

**USR Board of Trustees Meeting
October 7, 2020
Minutes**

Attendance: Dawn Walter, Sarah Lenzi, Don Campolo, Robert Markowitz, Rose Castillo-Leon, Kristin Bluemel, Chris Dunnigan, Helen Matusow-Ayres

Reading

Starting: 6:36 pm

Check In

I. Update from DRE- Jeannie Nametz

- Summary

- ◇ Worship:

- ◆ Virtual RE experiencing community in new and different ways.
 - ◆ Chalice Lightings at home: videos of families lighting the chalice from their homes shown at the service.
 - ◆ NJ Underground railroad history. Every week a new location will be presented to tell the story of the underground railroad in NJ
 - ◆ It is recognized that as white people we are telling a story that is not really ours. The meta story will be how we tell a story that is not ours.
 - ◆ Families will be emailed a NJ map and asked to print it and to flag or mark the locations as they are discussed.
 - ◆ Locate yourself in the story. What is your response?

- ◇ Sharing Circles:

- ◆ A letter will be sent out to promote the program.
 - ◆ Grades 2-5 had 2 USR children out of 6. There were four children from All Souls participating.
 - ◆ The PreK-1 group had 6 out of 12 from USR. The other six children were from CUC.
 - ◆ Grades 6-7 include 3 from USR with a total of 24 in the class the other spots included kids from CUC and All Souls.
 - ◆ Jeannie was pleased that we had USR participants in each class. She will pinpoint parents whose children didn't attend and follow-up. Collaborating with other congregations is helping to provide for healthy sized classes.
 - ◆ In the first week DRE's from all congregations taught with the teachers watching. All of the teachers are experienced teachers, but they need support for teaching on Zoom. All and all it went very well.

◇ Other Programs

- ◆ There will be a virtual Holiday Craft Fair in December.
- ◆ The first Dungeon and Dragons group met and there were 2 from USR and six guests. It went really well. Still attempting to get a high school group going.
- ◆ Social Justice activities include a pet food drive and Soul for Souls. Congregants will be asked to donate any shoes- foot journeys of the underground railroad.
- ◆ Jeannie will be pairing up congregants with children who are learning to read.
- ◆ Socials for grade 1-5 and 6-8 on Zoom. Nobody from USR attended the first one. We need to promote them better.
- ◆ In person OWL every other week. It will be half an hour longer.
- ◆ Parent orientation will be in person. There will be testing and temperature taking. We will play it by ear. Hopefully no infections or other problems.
- ◆ Next time Jeannie will report on her ideas for involving RE parents more in the program.

- Discussion

- ◇ Rose and Helen expressed gratitude for the great programming and spoke about emphasizing the social to get them interested in Cons.

II. Action Items (See Separate Sheet)

III. Thank You notes/ Housekeeping

- Summary

- ◇ Thank You notes will be in In Sarah's report.
- ◇ Chris Dunnigan's email address is Chrisdunnigan@hotmail.com. It has been wrong in previous emails
- ◇ The CUC minister, Board President Board VP will be meeting on Zoom with our President and another Board member. Kristin Bluemel volunteered to take Robert's place.

IV. Non-partisan reminder

- Summary

- ◇ Sarah is crafting a non-partisan political statement.

V. Outdoor Gatherings

- Summary

- ◇ Hetty Hirshman conveyed an interest in holding some in-person meetings and services to meet the needs of isolated congregants.

- Discussion

- ◇ Not enough space inside.
- ◇ This should be an Orange Circle responsibility but right now no one is facilitating the Orange circle. Some congregants who are not technologically capable are really suffering.

- ◇ We should assign this to another leader to put together.
- ◇ If people thinking of using the building we need to consider the perceived safety for renters who were told that no one else would be using the building.
- ◇ Perhaps we could manage it by reservation only.
- ◇ Events might be better off-site.
- ◇ We definitely cannot safely have services indoors.
- ◇ Chris suggested Habernickel Park on Hillcrest Rd. It is available for groups to schedule.
 - ◆ There is some parking available and lots of space in the field
- ◇ OK for people to gather outside at the USR.
- ◇ We could offer 10 person gatherings with a sign up procedure .
- ◇ Who will manage this? Considerable amount of work for several meetings a week.
- ◇ Could we have a larger gathering, like a service outside?
 - ◆ What about people who couldn't come to the in person service?
 - ◆ Maybe in the Spring for outdoors- not enough time
- ◇ We could hold small in person gatherings.
 - ◆ Smaller is better
 - ◆ Could someone take this on?
 - Community- Fellowship
 - Lack of leadership in Fellowship Circle, who can do this?
- ◇ An in-person socially distanced service won't really help people feel more connected.
- ◇ Caring committee doing what they can, but not prepared to take this on- We need a leader.
- ◇ We should ask Hetty if she is willing to manage this.

VI. Action Items

- ◇ Sarah and Dawn and others will attempt to find someone to take on the leadership for small in-person gatherings. Georgetta Walsh was recommended
- ◇ Orange Circle work with the SCRT in an ideal situation.
- ◇ Dawn will also ask Hetty if she will take leadership for the small group gatherings and she will look for someone who might provide leadership for the Orange Circle.
- ◇ Put the current availability for small group to meet outside the USR into the Eblast.

VII. Treasurer's Report

- Summary

- ◇ Contributions have slowed down. Currently there is \$56,000 in our operating account.
- ◇ Next task is to file for short term loan forgiveness for our COVID Loan.

- ◇ We are up \$21,000 in profits and interest in the Stock Market.
- ◇ We are on track for achieving the projected amount of rental income.
- ◇ There was an accounting error in previous years and we have been slightly underpaying our Minister. We owe Rev. Sarah \$1700. We need to make that right. Chris will issue a one-time payment as a one off payroll.
- ◇ Other long-term problems that Chris is working on include the convoluted mortgage payment process. Chris set up electronic payment and is setting up automatic payments.
- ◇ The Asset Circle is still considering the raffle. We are waiting on final approval from the State. The circle members still want to do it in the Fall, but it is getting late.
- ◇ Ann may also have been underpaid. Chris will investigate this and make any necessary payments.
- ◇ This is the time of the year that we should ask people who have loaned USR money to forgive the loan payment for this year.
- Discussion
 - ◇ PPP money is not reflected in the budget. It is in our bank statement. It should be reflected in the actuals. Once it is forgiven we will reflect it in this fiscal year's budget. Until it is legally forgiven, it doesn't belong anywhere
- Action Items
 - ◇ Chris will speak with Ann about the possible underpayment of her salary
 - ◇ Chris will tell us when Sarah receives her salary payment.

VIII. Ministers Report

- Summary
 - ◇ There have been some staffing role challenges related to staff reductions and new responsibilities.
 - ◇ Thank You notes assigned:
 - ◆ Rob Willis (Kristin), Bea Cronin (Helen)
 - ◇ Board needs to review policies- Dawn has had difficulty locating all of the Board Policies.
- Discussion
 - ◇ Perhaps we should reconsider having some in person office hours.
 - ◇ Are there tasks that can't be done because we don't have enough staff. Are people are working to their capacity?
 - ◇ It may be more of a planning issue.
- Action
 - ◇ Dawn will locate the policies and put them in the Dropbox folder for review. Board members will review them.

IX. Solar Proposal

- Summary
 - ◇ Environmental Justice Committee proposed installing solar panels.

- ◇ \$10,000 was written into construction budget. The Optimal installation is \$69,000.
- ◇ The construction budget was not approved. A new budget can be written.
- ◇ We could also borrow the money from congregants.
- ◇ The intention is that the energy cost savings from the panels will return our investment in 8-9 years. Savings in electric bill 8-9 years. We will receive our entire investment back in 15 years from providing energy to the grid.
- ◇ The installation reduces our carbon footprint. It will enable us to walk the walk.
- ◇ Rob Willis supports the project.
- ◇ For \$39,000 we would install half as many panels,
- ◇ However the more panels that we install the greater the reduction in utility bills
- Discussion
 - ◇ We should go for the full installation because either way we will get the money back.
 - ◇ The Roof needs to be replaced first. What happens if the roof leaks? Rob said that we do not need to put in a new roof. Don asked Rob to double check on that.
 - ◇ Could we borrow the money from the reserves and pay it back?
 - ◇ It is a bad idea to keep borrowing money from congregants
 - ◇ Chris thinks that we should take it out of reserves and pay it back. We should think of it as an investment.
 - ◇ Because we just did the construction capital fund, we shouldn't fundraise for it.
 - ◇ We could rework the capital budget to get some more money
 - ◇ Don said that Rob indicated that there are some savings in the capital fund. It may have disappeared. We need to check.
 - ◇ Maybe be able to receive additional federal incentives for green work with a different federal administration.
 - ◇ The cost is seven times more than expected- What else should we not do?
 - ◇ It is the Board's call how we spend the Capital Campaign income.
 - ◇ We need new bathrooms rather than solar panels, new members more interested in these than solar panels.
 - ◇ More of a real estate asset rather than cash.
 - ◇ Living our values vs. Getting new members.
 - ◇ Should put it off to see what our financial situation is?
 - ◇ Solar panels don't last forever- we may need to replace them
 - ◇ More comfortable taking it out of reserves.
 - ◇ Need to communicate with Environmental Justice Committee that we do want to do this, but in the most financially responsible way.

- ◇ Did Rob get more than one estimate? We would like to see the other quote.
- ◇ The money may be available in the budget so that we may not need to go into reserves.
- ◇ Financials in Rob's power point not clear.
- ◇ Will all the trees around the building interfere with the panels effectiveness. We need a more specific estimate of the existing property savings.
- ◇ Need more information and more confidence in the savings and the energy generated.
- Action Items
 - ◇ Chris will check with Rob if there is additional money in the capital fund or if it was spent.
 - ◇ Dawn will send a written version of the capital campaign budget to the Board.
 - ◇ Dawn will invite Rob and the Green Circle facilitator to a Board meeting to respond to the questions raised.
 - ◇ Dawn will ask Paul Rosengren his thoughts about the accuracy of the proposal's claims.
 - ◇ Helen will type up questions and share with Board to finalize and then Dawn will send to Rob.
 - ◆ Summary of questions for Rob:
 1. Does the Roof needs to be replaced first. If not, please explain why not?
 2. How often would we need to replace the panels?
 3. Did he get more than one estimate? Can we see others? If this was the only estimate, why?
 4. Will all the trees around the building interfere with the panels effectiveness?
 5. Please review financials to better explain the return on investment.

Adjourned_8:58