

Attending: Brian Lasher, Beth Cliff, Stapley Emberling, Deb Garskof, Steve Grathwohl, Luke Garvey, Wendy Levy, and Rev. Alan Taylor (ex-officio)

Absent: Jen Gerometta, Ravi Sankar

Observers: Eileen Belmont, Jamie Forbes, Linda Hudson

Guest Speaker: Elena Rockman-Blake

Agenda/Topic	Discussion	Motions & Votes (M/S/V); Actions
Opening	B Lasher, who presided over the meeting, called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm; he read Board Covenant and Message to Observers.	
Check-In & Opening Reading	Board members and Observers briefly checked in. D Garskof opened the meeting with an excerpt from Barack Obama’s 2009 speech “On Humanity.”	
Consent Agenda	<p>Approval of Board Minutes, February 20, 2024, meeting.</p> <p>Reiteration of Motion passed on February 28, 2024: Motion to endorse the recommendation of the CEC regarding construction prioritization and request to Endowment Committee.</p>	<p>1) M/S/V PASSED: Minutes for Board Meeting on February 20, 2024, APPROVED.</p> <p>2) M/S/V PASSED: “To accept and endorse the recommendation of the Congregational Engagement on Construction Team (“CEC”) regarding the prioritization of the construction options, and to request that the Endowment Committee again help support the construction work first outlined in 2019 as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide matching funds capped at \$175,000.00 (or a lesser amount approved by the Endowment Committee) with a match of 1:1. All donations, including public grants, are allowed and eligible for matching. • Appeal to run April 1- May 1. Gifts must be in the Congregation’s bank account by May 1. • The amount of money raised at the end of the open appeal time limit or shortly thereafter will determine the construction we pursue based on the priorities voted on by the Congregation

		<p>on May 10, 2024, for support of the project.”</p>
<p>Sr. Minister’s Report/Monitoring</p>	<p>The Sr. Minister’s Report for March 2024 is posted on the website.</p> <p>Rev. Taylor reported on the following priority ends: End 1.2.1 — news and preparations for the upcoming events with Rev. Terasa Cooley; End 1.2.4 — update on current pledge drive, his sermon encouraging a 10% tithe and fact that Congregation approved the 1:1 match from Endowment up to \$175,000 for continuation of construction; End 1.2.3 — the Social Justice Council (SJC) proposed/approved paying David Vita \$7,200 (5hrs/week) from the Jan Park Fund for his legislative advocacy. Rev. Taylor admits that allowing the SJC to vote on this proposal that came directly from David Vita, without having been seen or reviewed by the Board, the Finance Committee, the Endowment Committee, or the Congregation was in error; the vote will be walked back. The SJC does not have the authority on its own to grant such a proposal or approve payment to a congregant from the Endowment Fund.</p> <p>Discussion over need to leverage Meeting House for income via rental or via conversion back to parsonage given high cost of living in Fairfield County and impact on Called Minister search; Eileen Belmont has offered to look into options and will meet with Town officials. She will report back to the Board.</p> <p>Nursery School requests to remove a non-load-bearing wall from the property to comply with State requirements regarding size of classroom space; David Raymond reportedly examined the wall and concurs that it may be safely removed; Board suggests a professional engineer examine and provide an opinion before consent is given to proceed.</p> <p>Initial budget items, in addition to above RE: Jan Park Fund: Rev. Taylor asked committees what they would be looking for in 2024/2025. Four different committees asked for +\$3,000 each, many committees or individuals requested \$500 each from next year’s budget.</p>	

	<p>Rev. Taylor suggests that it will be more transparent and cause less disagreement within the Congregation as a whole if budget issues and monetary requests for are funneled through the Sr. Minister, who would then decide which requests are appropriate to bring to the Board or to the Finance Committee for review.</p> <p>Rev. Taylor also expressed his desire to receive feedback from congregants on his sermons.</p> <p>Furthermore, he informed the Board that the UUA had made recommendations concerning Article 2 in the By-Laws, and there would be a vote on the issue at the General Assembly in June. He said that he had heard from some congregants that they had a desire to discuss the matter with others in our Congregation before GA.</p>	
Senior Minister Hire for 2024/2025 FY	After discussion and expressions of gratitude given to Rev. Taylor for his inspiring work with us this year, a Motion was made, seconded, and unanimously passed to invite Rev. Taylor to continue his ministry with TUUCW for the next fiscal year. The Board then formally invited Rev. Taylor to stay with us for 2024/2025. He said he would discuss it with his family and let us know his decision.	M/S/V Passed: To make the official invitation from the Board of Trustees to Rev. Taylor to continue his Transitional Ministry as TUUCW's Senior Minister for an additional year: FY 2024/2025. Approved.
Treasurer's Report With Pledge Drive Update from Stewardship	<p>Treasurer's Report was given by S Grathwohl, posted in Dropbox and on the BOT's bulletin board in the foyer; see report for details. Also see draft budget for FY 2024/2025, posted online.</p> <p>Elena Rockman-Blake, Stewardship Co-Chair, reported that more pledges have been received this year than last year at the same point in time; realistically, however, most large pledges have now already been received. She is optimistic we will meet goal. Suggests an outreach in Soundings and sending targeted emails to those who have not yet pledged. In the past, TUUCW had an active Visiting Steward program, which is no longer operating. B Cliff suggested a personal touch could be more effective. Discussion followed on whether cottage parties resulted in increased giving; results showed they were excellent for community-building, but it was suggested that a committee other than Stewardship might hold such cottage parties in the future, since Stewardship has</p>	

	<p>significant additional work to perform. B Cliff recommends a report from Stewardship to the Congregation at the conclusion of the Pledge Drive.</p> <p>S Grathwohl reported finances are approximately \$20,000 “above budget” but that he anticipates coming months will bring that number down, consistent with historical data. The preliminary draft budget for next year will be discussed in detail at the April Board meeting. The people cost is biggest expense, \$600,000 but only \$500,000 in pledges in the event we meet the goal. Current predicted budget total is \$950,000 and projected revenue \$700,000 leaving potential \$250,000 deficit. Discussion over fact that some Congregants are unaware of budget process or Endowment and composition of restricted and unrestricted funds. Will as always hold meeting(s) to educate but pointed out that these meetings are sparsely attended.</p> <p>Regarding “Emergency Distributions” from Endowment, S Grathwohl reports although such requests have been authorized to come from him, he has not needed to make them more than once or twice; he is confirming numbers; if correct will render our financial condition improved as to not having requested such funds from Endowment. Funds from PPP and ERC grants under ARPA have been sustaining us. Could be estimated \$200,000 thought to have come from Endowment for operating expenses over the last several years has not.</p> <p>S Emberling recommended that we schedule a separate Board meeting in April to thoroughly review and examine the proposed new budget, as we had done last year, since our regularly scheduled meetings were always so full with other pressing matters, and we needed time to devote exclusively to this proposed budget. There was consensus expressed for this idea.</p>	
<p>Proposed edits to Policy Manual Limitations Section 3.5.4</p>	<p>Discussion to approve proposed edits to Policy Manual to add to Limitations section 3.5.4 two additional limitations that would require the Sr. Minister to obtain Board approval in advance where an action would encumber TUUCW property:</p>	<p>M/S/V PASSED: To add to Section 3.5.4 of the Policy Manual the following two limitations:</p> <p>1) Incur any debt that will place a lien on the Congregation’s property;</p>

	<p>l) Incur any debt that will place a lien on the Congregation’s property;</p> <p>m) Agree to or authorize any agreement, lease, or license that allows another person or entity to occupy and/or control any part of the Congregation’s property.</p>	<p>m) Agree to or authorize any agreement, lease, or license that allows another person or entity to occupy and/or control any part of the Congregation’s property. APPROVED.</p>
<p>HR Manual/Employee Handbook</p>	<p>D Garskof reported that she and Kim Fuchs (HR Committee) have prepared a draft revision of HR Manual/Employee Handbook. (See her report, posted in Dropbox, as well as the draft document.) Suggest 2-3 Board members review and advise at the April meeting whether to approve the revisions. B Cliff and S Emberling agreed to review and report to the Board.</p>	<p>B Cliff and S Emberling will review draft HR Manual and report back at April meeting.</p>
<p>Construction</p>	<p>B Cliff informed that the next phase of the construction work will begin, now that the Congregation has been engaged and, as of March 10, has signaled what it wants to do:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Proceed with floor and chancel and other miscellaneous items described in Option 1 (as listed on website). 2. Raise money between April 1 and May 1 (extended longer if Board and Endowment Committee deem appropriate). 3. Focus on replacing glass walls that slide vs. static. 4. Glass doors have priority over trench for ductwork. 5. Approve a 1:1 match up to \$175K from Endowment. <p>(Draft Minutes for the March 10, 2024, Congregational Meeting are posted on the website and on the BOT bulletin board in the foyer.)</p> <p>Work now reverts back to the Sr. Minister and the Construction team; a formal handoff will occur 3/22/24. Construction team will handle things going forward and keep the Congregation informed on progress. B Cliff will continue to stay involved to oversee the money-raising process in April, but until April 1, the priority is Stewardship and the Pledge Drive.</p> <p>High praise was given to Beth Cliff and Ken Vogel for leading the process well and to the Congregation for conducting business in a way that was respectful and allowed all voices to be heard. Some feedback that the option chart itself was hard to read and follow, which is helpful data for the future. Also, a question was raised as to whether we could find other resources to handle</p>	

	<p>the ZOOM logistics, since it takes 3 or 4 Board members out of meeting visibility and away from the discussion in order to manage the remote voting on Zoom. There were 12 members who voted remotely on March 10, which included the 3 Board members required to manage the Zoom chat line and make sure Zoom participants were able to speak at the meeting, if they wished to.</p>	
<p>Information Reports See Reports posted in Dropbox</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. March Bagels with the Board: See report in packet. 2. Transforming Conflict: Excitement regarding Rev. Cooley’s visit next weekend. Focus on looking forward, not backward. Rev. Cooley will examine whether COM or a separate body should be engaging in conflict transformation. 3. Very Fine Award: S Emberling will place announcement in Soundings seeking nominations; will also place announcement that nominations to elected positions for 2024/2025 could be made by petition, if desired; will go out after 4/1 when Slate will be announced by the Nominating Committee. Communications Subcommittee will review S Emberling’s drafts. 4. Cyber Fraud Team: The Team (L Garvey, S Grathwohl, MJ Cross, and Rev. Taylor) met; examination of Policy Manual Limitations on topic; discussion with accountant and lawyer; discussed engaging technical support for review of computers, software, and update needs for security purposes; 2 older computers will be replaced this fiscal year. Determination that we likely need commercial software for virus protection, etc. Insurance co. is investigating our claim. B Cliff requested that next report include details of recommendations. All transactions involving money should be examined as part of this review. 	<p>M/S/V PASSED: To approve S Emberling submitting an announcement to Soundings requesting nominations for 2024 Very Fine Award and a separate announcement seeking any nominations by petition for Elected Committees.</p>
<p>Governance Committee</p>	<p>Rev Taylor discussed plans for the formation of the new Governance Committee. Ideally, it would consist of 5 to 7 people, he said. S Emberling reported that 12 people have notified the Secretary of their interest in joining this committee. Rev. Taylor will consider this list with a hope of selecting a diverse group of volunteers. B Cliff, S Emberling, and Rev. Taylor will meet to discuss further.</p>	
<p>Executive Session</p>	<p>Discussions regarding Governance Committee; Faith Formation position; and Transitional Ministry for upcoming year, including contract details; 2.5% cost of living increase for all staff next year.</p>	<p>M/S/V PASSED: To support Rev. Taylor’s recommendation to retain current Acting Faith Formation Director, Angi Haen, for a two-year term commencing July 1, 2024, as Director of Faith Formation. APPROVED.</p>

Check-Out and Assignments	Omitted due to time constraints.	
Process Observer	W Levy reported that although meeting ran 30 minutes late it was well run, in covenant and critical topics discussed.	
Closing Reflection	B Cliff read quote from Calvin Coolidge on "Persistence."	
Adjournment	The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 pm.	
	Next Board Meeting: Tuesday, April 16, 2024	

Respectfully submitted,
Deborah Garskof, Assistant Secretary and
Stapley Emberling, Secretary for the Board of Trustees
March 26, 2024