

TUUCW
Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda
Tuesday, November 19, 2024

Present at the meeting:

Board: Beth Cliff, Ravi Sankar, Felicia Keeton, Brian Lasher, Mark Corcoran, Alexa Marshall, Stapley Emberling, Rev. Alan Taylor. Jon Gage and Anita Pfluger arrived by 7:10 given traffic delays.

Observers: Eileen Belmont, Linda Hudson, Randy Burnham, Angi Haen

7:01 p.m. - Meeting was called to order by Beth Cliff

Consent Agenda

- Minutes from 10/22/24 meeting – motion passed unanimously, after Beth Cliff suggested amending the language on page 4:
 - “Does the ~~congregation~~ **Board** re-sign Alan for another year?” Beth noted that constitutionally, contract ministers report into the Board, and that it is only settled ministers who report to the congregation. This could be a material fact for future considerations around ministerial search.
- The board also passed unanimously the below motion.
 - 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.
- Next step: 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:

- Alan referred the Board to his full report and volunteered that in the future he is happy to report out on whatever the Monitoring team asks him to focus in on. He called out on the plan to hold 10 cottage meetings between January and early March. The COM has agreed to coordinate these before the launch of the annual fund drive on March 8th.
 - A goal of these gatherings is to solicit input and perspectives on what the congregation's shared identity and purpose is such that we can then work to converge the different points of view He believes a clear and shared identity is foundational to other workstreams such as redesigning our website.
- This launched a discussion about the importance of reaching the full congregation beyond those who attend cottage parties. Ultimately a motion was made to establish a committee that works with the COM to gain this broader understanding of our member perspectives on who we are and what we stand for. This was followed by further discussion on how to successfully execute this motion. It was decided that the Board needs to reflect on options further. Thus, the motion was amended by Beth and passed unanimously as follows:
 - The amended motion passed unanimously: That the Board set up a small team to design a process for the Board to gather data to provide a broad and holistic understanding of how

TUUCW
Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda
Tuesday, November 19, 2024

our full members and congregants think about UU Westport, drawing on known market research techniques and reflecting UU Westport culture and values.

- **Next step:** Brian and Alexa volunteered to be that small team and will come back to the Board in December with a proposed plan on how we can best capture member perspectives.

Treasurer’s Report and Discussion:

- Jon Gage shared that our revenues and expenses are coming in close to budget, but pledge income is below. The finance committee is discussing how to increase pledge money and reviewing the charter.
- The audit period begins December 1st and will be conducted by Bob Bailey, as in prior years
- Further updates: We anticipate needing more worship materials which will increase expenses by an amount TBD, and the cancellation of the \$11k “Montessori program” meeting house rental will reduce anticipated revenue by \$11K.

Written Reports. The Board acknowledging reading the written reports for updates. No discussion except where noted.

- **Construction project**
- **Governance**
- **COM** – no written report because they had just met the night before. As mentioned above, they will take on Cottage Party meetings.
- **Right Relations**
- **Stewardship** – no written report. The winter appeal will go out after Thanksgiving). Beth will take on the canvassing aspect of Stewardship this year, and Jon will connect with the group as Finance chair.

Article II

- Anita raised the need to gain clarity and resolution on the meaning and impact of Article II – which passed at GA in June - on our congregation. She reminded people that at last June’s annual meeting, there had been assurance there would be an opportunity to make changes and this turned out not to be true. It was discussed that this issue came up in several Board meetings and at the retreat, but no action has been taken.
 - Beth made a motion for Anita and one other board member to work with Alan on a recommendation for how to bring closure to questions or concerns about Article II. This recommendation can be discussed and voted on at the December meeting. A short discussion followed, and the motion was passed unanimously.
- **Next step:** Anita, Felicia Stapley and Alan to prepare a recommendation for the December meeting.

New Minister Search

- Beth opened a discussion about what the Board needs to do in the ministerial search process. She reminded people that Alan’s contract with UU Westport is an annual one, that expires the end of July. The Board needs to decide if we’ll renew his contract next year. She stated that that means the Board needs to have an informed understanding of how the congregation feels about having a hybrid minister for another year, or whether we seek different options She reminded folks that Alan has said that due to personal reasons he would be open to returning, but on a reduced schedule in Westport – still full time, but 8 days in Westport instead of the current 10. She explained:
 - It would be best to resolve the hybrid issue by end of February so that Rev. Alan can pursue other options if need be and we can plan accordingly.
 - The UUA search process for contract/developmental ministers starts in April 1st.
 - Working backwards, we’d want to have answers about what our purpose and identity is by February – March. Likewise, a preliminary understanding of Governance recommendations will be helpful, a website under development, and demonstrated progress with our healing and conflict resolutions processes, as being handled by the Right Relation team. These were things Alan outlined in our October meeting.
- Beth referred the Board to the decision tree she had distributed earlier that laid out the different hiring options that could be under consideration, and “if this, then that” diagram. The Board understands there are a lot of moving parts depending on whether we continue with hybrid or not, and when we want to have a settled minister. This is a high priority for it to work through.
- Discussion centered around how best to listen to congregants and collect their input, plus how to ensure they are informed and updated to the Board’s process
- Ravi made a motion that was seconded, to form a Board subcommittee responsible for preparing the congregation for a ministerial selection process. Discussion followed about the importance of an open and transparent process, with the Board listening and updating members along the way. The motion passed unanimously.
- Next steps: Beth Cliff and Jon Gage agreed to be the subcommittee and will return at the December meeting with a proposed plan for the Board to discuss and vote on as it relates to ministerial search at least as it relates to the next year.

2024-25 Ends

- The Board discussed the draft priority ends that had been drawn up and shared at the October meeting. These “overarching” ends would serve in addition to the existing ends that are currently in place and including in the policy manual, to reflect the current times at UU Westport and in our greater communities. Ultimately, the following ends discussed, and a motion made to finalize and include in the policy manual as follows:

TUUCW -

- Is a safe place to all people, mainstream and most vulnerable, who center Love in their lives.

TUUCW
Board of Trustees Meeting Agenda
Tuesday, November 19, 2024

- Empowers individuals to amplify their positive impact of our UU principles on the world.
- Supports a vibrant shared ministry based on trust and good governance.

Linkage

- The first Bagels with the Board was success on November 17th, with more than 30 people – Board members and congregants – in attendance. Ravi and Anita will send an overview to the board; in the meantime, Anita shared some inspiring comments to the Board as evidence that the conversations were thought-provoking and a great way for everyone to connect.

New Business, Process Observer and Other Discussion

- In her process observer debrief, Anita observed that there is always a very full agenda and not a lot of time to cover on it all. She suggested considering adding another meeting to the monthly agenda, extending the time of the meeting, and perhaps having a process observer from outside the Board to help the discussion. Anita moved that the Board obtain a volunteer to be a process observer. After a short discussion– including Beth’s strong desire to hold off on such a move until the Board had had an opportunity to fully gel as a team before bringing in others to the mix, and Mark’s comments that the meeting this month ended on time and with all topics covered well -- the motion was tabled. If desired, the Board can pick it up in December.

Check Out and Action Items

- Recommendations due to be presented at our December meeting:
 - How to collect a holistic and broad perspective on our identity and purpose – Brian and Alexa
 - How to bring closure around Article II questions and concerns – Anita, Felicia, Stapley, Alan
 - How to keep congregants informed plus collect perspectives on if we continue with a hybrid minister for one more year – Jon and Beth
- Board members to inform Alan if they can host a cottage party.
- Ravi and Anita to send a Bagels and the Board synopsis to the board.
- Felicia to update the policy with the 24-25 priority Ends.
- Felicia/Beth to arrange for congregational Emeritus vote in January.

9:10 p.m. – Meeting adjourned