

## **UU Westport Board of Trustees**

### **Meeting Minutes - Draft**

**Date:** 6-23-26

**Time:** 7:05–9:30 PM

**Location:** Hybrid (West Wing + Zoom)

- In Person: Felicia Keeton, Rev. Carlton Smith, Mark Corcoran, Dayle Brownstein, Julyan Norman, Elena Rockman-Blake, Alison Smith
- Absent: Ben Chan, Sari Bodi
- Other attendees: Brian Lasher (in-person), Development Committee & Denise Carreau, Amy Feinman and Leslie Censi (all hybrid), Safer Congregations

#### **1. Opening (7:05) - Felicia**

- Welcome, chalice lighting and reflection
- Observer guidelines were reviewed
- Board check-in plus answering this prompt: What's one hope you have for the Board or congregation this coming year?
  - Continuing the positive momentum in stewardship
  - Supporting Rev. Terry in her first year
  - Strengthening communication, clarity, and transparency
  - Ensuring meetings end on time
  - Making board service sustainable and enjoyable

#### **2. Consent Agenda**

**Motion:** Approve minutes from the May 26, 2026 Board meeting.

Moved by: Felicia

Second: Mark

Discussion: Alison inquired if the Treadwell committee is required to share any congregation communications with the board prior to publication. Yes, board appointed committees should review communications with the board. Felicia will invite a Treadwell representative to the September meeting for an update on the committee's progress and remind them of the communications framework.

Outcome: Motion passed unanimously (6:0)

### 3. Governance Structure & Officer Roles for FY 26–27

The board discussed governance structure changes and agreed to pilot a shared leadership model for officer positions while ensuring compliance with Article 8, Section 4 of the constitution's requirements for elected officers (1- President, 1- Vice President, 1- Treasurer, 1- Secretary).

- The board decided to amend the proposal to remove co-treasurer and co-secretary designations and instead focus on sharing duties among officers (see below).
- The group agreed to finalize the structure and officer assignments at the July 27<sup>th</sup> onboarding virtual meeting. The team also agreed we'd review the pros and cons of this pilot shared framework at the December board meeting (if not before).
- There was a short discussion on the role of Linkage versus COM. It was agreed that there needs to be a clear distinction.
  - As a starting point, Felicia will collaborate with Julyen (who was formerly on COM) and Dayle to develop an initial role description which can, once finalized, be discussed with COM for input and refinement.

#### Revised board operating structure and officer assignments to be voted on July 27th:

- President\* (Felicia Keeton) & Vice President (Ben Chan)
- Treasurer\* (Mark Corcoran) and Assistant Treasurer (Elena Rockman-Blake)
- Secretary\* (Sari Bodi) and Co-Secretary (Alison Smith)
- Linkage Ambassadors (Dayle Brownstein & Julyen Norman)
  - Note, Linkage Ambassador is a new and important board role, but not an officer level position.

\*Positions with signature authority

#### Related Action Items:

- The Board will work with the Nominating Committee to fill the 9<sup>th</sup> Board position left vacant with Jon Gage's departure for one year. (If willing, this person could then get elected to remain on the board for two full terms (6 years)).
- The Board discussed a needed Finance Committee refresh including a role description. The goal would be a committee of 6 members that have finance skills and represent key program areas (e.g., music, social justice, faith formation). Most recently, members included Bob Trefy, Steven Grathwohl, MJ Cross (who lives in TX), Elaine, Mark and Jon.

#### 4. New and Ongoing Business

- Safer Congregations – Denise Carreau, Amy Feinman, Leslie Censi
  - Denise, Amy and Leslie shared their point of view and concerns about congregational safety. The discussion highlighted gaps in current safety coverage. Safety responsibilities are dispersed across multiple committees and there is no hub to govern and oversee all efforts, particularly with the transition from Rev. Carlton to Rev. Terri (who does not start until August 15<sup>th</sup> and will require an onboarding period). Denise emphasized the need for both emergency response and equipment check plus finding a replacement for Wendy Levy, who is an attorney, to manage confidential congregant issues.
  - An interim Safer Congregations Committee (SCC) was proposed and discussed to ensure any immediate needs are addressed. Denise, Amy and Leslie volunteered to spearhead this effort. Given some recent safety incidents, the goal is to first address any risks related to Sunday services by early July. The board will support their efforts. Once Rev. Terri joins and gets settled, the board can continue to champion the build-out of safety protocols and a more robust safer congregations' program by October 31st.
  - Felicia surfaced that the SCC is currently the responsibility of the senior minister at UU Westport. UUA guidance differs: the SCC *“falls under the congregation’s governing body (the Board) and its members are selected or approved by the Board.”* This is an area to discuss with Rev. Terri – particularly given the Board has prioritized streamlining the senior minister’s role in operational matters so she can focus on ministerial duties. Related, the Board will review current safety-related policies and what improvements are required, if any.
- Development Committee - Brian Lasher
  - Brian provided an update on the Development committee which includes the consultants’ contributions to date. He also reviewed progress towards the planned relaunch of the Legacy Society.
  - The group discussed the congregation’s approach to legacy giving, the Treadwell donation and if and how this or future legacy money might be used for future building preservation requirements (e.g., a new roof). Most donors want to target funds toward specific programs and not “operations”. The

discussion highlighted the need to develop policies and a giving framework to encourage a balanced distribution between unrestricted and restricted funds (i.e., if the roof leaks and the sanctuary is not usable, the music program will be impacted).

- There was a brief deeper discussion on what are the options for a restricted donation in the event it becomes impracticable or impossible (e.g., the sanctuary is closed due to a leaky roof and the music program must be suspended). The Board will connect with Endowment to understand more about current and/or future policies to address this situation.
- Other discussion points:
  - \$3,000 remains out of initial \$13,000 in the consultant contract for fall legacy work.
  - Concerns were raised about consultant expertise in assisting faith congregations; the board will maintain oversight.
  - The Development committee will ensure alignment of any decisions across the:
    - Treadwell Committee
    - Development Committee
    - Endowment policies
    - Board governance
  - The Treadwell committee must bring all communications to the board before public release.
  - There was a brief discussion, but no decision, about using what remains of the previously approved **\$30,000** for marketing and outreach to increase community awareness of UU Westport.
  - For the next pledge drive, there are plans to leverage consultant insights from 10 recent engagement interviews and create a one-pager documenting the previous capital campaign results to demonstrate successful use of donated funds.

#### Deliverables

- One-page summary of past capital campaigns (Rev Carlton & Sue)
- Consultant engagement findings to be presented at the **September retreat**
- Treadwell update scheduled for the **September board meeting**

## **5. Draft Board Calendar & Meeting Rhythm for FY 26–27**

The board discussed options for restructuring the meeting schedule (once or twice a month). The group was split on which option makes the most sense to accommodate all of the required board topics plus reduce the need for ad-hoc meetings. It was agreed that everyone will think about it and a final decision will be made at the July 27<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Other schedule related topics discussed:

- Whether or not to relaunch Bagels with the Board, as shown on the draft schedule provided. Everyone supported this as part of an overall Linkage program.
- Welcome schedule and the role of the board in making announcements. The protocol is to direct Sunday service attendees to the Order of Service and Soundings (and not to call out what's already published).
- Hosting a couple of board sponsored coffee hours. Everyone agreed to what was on the draft schedule. In addition, the board will work with Rev. Terri and membership on the opportunity to form a more robust hospitality committee along with a more robust worship associate program.
- The board will hold a member meeting in late September or early October to ratify the new search committee size of 7 voted on at the annual meeting.

## **6. Board Retreat Planning (8:30–8:45)**

Everyone at the meeting is available (including Rev. Terri) for a September 18-19 retreat. Felicia will confirm with Ben and Sari. The main objective of the retreat is to draft a 3 year board strategic plan. A committee will be formed to work out retreat details.

## **7. FY 26–27 Program Areas & Carry-Forward Work**

Everyone had received the draft of Board-related programs and Felicia asked them to read through it this summer and speak up if any programs are missing.

## **8. Website Redesign & Digital Tools**

Rev. Carlton provided an update on the 5-6 RFP responses received. It was agreed to form a team including Ben Chan, Ruth Fontilla plus others to interview the finalists. Concerns were raised about how the website would be maintained post-launch and the need for a dedicated webmaster.

Felicia shared that she will provide training on the digital tools the Board will use during onboarding. She suggested that we use Google Drive for sharing some working documents given we only have 3 paid Dropbox licenses.

#### **9. Closing (9:05–9:15)**

- Process observer report (Dayle)
- Closing reading (Julyen)
- Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

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## **Summary of Next Steps**

- Safer Congregations:
  - The interim Safety Committee to prepare a checklist of immediate requirements for Sunday services and share that with Rev. Carlton and the board to determine what additional support is needed to get this launched.
  - Felicia to reach out to Fredda (attorney) and explore her potential involvement in the interim safer congregations response team.
  - Felicia to add to the Board programs list if and how to align our Safer Congregations structure with UUA guidelines.
- 9<sup>th</sup> Board Position & Finance Committee Refresh
  - Mark and Elena to develop or update the Finance Committee description and charter plus create an initial list of candidates for input.
  - Felicia to coordinate with the nominating committee to discuss potential candidates for the ninth board position.
  - The Board will work with the nominating committee to find ways to involve parent(s) with children in the faith formation program either directly or indirectly in board decisions and discussions.
- Onboarding Session Agenda July 27<sup>th</sup>
  - Felicia to amend the agenda to include these business items.
    - Vote on officer positions.
    - Finalize meeting cadence effective October.
    - Finalize retreat date (firm up 9/18-9/19), agenda and planning committee.
- Rev. Carlton to coordinate with Sue O'Meara to prepare a financial one-pager for Brian Lasher on the recent sanctuary capital campaign for use in legacy/development communications.
- Rev. Carlton to connect with Ben and Ruth regarding the website RFP process, including next steps for proposal review and webmaster planning.

- Felicia to notify committees clarifying announcement protocols during Sunday services plus alert them to potential future invites to board meetings to share updates.
- Felicia to schedule the member meeting for the constitutional vote on search committee size.

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