

USR Board of Trustees Meeting
March 9, 2021
Minutes

Attendance: Dawn Walter, Sarah Lenzi, Jack Lohr, Don Campolo, Chris Dunnigan, Helen Matusow-Ayres

Check-In 7:03

Meeting Starting at 7:20

I) Approve and post past minutes

A Minutes approved

II) Action Items

A Action Items reviewed and updated

III) Thank you notes

A Rob Willis - Don

B Diane Kidwell – for cleaning -Dawn

C Hetty and Ron- Thank you for coffee hour and the various work-Helen

IV) DRE Report

A Summary

- Board breakfast with RE families scheduled for May 1.
- Online OWL training is very limited. Plans for a local in person training did not materialize.

(1) There will be no 7th grade OWL at USR for 2022-23. We will hold a Coming Of Age class next year instead. This has not been announced yet. We will hold 7th grade OWL in 23-24. This will give us more time to train teachers.

(2) Owl for K-2 and 4-6 grade in 2022-23.

B Discussion

- A question was raised about the variation in attendance at RE.

(1) Sarah not in the pulpit. Second Sunday of vacation was sparsely attended. Weather has impacted attendance. Things have improved in RE. More parents are coming to in person services because kids are in person.

(2) Possibly open 7-9 OWL to the wider community.

C Action

- HMA will send out an email to poll Board members after meeting to see if they can attend on 5/1

V) Plan for April, May, and June board meetings

A Summary

- Invite Laura Krag (Yellow circle) and Jeannie to an upcoming meeting. How can we support them better?

(1) More presence in the community about RE.

(2) Strengthen communication and support
- Invite the Racial Justice Team to meeting to ask them how to accomplish our racial justice objectives
- Invite investment group to have a conversation about our investments

- The Board will plan to host a coffee hour for the congregation soon.

B Discussion

- Chris voiced that there is some concern among congregants that we don't give enough money from the endowment away. He suggested that perhaps we should just give away a certain percentage of the endowment instead of a set amount.
(1) If we are doing well our giving increases. It would match our reality at the time
- Should we go with a fair share percentage. What is the right percentage of our budget?
- There were questions about why we continue to accumulate money.
- It is important to separate the endowment from the reserves in thinking about our accumulated funds.
- We are invested responsibly. A plan was developed 20 years ago for the reserves, not sure about the endowment
- The people involved in that plan and with the endowment and the reserves in general are Ed Collins Mike Azzara, and Jeff Summerville

C Action

- Dawn will invite Ed, Mike, Jeff and Peter Duran to attend an upcoming Board meeting to discuss this further

VI) Miscellaneous

- Dawn discussed our relationship with Central Unitarian Church (CUC) with the new President of the CUC BOT. The CUC congregation is considering different possible courses of action regarding the future of their building.
- The USR Board discussed our awareness that CUC is discussing options for the building and our interest in reaching out the CUC Board to form a committee to discuss how our of our space might be helpful.
- Th new COVID guidelines for USR might be controversial among the congregants. The news guidelines allow for retraction or revision if conditions change. We are moving towards optional masks but not optional vaccines.
- Discussion
(1) How about air quality-SCRC has not yet addressed that. The air turnover rate in the building is good.
(2) One of our renter's needs to have a professional independent HVAC test completed. That will be helpful to us.
(3) Rob Willis and our HVAC systems are performing at the highest level possible.
(4) It was suggested that we add a sentence to our guidelines encouraging people to open windows, weather permitting.

VII) Sabbatical

A Summary

- Since we hired Sarah the UUM has shifted from recommending 7 years before a minister takes a sabbatical to 3-5- years. Seven years is considered more risky for potentially losing the minister after the sabbatical. The tendency now is that a minister be given a shorter sabbatical every fourth or fifth year, for 3 or 4 months.

- Sarah stated that she is not accessing the deepest well of her creativity. Like everyone else, she has been impacted by the pandemic.
- She wants to write a book. Currently she does not enough writing time for personal writing
- She would like her sabbatical to be sooner and shorter. She would like to take it in January of 2023, instead of 202 and she would go for 5 months instead of 6.
- There are widely varied opinions about how beholden to the congregation the minister is to have a valuable sabbatical.

B Discussion

- Is there is a sabbatical handbook?
 - (1) There is a very old one and another document neither were helpful to Sarah in writing her proposal.
- Sarah responded to questions as to why a minister gets a sabbatical. It follows the academic model which recognizes the need for a teacher or a minister to have time off to learn new things and in the minister's case to get respite from the constant stress of always being responsible for the wellbeing of the congregation.
- What about our past policies and writings?
- When presenting the idea to the congregation we should start with stating that UUA policy has changed.
- Not sure that USR is ready and we will have a fairly new Board President
- Getting ready for Sarah to leave in nine months does not feel sufficient.
- Last time took a long planning effort to be successful.
- Coming back from abnormalcy, sabbatical is not normal. We need the minister for stability.
- In the absence of a minister it will not be appropriate for Jack to preach.
- Is there a compromise in timing to maintain the stability of the congregation?
- What needs to be done and how long do we need to get everything done?
 - (1) Doesn't work for Sarah in the Fall, or the congregation to start off in the Fall without a minister.
- It is most important that the congregation comes out OK.
- Governance structure is not functional.
 - (1) The Circles are not functioning effectively yet.
- We need a draft plan of what gets done when for planning in order to consider the proposal.
- How would Staff supervision be handled?
 - (1) Hire a sabbatical minister
 - (2) Board takes on the responsibility
- We should think about benefits and costs of an earlier sabbatical
 - (1) What does the sabbatical do for the congregation?
 - (2) What does it do for lay leadership?
- It would require making a change to Sarah's contract.
- Is 9 months enough time to prepare?
- Will the congregation be ready?
 - (1) Board need to discuss without Sarah

(2) Feeling conversation first

(3) Any decision will be provisional until Sarah presents a readiness plan.

(4) Is there anything we can do to get the congregation ready in nine months?

C Action

- Sarah will add in supervision alternatives into her proposal document.
- HMA and others look for planning documents from Sarah Lammert's sabbatical.
- Sarah will develop a work plan for what needs to be done to prepare.
- Dawn will plan a Board discussion without Sarah about congregational readiness.
- We will start with a Board conversation and then bring Sarah in.

VIII) Racial Justice

A Summary

- We should invite Social Justice group to a meeting to discuss hiring commitment and how can we work together to move forward on addressing the eighth principle.
- Every board member should recommend a racial justice book for the congregation to read.

B Action

- Next meeting each board member will bring the name of a book and write a blurb about it for Realm

IX) Draft Budget

A Summary

- Chris redid the spreadsheet and revised and updated it. It is now aligned to include the Circles.
- It will remain in draft form until the pledge drive is completed.
- There is now a line in the budget for a part time communications position who will be responsible for the newsletter, social media, realm, and promotions.
- On March 27 there will be town hall meeting. We will discuss the current budget, COVID and the draft budget. Pledge committee can summarize the draft budget and ask the congregants to be aware of the budget as they make their pledges.

Adjourned 9:05 pm

.