

TUUCW
Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda
Tuesday October 22, 2024

Present at the meeting:

- Board & Minister: Beth Cliff, Ravi Sankar, Felicia Keeton, Anita Pfluger, Brian Lasher, Mark Corcoran, Alexa Marshall, Jon Gage, Rev. Alan Taylor (Zoom)

Absent: Stapley Emberling

No observers

7:05 p.m. - Meeting was called to order by Beth Cliff

Consent Agenda

- Minutes from 6/19/24 meeting – motion passed unanimously
- Minutes from 9/17/24 meeting – motion passed unanimously
- The board **passed unanimously a below motion** to recommend to the congregation that Ed Thompson be named *Reverend Dr. Edward Thompson, Minister of Music Emeritus*.
 - Motion: In recognition of Ed. Thompson's tremendous contribution to the Congregation of UU Westport over the last 46 years, at this time of his retirement from our congregation the Board is recommending to the congregation that he will be named Reverend Dr. Edward Thompson, Minister of Music Emeritus.
 - The board will call a congregational meeting asking the congregation to approve and bestow this honorary title on Ed approximately January 2025.

Minister's Update and Discussion:

- Beth shared that an open work assignment, to be addressed in the future, is monitoring - to assign a board member to liaison with Rev. Alan on what the board wants him to report on each month given there is so much going on.
- Rev. Alan shared updates on Stewardship and we discussed how board members can support their efforts -
 - Stewardship plans to hold cottage meetings approximately starting this year through February focusing participants on questions about the 'why' of UU Westport and what members value of our spiritual community.
 - They are also preparing for a Winter Appeal to raise \$25,000 which Alan's recommends \$5,000 be used to replenish the Minister discretionary fund and \$10,000 to fund our technology budget.
 - The annual fund drive launches February 23 or March 9th. The goal is \$580,000 to cover expected staff expenses. The goal is specific, and the theme is like last year- live/give your values. Stewardship will have a clear ask that comes out of the cottage parties.

Key discussion points:

- Although there is not a direct connection between the cottage parties and fundraising, there are synergies between these two efforts that can be achieved relative to 'living and giving your values'.
- The board can assist with the cottage parties by attending and reaching out to those that have not pledged in the spring.
- Today Elena Rockman and Sam Somashekar have been leading Stewardship for a number of years in a row because no one else has stepped up, despite Elena's ask for someone to lead the team with her

TUUCW
Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda
Tuesday October 22, 2024

continuing on as a committed team member. The Board will assist with finding others to help lead Stewardship. It discussed how it would be great to have this role rotate more frequently to broaden / strengthen knowledge and experience in the Stewardship process, plus supply a fresh approach to it.

- Jon raised issues about how Finance can help with Stewardship and agreed to discuss with Alan.

Treasurer's Report and Discussion:

- Jon shared highlights from the Treasurer's report and added this context: the average per pledge unit went up last year because we have a strong core group that gives more. The risk is the overall number of pledge units is dropping (about 19%).
- Q1 and Q2 reminders for fulfilling pledges were sent by Sue. Q3 was not sent out.
- It was discussed to return to sharing a quarterly report that included core budget numbers and pledges, and membership numbers. This was done by Brian and Steve several times in the past couple of years so a template exists.
- Also discussed: the role of membership committee to pursue members to come back that have not attended in a while. It was decided to keep this on the back burner.

UUA Retirement Plan Restatement

- **A motion was unanimously passed** to adopt the restatement. This change updates the definition of compensation when used for calculating employer contributions (eg., severance pay, FICA). We are already in compliance and there are no budget impacts.

Last Month's Business

- **Construction project**
 - No updates are available on the new heater design.
 - The Construction team (Beth, Brian, Mark and led by Ken) are discussing how to update the congregation on Construction work, especially as designs will begin. Included will be sharing the importance of clarify the benefits and positive outcomes we'll get from this large capital investment to energize the congregation.
- **Governance** – interviews are in progress. Otherwise, no updates.
- **COM**
 - The committee is working on how they can support the Board
 - They are keeping a pulse on when congregation will be ready for a settled minister.
 - Traditionally the COM has been the eyes and ears of the congregation. Alan is working to clarify the roles and responsibilities of COM, Right Relations and the Board relative to keeping a pulse on things and to make sure there are clear boundaries between them all.
- **75th celebration** –
 - Alan was unsuccessful in orchestrating a party, so instead is focused on collecting member stories and impacts. On November 9th there is a gathering to show the film of the founding 30 years ago of the rainbow task force.
- **Right Relations and Conflict Management Tools**

TUUCW
Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda
Tuesday October 22, 2024

- The Board shared reactions to Rev. Terasa Cooley's meeting and event. They believe it was well participated and received. She imparted good strategies that the committee will explore on deep listening and how leadership relates to the congregation. The biggest risk is losing momentum if the committee does not digest and then act on the recommendations quickly to build our own conflict management framework (use it or lose it).
- The RR committee is collaborating on how to design and implement a framework for our community. Included in this will be to work with the committees to build skills and abilities. This framework must be more sophisticated than just breaking out into small groups to talk about areas of disagreement.
- The Board was in agreement that this was great work and thanked Rev. Alan and the RR team for its efforts and recognizes its importance for the health of our congregation moving forward.

Linkage

- Ravi and Anita are working on mechanisms to create alignment between the board and the minister and also the board and the congregation this year. This work is critical to all our successes, and especially important since the two Linkage leaders from last year are no longer on the Board. (Wendy and Jen.)
- The goal is to ensure that the board and community are in dialogue together and in touch with each other so that everyone is heard, and so the board is accurately understanding and representing the full congregation. We need to complement any work done by COM and Right Relations on this.
 - This will require role clarification and alignment between the board, COM and Right Relations. (see above)
- Ravi and Anita presented ideas on building and launching programs to drive linkage including a monthly Bagels with the Board, newsletters, deep listening sessions, surveys and recurring town halls.
- A successful Linkage program requires a vision of 'what good looks like', a framework to achieve this vision and a means to measure the program health. Ravi and Anita are evaluating how to do this.

Linkage Plan – Proposed Board Resolutions (no vote needed; Ravi and Anita will take the lead to orchestrate)

1. Board agrees to go forward with bagels with board through end of year. Linkage team will orchestrate this program.
2. Board agrees on quarterly town hall structure. Linkage team will facilitate developing a thoughtful topic and get these scheduled.
3. The board needs a representative to work with COM to ensure other linkages are happening. Ravi and Anita can begin this workstream but would like someone else to be this liaison (e.g., Stapley). The first goal is to understand what COM is responsible for and is not.
4. The board members practice deep listening. Rev. Alan will share later the Social Justice work around this.

Board Assignments – remaining positions were assigned.

- [BOT Work Assignments](#)

2024-25 Ends

- Since the board is not clear yet what the congregation thinks our priorities should be and we have not yet executed our linkage program, Beth proposed we establish some interim priorities with the understanding we can change them once some of our Linkage activities have borne fruit. There was discussion on how to rally

TUUCW
Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda
Tuesday October 22, 2024

people around the current Ends which are very broadly written and not very tangible. Alan suggested we hire a governance professional at some point to develop our Ends. No formal work is suggested at all, however, until we agree on what kind of governance we intend to have; if we move away from policy-based-governance, then rewriting ends might not be worthwhile.

- After a rich discussion, the Board landed on three areas/goals to guide the minister and congregation for the year as our priorities. These can be replaced, but for now, the Board agreed to these three:
 - We are a safe place and a sanctuary for all – including the underrepresented and disempowered
 - We are a community striving to be our best selves so we can better enable others within and outside of our community to be their best selves.
 - We are positioning ourselves, as a congregation, for a new minister.

New Minister Search

The Board discussed that a big issue for the congregation is addressing the minister search process. The questions of who/when/how need to be answered; the not-knowing can be destabilizing. These questions include:

1. Does the Board re-sign Alan for another year?
 - a. If no, what kind of minister are we looking for? (another contract minister on an annual basis? A developmental minister for a predefined length of time?)
 - b. If yes, are there any changes to the hybrid relationship we should consider? What are we suggesting for the year that follows? A called minister? A developmental minister?
2. To help us, Alan recommends the following work:
 - The Board meet with a UUA representative (like Hilary Allen, who is on sabbatical through mid-January) regarding steps and options including pros and cons of a developmental ministry.
 - Note, Alan reports to the Board. A dev or contract minister reports to the Board. A settled minister reports to the congregation.
 - The congregation has a clear and collective understanding of who we are for the search team.
 - The governance framework is finalized.
 - The website is updated.
 - The linkage processes between Board and congregation continues to strengthen.
 - Hold 1-1 relational conversations to learn what's important to members
 - Participate in Right Relations team events and activities
 - Gain clarity regarding the distinct roles of the COM, board and RR. Consider hiring an outsider (Hilary or Terasa) to help with this.
 - Refresh some of our programs with new leadership.

9:38 p.m. - General meeting ended and moved to exec session.

9:49 p.m. – General meeting resumed

New Business and Other Discussion

- Finance committee is waiting for the cyber security report.
- Alexa suggested that the Board be direct in asking those 310 members that are less vocal why they belong to our congregation.
- Alan has 10 on the worship associates' team and will email a list of the members.

TUUCW
Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda
Tuesday October 22, 2024

- Anita shared a document with the Social Justice Council committee updates

Check Out and Action Items

- Stewardship – Jon and Alan to meet on topics described earlier in the notes
- Financial health – Board to finalize conversation and plans around sharing quarterly reports with the congregation in parallel to pledge campaigns.
- Construction project – finalize plan on developing a positive spin to energize the congregation
- Linkage – Ravi and Anita to finalize plans and preparations around 4 resolutions

10:01 p.m. – Meeting adjourned