

First Parish Cambridge Governing Board Minutes  
March 19th, 2024 at 7:00 PM  
(Virtual)

Present:

Cade Murray, Chair	Sylvia Wheeler, Past Board Chair
Jane Stabile, Member at Large	Rev. Rob Hardies, Contract Minister 2022-23
Nina Lytton (for 1st hour)	Carol Lewis, Director of Administration
Patrick Sullivan, Member at Large	Grace Hall, Governance Advisory Committee
Rich Lawson, Clerk	

Regrets: Lindsay Lucke, Treasurer

Chalice Lighting & Check in – Patrick Sullivan

The reading was from Pema Chödrön: *How We Live Is How We Die*.

The check-in prompt was: In the change that we are going through at FP what do you think is our role in that change - as a member of the church and as a member of the board?

Consent Agenda

There was a brief discussion about the reports from the Senior Minister and from the Director of Administration.

The consent agenda also included a proposal to add five new members. (They will be notified by Carol. Rob will invite them to the newcomer gathering in April.)

Tod Hibbard made a motion to approve the consent agenda. This was seconded by Patrick Sullivan. The motion was approved unanimously.

Board Priorities

Ministerial Transition. Cade Murray and Rev. Rob discussed the target timeframe to complete Rev. Rob's updated contract, i.e., late April or early May.

The Governance Advisory Council (GAC) will have a significant role in planning the Board retreat in May. This can be discussed at the GAC meeting at the end of the month.

One theme will be how to make developmental goals operational. There was a suggestion that it could be valuable to invite members of the ministerial search committee to the retreat since they were involved in refining the developmental goals as part of the ministerial search process.

Membership Program/Team. Details about this topic are in the minister's report.

There was a really good newcomer orientation in early March. The format is now feeling comfortable. Some of those folks have already applied for membership.

About 15 people will be directly invited to officially become members, ideally by April 21st.

Rev. Rob is leading a soul matters group for newcomers on 3rd Wednesday nights from now to August. Jane Stabile offered to join that group to represent a member with more tenure.

The program has been going well. It will be more institutionalized going into next year.

Rebuilding RE Program. Jennifer Goodman has extended an offer to a new elementary school educator, who is expected to start next Sunday. We will be fully staffed again.

Rev. Rob indicated that he is optimistic about where we are with our RE rebuild. There is a good cohort of young people. Keeping good staff is always a challenge, however. The next step is more outreach to families. If we can keep continuity with staff we will be able to build on the progress this year. It is encouraging that there has been an increase in volunteers since the Autumn. Volunteers now realize that they have support from staff.

The new RE Council has met twice. They are starting to think about plans for next year. Carol Lewis and Jennifer Goodman plan to meet weekly or biweekly about staff support for RE.

Building Update The report from the Director of Administration has more detail.

Sylvia Wheeler provided this update. The team is currently waiting for information from a structural engineers to be able to get an estimate for repairs to chimney and elementary class leak. The chimney repairs won't happen until Fall, most likely.

The Building Committee is already planning for phase 2, which is longer-term. Accessibility will be part of this planning.

Approval Kirwan Plaque Sylvia Wheeler provided background on this topic.

In 2015 the Board approved a proposal to honor Connie Kirwan for her dedication and support for the parish. Implementation was delayed due to construction and other issues. When her husband, Ernie Kirwin also passed away, the Leadership Team consulted with the Kirwin family and decided to honor both Connie and Ernie Kirwin with a plaque.

There was a motion made by Tod Hibbard to authorize the installation of the plaque. Jane Stabile seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

Sylvia Wheeler will send the final text for the plaque to the board once the family has approved.

The Kirwin family will be able to attend April 21st Celebration Sunday when plaque will be unveiled.

There was agreement that the congregation should have a policy about recognition, whether it is for financial or non-financial contributions to the parish. The GAC will be asked to develop this.

Stewardship Update – Tod Hibbard provided this update.

If the outstanding 57 outstanding pledge units commit at the same level as 2023-2024 our total pledges would reach \$304,000. Our target is \$315k, which was a stretch goal. With new members, we have the potential to reach the target. This is even with the backdrop of losing 9 pledge units adding up to ~ \$9k

There has been a lot of activity and a lot of progress in last 2 weeks.

There was a great kick-off event on the 2nd of March. Rev. Rob has spoken about generosity from the pulpit. Lay leaders have offered testimonials. Each newsletter contains information about stewardship. Visiting stewards all have their list of names to call; they will be starting this week. A lot of pledges are already in. Plans for Celebration Sunday are developing: there will be brunch, new member recognition, and the plaque unveiling.

Thank you letters go out tomorrow to those who have pledged.

Right relations work

Other church policies around safety have been completed, e.g., Safe Congregations, but there is a gap on right relations. The focus of this is on relationships between congregants or between staff and congregants. For implementation, the church would need a group of individuals trained in resolving interpersonal conflict.

Some work on this was done last year by Sylvia Wheeler and Jan Puibello. In that process they identified an important barrier: there weren't a lot of people who would want to be on a response team. This requires significant training, and individuals need to be on call for uncomfortable situations. There was a presentation to the board, but the timing was not right. The board agreed to have this on the table as the board plans for the future.

As part of the discussion, the board recognized that there is no active safe congregations response team. This should be in place. The last time there was an incident, there was no safe congregations response team so the issue went to the board, which is not ideal.

The covenant of right relations policy was written 15 years ago. This is supposed to be reviewed every 5 years, but there has never been a review.

The board agreed that it needs to think about implementation. The board needs to take responsibility for translating the policy into practice. This could be positioned as one element of membership development, which is already a priority for the board.

Rev. Rob noted that this is currently an area of vulnerability. UU congregations often have a hard time setting boundaries, and a hard time enforcing boundaries. Inappropriate behavior may be tolerated because of this.

Adjourn just before 9pm

*Note: Chalice lighting/check-in monthly rotation – Proposed 2023-2024*

*April: Rich (for Nina), May: Jane, June: Lindsay. (Sylvia is a substitute as needed)*