

TUUCW Board Meeting Minutes

Date: January 6, 2026

Time: 7:07 p.m. – 9:26 p.m. (Observers left 9:03)

Location: Hybrid

Attendees

Board & Minister:

Beth Cliff, Felicia Keeton, Julyen Norman, Sari Bodi, Rev. Carlton, Jon Gage, Dayle Brownstein (remote), Ravi Sankar (remote, left at 8:27 p.m.), Mark Corcoran (7:10 to listen only) Alexa Marshall (remote – 7:14)

Development Consultant committee: Brian Lasher (along with Rev. Carlton)

Observers:

Kim Fuchs, Allison Smith, Nancy McKeever, Angi Haen

Opening

- Meeting called to order by Beth Cliff at 7:07 p.m.
 - Observer rules shared.
- Chalice lit.
 - Refection on gratitude shared by Jon.
- Check-in

Consent Agenda

- **Motion:** Approve minutes from 11/18/2025
- **Moved by:** Julyen
Seconded by: Jon
- **Outcome:** Passed unanimously

Observers check in

Nancy McKeever encouraged board members to share suggested board nominees in advance of the nominating committee coffee on January 22nd. Kim Fuchs shared it is her first board meeting and is interested in the discussion on the future of Voices Café. Angi and Allison just wanted to listen in.

Stewardship and Proposed Development Consultant Update

Beth kicked off the discussion and explained when she was asked to sign the consultant agreement, she asked Brian Lasher and Rev. Carlton to first review the agreement terms with the rest of the board to make sure everyone was informed and could ask questions.

Rev. Carlton shared slides and Brian provided background information. He reminded the board that the objective is to align pledges with staff costs by fiscal year 2029. At the June annual meeting, a \$30k budget was approved and allocated to hire a development consultant lead. At the October board meeting, Brian briefed the board on the RFP he planned to issue which was completed shortly after that meeting. The intent was to hire a local consultant to train volunteer members to engage congregants to participate in stewardship and secure funding plus support us in a bold campaign to transform our culture of financial philanthropy. Rev. Carlton, Ben Chan (Ops Council), Nari Viner and Brian completed the selection process. There is a ready-to-sign contract to hire a Houston firm called Brian Lacey and Associates (recommended by Ed Mahoney) whereby we'd work with two of their local consultants (Anthony Cernera and Chris Altrock).

Carlton then covered the gameplan outlined in the slides calling out how the timeline considers upcoming activities related to hiring a settled minister. Through Q&A, it was clarified that the consultancy cost is \$13k and their deliverables, between January 11 and June, include the following:

- A Culture & Engagement Report
- Three major workshops (event-based fundraising, individual giving, planned giving)
- Donor visits coaching

The board expressed several concerns including:

- The challenge in recruiting 4-6 stewardship canvassers to participate in the workshops. Rev. Carlton shared his plan to ask people to help out and will assess roles based on who he is able to recruit.
- How much impact can the consultants have during this short period in changing the culture? Brian suggested we can leverage consultant training and materials to continue the work. He also shared that the consultants expressed that they are interested in a multi-year commitment and we have \$17k available to continue working with them.
- Whether the focus on only stewardship was missing other revenue streams like Voices Café or other external revenue sources? Rev. Carlton said this can be explored.
- Will the consultants truly drive systemic changes that improve our revenue streams long term?
- The level of time and effort to put on a gala event in the spring.

Motion: To support the proposal to spend \$13k for a one-year commitment to work with the consultants on the agreed upon deliverables.

- **Moved by:** Felicia
Seconded by: Julyen
- **Discussion:** Reminder that we can break the contract if we are unhappy with the consultant results along the way
- **Outcome:** Motion passed by majority (7:1)

Next steps:

- Beth, the President, will sign the contract.
- Brian to join the January 27th meeting to discuss further the gala and potential uses for the remaining funds.
- Brian and Carlton will announce in Sounding that we've hired Brian Lacey & Associates

Treasurer's Report (postponed to Jan. 27)

Financial Handbook (postponed to Jan. 27)

Housing Allowance

Motion: The amount of the Ministerial Allowance as a portion of the total salary for Rev. Carlton E. Smith, Transitional Senior Minister, an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister, currently under contract to service the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Westport through August 14, 2026 shall be \$10,800 for the duration of his contract effective January 1, 2026.

- **Moved by:** Beth
- **Seconded by:** Jon
- **Discussion:** Beth asked Rev. Carlton how he arrived at \$10,800
- **Outcome:** Motion passed unanimously (Note: Ravi dropped right before and then logged back in after the vote)

Ops Council (postponed to Jan. 27)

Linkage

Dayle sent an email prior to the meeting and outlined her plan. There was some discussion around the best dates considering the upcoming stewardship workshops and other

activities. It was decided to finalize the date at our January 27th meeting. Sari agreed to help Dayle with this program.

Governance: Decision Making Framework

Beth reminded everyone that we're scheduled after service on January 18th to hold a member discussion where we'll explain the recommended decision-making framework (i.e., small, medium, large).

First Parish Brewster Motion (postponed to Jan. 27)

Beth summarized the request from First Parish Brewster. She put the documents in Dropbox for our vote so we can respond by the February 1st due date.

Voices Café

Beth prefaced the discussion that the Board will not solve what the future of Voices Café is today. Jon then presented the situation:

- Voices Café is profitable and funds our social justice programs.
- There currently is no one to lead this program.
- There is a disconnect between the Social Justice committee and Voices Café and how they are interlocked.
- Jon asked if the Board can voice support of the Voices Café mission and endorse a strategic review.

Key discussion points: Beth suggested that anyone can do a strategic review – this does not need to be sanctioned by the board. Carlton asked if the program scope might be scaled back so it's more manageable. Kim Fuchs reviewed a few of the benefits this program brings to our congregation, most importantly the financial impact to social justice if the program shuts down, then shared that the Voices Café committee is still active without a leader and they are unclear if they should continue being active. The committee wants board to demonstrate support for completing a strategic review such that it's not insular. Beth asked to provide the board program data to determine its impact. Felicia raised the point that there is a bigger conversation the board needs to have on congregation priorities and where we want to invest our precious resources (today we are spread thin across all the active programs). There was additional discussion about what the right next step is and the role of the board versus the senior minister. Kim and Jon will go back to the committee and they will come back with data and a presentation of why Voices Café is critical to our UU mission and what the recommended next steps are.

Executive Session (8:57 p.m.)

Closing (9:16 p.m.)

- **Action items:**
 - Beth to draft thank you to Art show committee fundraiser.
 - Felicia to coordinate Board members to provide food after a future service.
 - **Topics for next meeting**
 - Treasurer's report (catch up report) – Jon
 - Ops report and update
 - Financial handbook review and recommendations – Felicia, Dayle, Sari, Jon
 - First Parish Brewster motion due 2/1
 - **Process read-out** by Alexa
 - **Closing reading** by Sari
 - **Next meeting date** 1-27-26
 - **Meeting adjourned** at 9:26 p.m.
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