specifically as it relates to sanctuary use; proposed changes include formalizing use of the space regarding hours and availability, and establishing it as a sanctuary first and venue second. **There was a vote to approve** the policy update with the following changes:

- Adding a values statement
- Clarifying when the sanctuary is available/not available
- A cost-of-use statement that is fairly general and invites further conversation, but allows us to say no to any fundraising ideas that could be too costly

The vote passed unanimously.

Further discussion included acknowledging that as fundraisers become more complex than in the past, we need to create a fundraising policy in the future that considers logistics and ROI.

## 2nd Hour

### Personnel Updates

Rev. Kim provided an update on the current configuration of the Personnel Committee; they are mostly new and learning on their feet but there is health and positive energy. Discussion included:

- History and current make-up of the committee
- They are working together on a covenant and documenting boundaries for responsibility.
- Personnel is by far the largest part of the budget; expected to go up 10-15% next year.
- Proposing to decrease full-time cleaning from sexton portfolio and hire a cleaning company for a deep clean once a week
- Personnel is in discussions about:
  - Staff transitions that will be coming up in the future
  - Whether we want to continue being a teaching congregation with an intern, and the finances necessary for that
  - Finances for hiring an assistant minister in a few years

### Stewardship Update

Susan provided an update that she has met with the Stewardship Committee and they are in good shape with plans for this year's launch on Stewardship Sunday; plans are in place for stuffing party, testimonials, packet distribution and table with committee representatives, etc. The campaign will continue through 3/31. At a high level, the Board discussed the potential merits of various messaging approaches including sharing specific goals, soft targets, percentage increases etc. vs. telling the congregation we need a specific amount; there was discussion around possibly having an annual goal amount in the future.

### Congregational Pulse

Rev. Kim invited the Board to consider how the congregation may be feeling during construction, and advised us to keep this question on the agenda for our meetings during the next 6-8 months. We should pay attention to things that may require attention and any themes we may be noticing. She shared some of the things that the staff has observed including logistical as well as less tangible considerations.

### Housekeeping & Action Items

- **CrossCurrents** - Wendy will follow up with trustee Michael Waas to confirm whether he can still write next article; can tie in heads up on cottage meetings to come
- **Board Goals** - Wendy and Rev. Kim will make a plan to finalize.
- **Gift Policy Revision** - Maria and Wendy are finalizing and need to consult with relevant committees; we may pursue a vote by email based on timing.

- Reminder that there will be 2 board meetings in April and a Council Meeting in March.
- Wendy will reach out to George and Farzad to see if anything else needs to be signed.
- Jamie will send a thank you note to Stewardship on behalf of the Board, and Rev. Kim will get a gift for Farzad.

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

***Colleen McCourt***

Secretary, Board of Trustees

***Jamie Evanini***

Vice President and Scribe, Board of Trustees

## **Appendix: Staff and Treasurer Reports**

### **February 2024 Board Report**

#### **Ministerial Intern's Report**

**Lisa Schilansky**

#### **Celebrate Life (Worship & Rights of Passage)**

I am grateful for multiple opportunities to lead worship and provide liturgical support since my last board report in December. The holiday season brought forward multiple opportunities to be before the congregation. Most poignantly was the “Dark of the Moon” service. This provided an opportunity to co-lead with Rev. Kim and to hold the complexities of grief, loss, and pain during a season where we are told to be happy. This was also the first time I got to participate as a song leader at UUCWC.

Both Christmas Eve services provided an opportunity to connect more deeply with the congregation around the meaningful rituals of the pageant and the candlelit service. For both services I also got to fill the role of worship associate, therefore writing and offering the financial affirmation to pastorally provide an enticement for financial generosity.

On January 28th I led the service “Ballou and Murray’s Vision.” This was the first UU history/UU theology sermon I have offered at UUCWC and was an opportunity for congregants to be reminded of our lineage and our present values. I heard, especially, about the informative nature for some non-UU visitors and also for some of our children and youth who stayed in the sanctuary during the service. This feedback was helpful to know that this complex topic was delivered in a way that was accessible to people of all ages and to those new to Unitarian Universalism.

On February 4th, I had the honor of guest preaching at UU Wellsprings in Chester Springs, PA (Chester County). While I was sad to be away from UUCWC last Sunday, it was an important opportunity to do the work of Unitarian Universalism beyond our walls. The liturgy of this congregation is quite different from that of UUCWC and provided important learning moments that I will bring back into my internship.

Finally, I responded to a call from a colleague who serves our congregation in Moscow, Idaho. She was seeking out dual-faith UU clergy and candidates who could speak to the ways that our religions spoke to each other. This colleague and I met for an hour and an edited version of our recorded conversation will be part of their service in June on pluralism.

In addition to elements related to church services, I had the honor of leading a graveside memorial service for the family member of a UUCWC staff member. This was the first time in my career I have had the opportunity to lead a memorial, and it was a chance to offer a UU-framed, interfaith service, holding space for all gathered.

### **Create Community (Small Groups & Pastoral Care)**

In the past two months, I have continued to offer my monthly meditative drop-in initiative, *Breathe*. While attendance has been relatively low, I am hearing very positive feedback from those who have attended and hearing great interest from lots of others. While this initiative was initially created to support those doing activism and direct service, very quickly it was decided to broaden this. The challenge, however, is that while CFA-affiliation has not been part of the messaging since its first iteration this fall, the perception seems to have carried over. We will be experimenting with different time offerings this spring to help meet the needs of the congregation.

I have also continued to engage in pastoral care, both with congregants I have met before and with those whom I have not. This has been a wonderful opportunity and has reconnected some congregants with UUCWC after COVID led to some detachment.

Each month I have the opportunity to lead Lectio Divina in Rev. Kim's place and this month I was fortunate enough to have that opportunity twice. This is a close knit group who has welcomed me very generously and engages strongly in the weeks that I lead. As Rev. Kim has noted in her reports, this time often leads to impromptu pastoral care and the deep spiritual practice leads to a strong connection, while also generously welcoming those who do not attend every week.

This month excitedly brought the start of the UUA Common Read book club. We are focusing on *On Repentance and Repair*, a book that explores the complexity of individual and macro transgressions and the ways that it is important to stay in right relationship as we correct our misdeeds. There were six participants representing a wide range of ages and length of tenure at UUCWC. We crafted a covenant together followed by a rich discussion on the book and deep personal sharing. It is a very engaged group and I am excited to lead it for the next three sessions.

### **Change the World**

The past two months I have done a lot of work to connect the UUCWC community with causes beyond its walls. On January 13th there was a National March on Washington for Gaza where representatives from the DC-area UU congregations were mobilizing UUs to march together. While I was not able to attend the march as it conflicted with the board retreat, I did make the UUCWC community aware that it was happening. Two congregants attended and reported feeling grateful to be connected with other UUs. I offered support and debriefing after the march.

Closer to home, on January 17th there was a march in Newtown after a resident of the town, a Palestinian American, put out a call for area folks to join him in calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Again, I advertised this to the UUCWC community, noting that I would be attending alongside any interested congregants. Five UUCWC members came out and my spouse and I joined in with them in the rally and subsequent march. Unlike other actions that I have been a part of, there was a significant and aggressive counter-protest set up to meet us on our route. I marched with a sign "Unitarian Universalists for Ceasefire" locating myself as a member of this group and a person of faith illuminating the moral outrage. As possible, I checked in with UUCWC folks throughout

the march due to the aggressive and at times scary reception we had. In the days that followed, I offered multiple debriefing conversations. At Rev. Kim's suggestion, I also wrote a liturgical piece to accompany the five congregants in lighting the chalice and five candles of fellowship at the January 28th service. While taking to the street is important, I have also intentionally continued to invoke the violence in Gaza, and the moral injury of witnessing the magnitude of loss, in my prayer and other parts of the services I lead.

I am continuing to participate in the meetings of NJ Faith Action (NJFA), including attending their statewide hearings on Reparations in NJ. At the latest meeting of NJFA I was asked to offer an extemporaneous prayer to ground the participants prior to beginning our work. I will be continuing my involvement with this group this next month which I can report on more in my next report.

Within the UUCWC community, I have been involved in two committees to change the world. This past month I was able to join the Earth and Climate Ministry team for their monthly meeting, witnessing another way that the church puts its values into action. For the past several weeks, and continuing through the stewardship campaign, I have been joining the stewardship committee for their weekly meetings. While this has an important learning component for me, I have also been able to answer questions and provide information about the worship service formulation process.

In service of the Unitarian Universalist Association, I learned on February 9th that I have been selected to be a part of the UUA General Assembly (GA) Covenant Team. This is a great honor and I am delighted to get to serve in this manner. The covenant team is responsible for helping attendees who are in conflict with each other and helping to address when GA attendees step out of covenant. This experience will be an important learning opportunity as well, benefitting my internship and service to UUCWC.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration,  
Lisa

## Notes for January 2024

Auction: -\$1,700 is the annual fee for the online platform

UUA Insurance plan (LTD, life, dental insurance): There was no expense recorded for December, as the check for December's premium was lost in mail, and payment made in January. Then the December check was received and deposited at the end of January, and credited against our February invoice. In summary, Dec, Jan, and Feb expenses are recorded in January.

We did incur expenses for snow removal in January; they'll be reflected in February as that was when payment was issued.

Payroll fees: Are higher than usual for January, due to 2023 year-end reporting – processing W-2s.

Service Fees – Bank: -\$30 is for reimbursement by a member. They had two checks bounce and wanted to cover the bank fees.

Exchange:

Knight estate: \$5,653.54 (being held for FY25)

Payroll tax adjustment in process by ADP: \$28.80

The \$276 raised by the Food Ministry's December chili fundraiser was donated, along with a matching amount from CFA to the Interfaith Food Alliance, based in Morrisville, PA.

The Endowment Fund is as of December 31, 2023; UUCEF issues reports several weeks after month end.

Form 1099s for 2023 were issued in January.