

First Parish Cambridge Governing Board Minutes
June 18th, 2024 at 7:00 PM
(Virtual)

Present:

Tod Hibard Vice Chair	Cade Murray, Chair
Jane Stabile, Member at Large	Rev. Rob Hardies, Minister
Julie Duncan, Observer	Sylvia Wheeler, Past Board Chair
Patrick Sullivan, Member at Large	Grace Hall, Governance Advisory Committee
Rich Lawson, Clerk	Lindsay Lucke, Treasurer

Rashid Shaikh and Lois Markham from the Racial Equity Team attended only for that agenda item.

Regrets: Nina Lytton and Carol Lewis

Chalice Lighting & Check in

Lindsay Lucke led this part of the agenda.

Consent Agenda – Cade

In addition to meeting minutes and reports, there was a proposal to approve a new member: Nafeez Ishmam Ahmed.

Tod Hibbard moved to approve the consent agenda. Patrick Sullivan seconded that motion. It was approved unanimously.

Carol Lewis was out of the office on this day, but she will notify Nafeez on her return.

Leading Edge workshop proposal

Rashid Shaikh and Lois Markham joined the meeting to inform the Board of an opportunity to explore an emerging congregational model being developed by Paula Cole Jones. She is a well known leader behind the 8th principle who continues to work on antiracism and anti oppression.

She is developing a new workshop to explore the idea of “Community of Communities.” The Racial Equity team is enthusiastic about the concept. The workshop would include half a dozen members from various congregations in the next year. They will be expected to meet 4-5 times per year. Following the workshop they would then Implement the model as a pilot in their congregation. The full program would cost \$1,500.

Sylvia Wheeler noted that this could be a useful new paradigm for looking at the community, and possibly avoid silos that we’ve had in the past. In principle it could highlight interconnectedness like ecosystem mapping. Others recognized similarities to Sociocracy, which has been researched in the past.

Patrick Sullivan suggested that if we move forward with this program we should be strategic about which parishioners participate in the workshops. If this is part of a strategy that would transform our communities as a church, we need to have the right people involved from the beginning..

The Board and the representatives from RET agreed that in concept this program could fit with the Board theme around rebuilding community. The model is not clear enough yet for us to know, however. And there is already a lot that will be happening at FPC related to community development over the next year. There was agreement that it will be better for us to focus on learning more about the program over the coming year, and then decide next summer or Autumn whether it would be appropriate for us to get actively involved. Rashid indicated that he would send background material on the program to the Board. He also offered to arrange for a meeting with Paula Cole Jones when the time is right.

Board Priorities

Ministerial Transition and Developmental Goals

There was a very brief update on the state of Rev. Rob's contract. That is expected to be finalized in the next week or so.

There was also an update on the recruitment of the new part-time minister. The search committee met recently and agreed on a lead candidate. They hope to have an offer out to the candidate early next week. The goal is to have them start in early August, when Rev. Rob is back. They will be expected to be present for three Sundays per month, for two of those they would act as the liturgist. Up to once per month they would be the preacher.

In addition to the part-time minister, Rev. Rob has also had conversations with Elizabeth Nguyen about having a greater presence at FPC, possibly in the role of "Theologian in Residence." This could involve leading services 3-6 times per year. It might also include an Adult RE course. That combination of the part-time minister and Theologian in Residence would cover most of the gaps in the Sunday schedule. This would provide valuable consistency while still including diverse voices regularly. Any guest minister would be more of a guest.

Membership Program/Team

Rev Rob indicated that his report included all the key information about membership for the month. He expects next year to be a good year for membership. The total number of new members this past year was about 15 or so, which is a good number. There have also been strong gains in Sunday attendance.

Rebuilding RE Program

Rev. Rob noted the great turnout on Sunday - children, parents, volunteers - to recognize the end of RE for the season. We've been told that families don't come after mid-May, but we've had a strong presence through mid-June. This was a good close to the first year of our rebuild of RE.

There were a couple of positive developments on Sunday regarding OWL facilitators. We want gender diversity. One male parishioner is actively considering this role.

The nursery will start up again on the 2nd Sunday in August. Families moving to the area may be looking for churches so it is an important time to restart. Lisa will be back. She will have support from Jennifer Goodman and/or volunteers.

Building Update (Chimney, A/C)

Sylvia Wheeler highlighted the good news of approval at the Annual Meeting of the proposal to address the chimney issue. There were good questions from participants, demonstrating interest and support. With this approval, renovation plans are on track - as per report. Carol Lewis has signed the Notice of Intent on the contract. There is nothing else we need to do at this point.

Sylvia also provided an update on a Partners for Sacred Places workshop. She expects this to be very helpful for planning ahead. There are a number of tools and resources from partners that seem like they could be valuable. The tools should help us reach out to the broader community, beyond our congregation, and to demonstrate the economic and social value that FPC brings.

The Building Advisory Committee and Carol Lewis continue to work with the Cambridge Historical Commission on potential grants. Carol will check to see if we are in the current cycle. If not, we can go into the next cycle.

Approve HEART endorsement communication – Cade, Rich

Cade Murray provided background on this communication, which was written by Lois Markham. Patrick made a motion to approve this. Tod Hibbard seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously. Carol will send this out.

Set 2024-25 Board Goals

Tod Hibbard reviewed the draft priorities for the next church year. These should be aligned with our developmental goals.

Main Themes:

- Building community
 - Buddy system
 - Communications team
 - Social life team
 - Encourage individual initiatives
- Becoming more inclusive
 - Support new music director
 - Encourage each committee / team 8th principle
 - RET transition
 - Save, comfortable, accessible for all
- Continuing to build RE
 - Support Jennifer Goodman

- Actively encourage increased volunteers
- Explore opportunities for adult RE
- Organizational and leadership development
 - Grow and integrate new members
 - Start with “forming”: data gathering and ecosystem mapping
 - Then mission, vision, covenant

Cade Murraray reminded the group that at the retreat we had discussed another part of organizational and leadership development: bridging new members into their “sophomore year”, i.e., beyond newcomers and before GAC. This was discussed as also being related to increasing our volunteer base.

Tod agreed and suggested that the Board, GAC, and the Membership Committee address this. Before the next Board meeting he will update the 4th bullet point to make this more focused for this year.

Patrick Sullivan recognized these themes from past discussions, and suggested that we specify how we will know we’ve achieved something in each area. Tod suggested that success can be measured by assessing whether we did these things. As we did in the past church year, the Board priorities will be on the agenda for every meeting so we can review progress and identify challenges. It was also helpful in the past year that Rev. Rob and Carol Lewis organized their reports around the annual objectives. Some of the wording evolved through the year, which was fine, but these routine reminders helped with follow-through.

There was a brief discussion about the idea of Board members liaising with committees, since the actual work will be done outside of the Board. The idea was to ensure that committees understood the annual priorities, and understood their contribution. The Board was clear, too, that the work within the committees was up to the committees. The Board does not dictate how they achieve their objectives..In some cases the Board, with support from GAC, may be able to help new programs get started, e.g., a Communications Team and/or a Social Committee.

Since the next Board will need to have ownership of these objectives through the new church year, the vote to adopt them will be at the July meeting, i.e., the first meeting of the new Board..

Adjourn

Before adjourning, Rev. Rob expressed his gratitude to Cade Murraray for his leadership over the past church year - as the Board chair and in so many other roles. He developed trust with the congregation and had a gentle way of bringing people to consensus.

The meeting was adjourned shortly before 9:00 pm

Respectfully submitted by Rich Lawson, Clerk.

Approved by the Board on 16 July 2024.

Please Note: Chalice lighting/check-in monthly rotation – Proposed 2024-2025

*July: Rich, August: Julie, September: Patrick, October: Nina, November: Jane,
December: Lindsay,
January: Julie, February: Rich, March: Patrick, April: Nina, May: Jane, June:
Lindsay. (Cade is a substitute as needed*