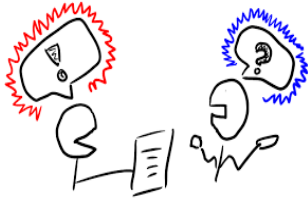


# Constitution Revision Task Force



---

## Task Force Members

Mary Jane Cross, Convener  
John Mason, William McEvoy,  
Sal Mollica, and Lynda Shannon

---

## Objectives

(1) In general “if in doubt leave it out” to have a Constitution that is a lean, clear and readable document (2) Have details in policies and procedures not the Constitution - and remove prescriptive or ‘how to’ language (3) Delete the laundry list of Standing Committees of the Board and issues relating to staff that are better handled by policy.

---

## Source Materials Used

(1) Constitution of TUCW rev. 2015 (latest version)  
[www.uuwestport.org/aboutus](http://www.uuwestport.org/aboutus)  
(2) *Governance for UU Congregations* (UUA)  
(3) [www.governancecoach.com](http://www.governancecoach.com)  
Tips/Cleaning-Up-Your-Bylaws  
(4) Bylaws and Constitutions from several large UU Congregations.

---

## YOU get the last word...

The fifth UU principle is "...the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large." **On May 15 and June 12** we will be acting on this principle when the **congregation will vote** on these proposed amendments. Get informed and **have your say**.

---

## What is the rationale for doing this now?

At the Board’s annual retreat last August goals for the coming year were adopted including to “assess and recommend changes to the Church’s Constitution consistent with organizational structures for a large congregation.” Working together as a Board and with various committees, we have run up against unwieldy provisions in our Constitution that are contrary to effective policy based governance. We have also come face to face with 1) inconsistencies in committee charters and the current Constitution; and 2) a lack of good clean lines of authority, accountability, and boundaries. Now is definitely the time!

## Do these changes really need to be made?

Whenever a board implements some form of policy based governance, bylaw or, in our case Constitution, revisions are generally needed in order to create consistency between our fundamental governing structure and the principles of policy based governance. At the very least, the changes we are proposing seek to optimize the flexibility allowed to the Board in designing its own process and delegating operational management to Rev. John as Chief of Staff.

## What changes to the latest version of our Constitution are being contemplated?

- **1-2-3** **1) Add** Policy Based Governance enabling language **2) Subtract** list of “Standing Committees of the Board” - many rightfully are ministries like Worship, Music & RE **3) Delete** unneeded and long prescriptive passages.
- We have **changed language about how we are governed** clarifying the ultimate authority of the congregation, delegation to the Board for policy and monitoring and to the Senior Minister as Chief of Staff for coordinating and implementing policies and supervising staff.
- We have **removed a lot of detail** in sections out of the Constitution where the current language is more policy and procedure - who does what and when.
- In Article VIII - Board of Trustees, **language was added limiting the authority of the Board** with regards to sale, transfer or encumbrance of congregational property, and clearly defining the authority of the Board in delegation.
- We are **recommending a change in the titles of our officers**, from Board Chair and Vice Chair to President and Vice President more common titles in other UU congregations. A second title change would be to change Clerk to the better-understood Secretary.
- We are **recommending deletion of the current list of “Standing Committees of the Board”** listed in the current Constitution to be in better alignment with our current practices. We don’t have a Worship Committee - we have Worship Associates who work with Rev. John and not the Board. Music, RE and Membership committees also rightfully report through Rev. John.
- With regard to Elected Committees - the Board, Nominating and Leadership Development, Auditing, Committee on Ministry, Ministerial Search and Endowment, we are recommending **language clarifying lines of authority and accountability** and removing a lot of detail that is contained in charters and policies.
- The proposed changes result in a tighter, clearer and less proscriptive document - **4,360 words in the current version, 2,500 in proposed version.**

## **As Senior Minister, how has Rev. John been involved in this process?**

The Task Force went over our proposed changes with Rev. John, who is broadly in agreement with them and believes that these changes will be important for us in the future.

"These revisions help to bring us in line with other congregations in our form of polity. The clearer lines of accountability and authority in these revisions reflect the best practices of healthy congregations in our Unitarian Universalist movement today".

*Rev. John Morehouse*

## **How can I learn more about these proposed revisions?**

The Constitution Revision Committee will be holding a series of informational sessions that will include feedback and revision suggestion. These are:

**March 9, 19, 20, and 22; April 6, 10, 21 and 24.** Notes from these meetings will be posted on the Board of Trustees bulletin board in the foyer. Please attend one or more of these sessions. Feel free to contact any member of the task force with your questions and concerns. Also all documents are on our website, [www.uuwestport.org](http://www.uuwestport.org).

## **Have Committee Leaders have been consulted regarding these proposed revisions?**

In our current Constitution, nine (9) standing committees of the Board are listed: Worship, Religious Education, Music, Membership, Communications, Stewardship, Finance, Buildings and Grounds and Human Resources. With the exception of the last three in the list above, they are more ministry than governance and thus we are proposing removal. Language has been edited related to the Elected Committees of the Congregation and all leaders and members of those committees are being consulted regarding the proposed changes.

## **How does our Constitution actually get changed?**

This proposed Constitution will be approved by the board and will be put to a vote at a Congregational Meeting on Sunday, May 15, 2016. If passed at this Meeting, provisions in our constitution require a second vote at least 21 days later. Ratification happens at a duly called Congregational Meeting and that vote is up or down - no amendments. Ratification could be added to the agenda of our Annual Meeting on June 12, 2016.

## **Where can I get copies of the current and proposed versions of the Constitution?**

Online at [www.uuwestport.org/Aboutus/governance](http://www.uuwestport.org/Aboutus/governance) or you may request a hard copy by leaving a message in the office (203) 227-7205 that you want a document printed and held for you at the church.

## **Where do I go if I still have questions or concerns about this process?**

The best place to learn more is to attend one of the sessions on the dates at the left. You may also contact Mary-Jane or any member of the Task Force.

Mary-Jane Cross [maryjanecross@me.com](mailto:maryjanecross@me.com)

John Mason [cement14@gmail.com](mailto:cement14@gmail.com)

William McEvoy [wmcevoy@hushmail.com](mailto:wmcevoy@hushmail.com)

Sal Mollica [smollica2@gmail.com](mailto:smollica2@gmail.com)

Lynda Shannon [Blueslyn@gmail.com](mailto:Blueslyn@gmail.com)

