

UU Westport Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Date: March 24, 2026

Time: 7:19 p.m. – 10:07 p.m.

Location: West Wing, with a few officers and observers online

Attendance

Board Members: Beth Cliff, Felicia Keeton, Rev. Carlton, Dayle Brownstein, Sari Bodi, Jon Gage, Alexa Marshall (remote; signed off 9:30 p.m.) Mark Corcoran (remote). Julyen Norman and Ravi Sankar both absent.

Observers: Alison Smith, Eileen Belmont, in person; Rob and Terri Laug (remote)

Other Participants: Kim Fuchs 7:54 p.m. arrived – HR Committee

Opening

- Meeting called to order and observer rules shared by Beth Cliff at 7:19 p.m.
- Reflection and chalice lighting by Sari
- Welcome and check-in – board and observers

Consent Agenda

- **Motion:** Approve minutes from 02/24/2026
- **Moved by:** Felicia
- **Seconded by:** Beth
- **Discussion:** In future office prefers “UU Westport” over "TUUCW"
- **Outcome:** Passed unanimously

Open Sharing

Our observers asked a few questions which were taken duly noted. The Board will respond after the meeting. Questions were about:

- The balance between process and outcome in governance decisions.
- The board's role and responsibilities pertaining to financial decisions.
- Allowing observers to provide input before board votes are taken.
- Suggesting the Board to take into consideration the website committee's plans and insights as we move forward to update the website.

Minister's Report (Rev. Carlton)

- Rev Carlton will do an update next month given other priorities.

Board Minister Reporting Structure Discussion (Beth)

Beth discussed the role and responsibilities of the board in relation to the settled minister, emphasizing that the settled minister reports to the congregation rather than the board. The discussion highlighted the board's fiduciary responsibility and its role in overseeing financial matters and priorities. It was noted that with the departure of several long-term board members, including Beth and Ravi, there would likely be a need for conversations about transition and onboarding in the coming months. The meeting also touched on the importance of maintaining a strategic focus in board meetings rather than getting too granular in operational details.

Treadwell Gift (Beth)

The discussion opened a motion (below) approved of having the Endowment committee serve as custodians until the congregation decides how to use it. Specifically, the Endowment committee will manage the Treadwell funds, alongside other endowment investments, with earnings staying with the original fund. This money is not restricted by the same rules as other Endowment funds.

- **Motion:** To approve the following statement regarding the management of the Treadwell gift:

Temporary Endowment Management of Treadwell Funds

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Westport recently received a donation of \$802,009 from the Treadwell estate. Since this money was given directly to the congregation and was not an endowment, the Board has initiated a congregational process to determine the disposition of this generous gift. The Endowment Committee has agreed to be custodians of the money until the congregation decides on how it should be used. The committee will invest it alongside its other endowment funds. However, the money might or might not end up as part of the endowment, based on the congregation's decision. The endowment committee will release the money for whatever purpose the congregation decides on.

This was agreed by the Endowment Committee on March 3, 2026 and the Board on March 24, 2026.

- **Moved by:** Beth
- **Seconded by:** Mark
- **Discussion:** The group further discussed potential risks of delayed decision-making about what to do with the money, but agreed the current process is appropriate.
- **Outcome:** Passed unanimously (7:0)

Financial Report (Jon)

The board discussed the congregation's strong financial performance, with unexpectedly large contributions, Rev. Carlton's proactive Get Set-Go pledge program and our successful music program under Micah. These have all strengthened our financial position. Jon noted, however, that we're at the time when current fiscal year pledges will stop coming in while expenses continue. It was suggested that Stewardship discuss how we move to monthly pledge payments versus one-time.

There was also discussion on initial budget considerations for next year including:

- Potential staff compensation adjustments to ensure equity and competitiveness, particularly for the incoming settled minister.
- The uncertainty around utility costs, maintenance needs (estimated at around \$72,000), and the difficulty of predicting future pledge amounts given rising costs.
- Our UUA contribution, which increased from \$20,000 to \$22,000.

A separate call will be set to review the FY 2026-27 draft budget.

Preservation Advisory Group (Mark)

Mark provided an update on the Preservation Advisory Group's efforts regarding balcony repairs needed due to a nursery school inspection, with a structural engineer scheduled to assess the situation next week.

Roles and responsibilities between this and Ops Council need to be clarified.

Operations Council (Beth)

Ben sent a written update on various projects. This included providing photos, architectural plans and other information to support an exhibit at The National Building Museum in DC. UU Westport was selected to be included in their exhibit on notable houses of worship, which will be run starting March 2027. Various national news outlets - e.g, NYTimes, WSJ - might pick up as they have in prior years. Excellent PR for us.

The Board needs to address how Ops Council framework can be strengthened for longevity.

Memorial Garden Gift (Beth)

Beth shared that she had spoken with David Thompson about his offer to help fund supplemental memorial garden maintenance. Of particular focus for him is the formal entrance by the parking lot. His annual gifts will be targeted to upkeeping the garden, especially the entrance, and tonight's Board discussion and recording in our minutes serves as a formal record of his intentions and desires for his gifts. The Board is very grateful for his generosity.

Stewardship Update (Rev Carlton)

The board reviewed the most current pledge information which is at 71% of goal after two and a half weeks with a matching grant in place to encourage additional donations. Carlton is in the process of meeting with the top donors.

Fine Award (Beth)

Beth will share the URL regarding the Fine Award that includes a description, who has received it and attributes of candidates. The board must develop a list of candidates by April and vote on the recipient so there is time to order the plaque.

General Assembly June 2026

Westport will be a satellite site for parts of the assembly. The main event is in Kentucky. The Secretary will get an announcement in Soundings.

Linkage Program (Dayle)

Dale presented a proposal for conducting congregational feedback through a survey, with the group agreed to distribute after service refreshments on April 19th. The discussion also touched on the purpose of the Linkage program, which should align with the congregation's three established Ends. Felicia will help Dayle to finalize the survey questions.

Website Proposal (Beth)

Beth created an RFP to solicit proposals to refresh our website, drawn from the work conducted over the last few years, and with review from Rev. Carlton and Ben Chan, who is a core member of the Ops Council, and has website expertise in a prior business life. It includes a budget of \$17,000. She will send it out to vendors recommended by Rev. Carlton and his UU connections, and other UU Westport members.

April 26 Special Member Meeting for Settled Minister Vote

There was a quick discussion about logistics for this meeting which must be called by April 5th. A passing vote is two-thirds of members present (which must represent at least 15% of all eligible members). Because this is not a change to the constitution, no follow up vote to ratify is needed.

Executive Session

The Board went into executive session to discuss private matters as it pertained to HR policy and suggested Employee Handbook changes, and identifying Treadwell team participants.

Employee Handbook Updates Approval (Kim Fuchs, HR team)

The discussion focused on getting Board approval for recommended changes to the employee handbook effective FY 2026-27. Rev. Carlton had asked the HR committee (Kim Fuchs, Sharon Poole and Deb Garskof) to review our policies and recommend any adjustments to make sure we were fair and equitable with our staff. The HR team made the following recommendations: increasing paid time off according to length of service, adding a carryover provision for unused sick days, and making the week between Christmas and New Year's optional time off as decided by the Senior Minister based on needs of the congregation.

A motion was made to approve the HR team's recommended changes to the Employee Handbook.

- **Moved by:** Jon
- **Seconded by:** Alexa
- **Discussion:** Jon asked about hiring practices and because this is not relevant to the motion it was agreed to table this question for a later time. It was clarified that Staff is aware these changes are under discussion. At an upcoming board meeting, we'll talk about staff compensation.
- **Outcome:** Passed unanimously (7:0)

Treadwell Committee Formation (Beth)

The board discussed forming a Treadwell team to oversee the dispersal of Treadwell funds. They agreed on a team of seven members: Sharon Poole, Randy Burnham, Joyce Thomas, Diane Melish, Bob Welsh, Sean Feuer, and Cindy Potter. The group also decided to have Beth Cliff, Mark Corcoran, Ken Vogel, and Deb Garskof on hand to serve as advisors should they be needed.

Motion: To form a Treadwell Team to oversee the process of determining how and when the congregation wants to disperse the Treadwell funds, for what purpose. This team will report into the Board and manage and execute that decision-making process, guided by the Decision-Making materials as put forth by the Governance Council.

- **Moved by:** Beth
- **Seconded by:** Sari
- **Discussion:** None
- **Outcome:** Passed (6:0 – Alexa had left the meeting by this time)

Last business before adjournment. (Beth and Rev. Carlton)

The Board discussed the opportunity for UU Westport to join the Shelter Rock UU congregation at their annual retreat over Memorial Day weekend in PA. This invitation is by arrangement from the Feuer family, who have attended it for years. The Board agreed to support this collaboration, and to mention it during Trustee announcements. It thanked the Feuers for coming up with a creative way to give our UU members a semi-private family retreat experience, without the fixed costs required if we were to do such a retreat on our own (as, for example, we did for many years at Camp Jewell). All see it as a nice way to test interest for potential retreats in the future, with no requirements but individual food and accommodation fees.

Closing

- **Process read-out** – no observer
 - **Closing reading** by Sari
 - **Next meeting date** 4-28-26
 - **Meeting adjourned** at 10:07 p.m.
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