

First Parish Cambridge Governing Board Minutes
September 17th, 2024 at 7:00 PM
(Virtual)

Present:

Tod Hibbard Chair	Cade Murray - Past Chair
Julie Duncan, Vice Chair	Rev. Rob Hardies, Minister
Jane Stabile, Treasurer	Carol Lewis - Church Administrator
Patrick Sullivan, Member at Large	Grace Hall, Governance Advisory Committee
Rich Lawson, Clerk	Sharon DeVos, Member at Large

Siobhan Bredin and Lois Markham attended through the RET agenda item.

Regrets: Nina Lytton, Rev. Rob

Chalice Lighting & Check in

Patrick Sullivan read a poem by Amanda Gorman and led the check-in question.

Consent Agenda

Tod Hibbard drew attention to the Administrator's Report that included an amazing increase in attendance over last year. He also noted some elements in the Minister's report focused on a recent meeting with the Membership Team. In that meeting the Membership Team cited the importance of 1:1 meetings as a means to get to know congregants better. These meetings should not be used primarily to recruit people to serve as volunteers. GBIO uses 1:1 meetings primarily to build relationships. This becomes the fabric of their community. In the process, we also learn about people's interests, aptitudes, abilities and ways they might find fulfilling roles, but that is a secondary benefit. 1:1 meetings are not only about putting people into open slots.

Julie Duncan provided electronic suggestions for corrections to the minutes for the ad hoc Board Meeting. With those corrections accepted, there was a motion to approve the minutes and the rest of the consent agenda. That motion was seconded and then passed unanimously.

UUA amended retirement plan for employees

Tod Hibbard and Carol Lewis provided background on this change in the UUA plan, and referred to the documentation that had been provided in advance.

This will involve additional paperwork for the staff, but there is no budget impact from this change. There will also be more flexibility on when FPC can make changes to % contributions (twice per year instead of once.)

Following the discussion of the changes to the plan there was a motion to approve the resolution. This motion was seconded and then approved unanimously.

Reflections on Homecoming Sunday

The Board members who attended this service and the following service shared their views, which were uniformly positive. The major themes were:

- The music was sensational. It was a reminder that music can be a backbone to a service.
- The number of attendees was impressive, and the energy level was very high.
- Rev. Rob's sermon was very meaningful, and brought the elements of the service together

Racial Equity Team

Siobhan Bredin and Lois Markham, the co-chairs of RET participated in this agenda item. This was a follow-up to a request from the RET regarding the Visions antiracism training proposal from the last Board meeting. They brought a total of 5 topics for discussion and decisions.

1. [VISIONS](#) anti-racism training

The Board explained that the request for the full cost of the VISIONS training would take all of the program budget (\$5k for all program requests from all groups) currently available. Siobhan indicated that there may be some flexibility in the pricing from Visions, and possibly an option to split the cost over two years. The RET will look into pricing options.

Julie Duncan asked how VISIONS compares to antiracism programs FPC has done in the past. Siobhan didn't have the full history of programs from RET, but was aware of. Beloved Conversations, 8th principle, and SURJ. Lois Markham added that personal anti-racism training has to be ongoing. The both agreed to follow-up with other RET members to get more details on the history of training and how this course would fit. The RET has already compared VISIONS with UUA material and many other programs. They offered to share additional details about how VISIONS has worked with the UUA and UU churches as well as other faith communities.

2. [UUA's MOSAIC Fall Conference](#) (Oct. 17-20 in Bethesda, MD)

The RET leaders also asked if any Board members would be able to attend the MOSAIC conference. This is a hub of connections and resources for UUs committed to antiracism. Karin Lin would like to go - she has a hotel reservation - but she doesn't want to be the only representative from FPC. The registration fee is less than \$200 per person. RET would expect people to pay their own way. Everyone would need to be masked the whole time.

No one on the Board will be able to attend, unfortunately.

3. FP contribution to funding for screening of "[Bounty](#)" on September 29

RET has an Indigenous Justice Working Group. Julie Duncan is part of that. Julie, Nina, and Gloria Korsman went to the [Upstander Academy](#), which was a valuable experience. RET would like to sponsor viewing of a film with other Harvard Square congregations. The film is about a bounty on Penobscot people placed by a spiritual leader from Harvard Square. RET requested \$350 to contribute along with other churches (First Parish, Christ Church, and Harvard Epworth to split the cost three ways.)

Julie Duncan added that this will be an opportunity to build our relationships with other Harvard Square congregations.

A motion to approve this request was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

4. BLM sign

Lois Markham noted that the original FPC BLM sign was missing for many months, came back, but is now gone again. She also cited research indicating that people feel safer and more welcome when they see a BLM sign.

Carol Lewis explained that to put any banners on our building we need approval from Cambridge Historical Commission. The commission generally doesn't let people leave banners up permanently.

Other options Carol suggested included:

- Putting a sign or signs on interior doors.
- Requesting approval for a permanent sign board out front, which First Church has done.

Tod Hibbard recognized that communication is a theme for the year - including our face to the external community. Some of that will be electronic, but some of the communication will be physical. He suggested that it may be appropriate for the Board to create a communications group. He offered to develop a proposal for the Board and to talk to potential committee members individually.

5. Board announcement about our endorsement of HEART

Lois Markham asked when the communication would be sent about FPC endorsement of HEART. A message for distribution was approved at the August Board meeting.

The Board suggested that this message might be more visible if it were sent as a separate email. The Board agreed with RET that the message should be sent from the Board and RET jointly.

Tod offered to work with Carol to decide on the best timing to send this message within the month.

Building Update

Carol Lewis provided new information that was not contained in her report. The scope of the project is still to cut 4.5 ft off of the corroded beam. Some carpentry work will need to be done to make room for shoring. The timing of the project is into November now. The cost is expected to be less than \$100k. Permitting is in process.

June 30, 2024 Year End Financials

Carol Lewis noted that the report to the Board had been presented to the Finance and Development Committee, chaired by Cade Murray.

Tod Hibbard was pleased that the final values came in very close to what had been budgeted. He also observed that employee benefit insurance is expensive because the UUA plan is an expensive one. Carol Lewis agreed and said that the Finance and Development team will provide support as she investigates options.

No vote was required for this agenda item; it was for information sharing.

Y2Y/YOF Relationship Committee

Tod Hibbard raised this topic as a follow-up to recent discussions regarding Y2Y and options to provide housing for immigrants. In the previous meeting there was a suggestion to form a committee to work with Carol on renegotiating the Y2Y lease agreement and discussing how to provide coverage during breaks.

Patrick Sullivan volunteered to serve on this committee. Tod and Patrick will discuss this to get more clarity on the scope of the committee. They agreed that it would be helpful to include a member of Tuesday Night meals.

Carol also suggested that it would be valuable to invite Y2Y and YOF to an upcoming board meeting to support the connections between our groups. This raised the question of how to make these services better understood within our congregation. Tod will discuss options with Rev Rob, e.g., whether there could be an opportunity to address this in a service.

Grace Hall noted that the lease can be a focused, ad hoc group. The broader topic of supporting unhoused people more generally will take more time and may need to be ongoing.

Sharon DeVos pointed out that the new part-time minister has a history with young people and unhoused. She might be helpful in thinking about this topic. Carol has already spoken to Sophia about this. She only works 10 hours per week, which will be limiting, but this is an issue that is near and dear to her.

Oktoberfest - Tod

Tod Hibbard reached out to some people in the congregation to supplement the staff role in Oktoberfest with family friendly activities. Sylvia Wheeler enthusiastically took the lead on recruiting volunteers.

Julie Duncan spoke with Rebecca Balder about a social justice presence at the Oktoberfest booth in addition to the religious education component. RE has committed to the booth from 12-2pm, but Oktoberfest runs until 6 pm, so there should be plenty of time to include Social Justice.

Julie Duncan will discuss this idea with Sylvia Wheeler.

Matters arising - All

Julie raised the idea of adding a “flag” to name tags so new people can get a quick sense of who’s who: board members, committee (team) members, greeters, etc. She will distribute details about this option via email. She suggested that this could be a conversation starter.

The Board expressed enthusiastic support for the concept, but recognized that some logistics will need to be worked out.

The meeting was adjourned just after 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Rich Lawson, Clerk
Approved by the Board on 15 Oct 2024

Note: Chalice lighting/check-in monthly rotation for 2024-2025
October: Nina, November: Jane, December: Sharon, January: Julie, February: Rich, March: Patrick, April: Nina, May: Jane, June: Sharon. (Cade is a substitute as needed)