



MINUTES
Parish Board Meeting
May 5, 2020

Present: Gene Thompson-Grove (co-chair), Janet Britcher (co-chair), Karla Baehr, Ellen Blaney, Dave Demerjian, Charles Sandmel, Bob Williamson

Absent: Micaela Coady

Others: Rev Lisa

Gene called the virtual meeting via videoconferencing to order at 5:35pm. Rev Lisa lit the chalice and read an excerpt from Amber Tamlin's homage to NYC. Gene outlined the outcomes we hoped to achieve at tonight's meeting, and then shared a TedTalk, Phil Hanson's, Embrace the Shake, and members shared in pairs insights and feelings it provoked.

Budget Recommendation for FY 21

Charles presented the Finance Committee's revised recommendation for the FY 21 Budget.

Members asked clarifying questions about the projection for rental income and then looked at five specific areas of the budget that were highlighted for further review from our May 3rd Meeting

● **Denominational Funding**

Members discussed the services provided by the UUA. Members noted that last year the UUA shifted to a more equitable system for assessing dues in FY20 based on congregational spending rather than membership headcount. The result was a 50% increase in our assessment for FY 20 from \$19,000 to close to \$30,000, with the expectation that congregations facing large increases would increase their dues payment by at least 10% annually. Instead, First Parish in its draft budget proposed to reduce its payment by \$4,000 to \$15,000. Board members reached consensus to recommend maintaining denominational funding at the same level as in FY 20.

● **Payroll**

Charles clarified funding for custodial services: our custodian works 25 hours a week and his efforts are supplemented by a contract with a cleaning company specializing in deep cleaning.

Rev Lisa reported that Laci can "live with" the elimination of the \$3,500 budget in FY 20 for Nursery Caregivers, especially given the uncertainty about COVID-19 guidelines for such services next year.

● **Committee Funding**

Gene and Ellen reported on their efforts, supported by Rev Lisa and Alisa, to "unpack" the details of committee spending in order to develop options for the Board to consider. They recommended that:

- Spending on our memberships in organizations such as *UU Service Committee*, *UU Mass Action*, *UU Urban Ministry*, and *Interfaith Power and Light*, be separated out into a separate line item, "Memberships", and that the specific organizations be named. The Committee saw this as living into its commitment to greater transparency.

- The Social Action Committee be renamed “Social Action Network” to more accurately reflect its function – now that there are three separate committees leading the work in three areas that are priorities in our mission: racial justice, immigration justice, and climate justice.
- Reduce the Parish Board Budget by \$2,500 in acknowledgement of the financial challenges facing First Parish
- Transferring accounting for the \$5,000 from the Cedar Tree Foundation to support First Parish social justice work from the Parish Board to its own expense line in recognition that, at the donor’s request, it will be administered by the senior minister.
- Reduce the Worship Committee budget by \$1,000 for one year because not as many guest ministers will be needed because second-year ministerial intern Jud Wolfskill will be leading more worship

The Board adopted budget recommendations that will leave the FY 21 budget for programs and committees slightly higher than FY 20.

- Admin & Office Expenses

In response to the Board’s May 3rd inquiry about the likely impact of a 20% reduction in this budget, Rev Lisa reported that she and Alisa will be more comfortable with a 15% reduction.

- Buildings & Grounds Reserve/Capital Expenses

Bob and Rev Lisa reported on the work they had been doing with B&G chair Clint Richmond to attempt to project our capital needs in the face of the \$80,000 currently in the Building Reserve Account. Board members noted the reductions being proposed in line items that directly support the FPB mission (e.g., freezing salaries, eliminating nursery caregivers, reducing most committee budgets,) and those that support administration (e.g., the 15% cut in the admin and operations budget). Members discussed whether or not it was advisable to reduce the B&G reserve account. Noting that the reserve account currently has a balance of \$80,000 and that there is not yet a long-term plan for spending it. A joint Board/B&G working group is currently working on a five-year plan. Board members decided to recommend a 15% reduction, from \$40,000 to \$34,000 for FY 21.

- Fall Fundraiser

Board members agreed to support plans for an online auction next fall to be organized by members Fred Andree and Johanna Kobran in hopes that it will raise the lion’s share of the \$7,500 budgeted as revenue from fundraising for FY 21. The Board signaled its appreciation for Fred’s and Johanna’s willingness to take this on and look forward to supporting their efforts.

Planning for Congregational Budget Conversations

Board members shared ideas for conducting the one-hour virtual congregational budget conversations scheduled for next week:

- May 11th at 7:00pm
- May 14th at 7:00pm
- Sunday, May 17th at 12:45pm

Previously, it had been agreed that Finance Committee members should not be expected to be facilitators so that they can concentrate on responding to questions and making sense of the feedback to inform their deliberations when the Finance Committee meets on the 17th right after the last congregational conversation to finalize its recommendations to the Board.

Gene, Janet, Bob, Karla and Rev Lisa agreed to confer Saturday morning, May 9th at 9:30 to develop the facilitation plan.

Karla will have the Budget Building Blocks document updated by then, based on the final budget recommendation she receives from Charles.

Announcements, Reminders and Next Steps

- Gene, Janet, Karla, former Moderator Bob (Williamson), incoming Moderator Kimberly Rand, and ByLaws chair, Sue Andrews will be meeting on May 7th to develop plans for our virtual Annual Meeting.
- Gene reported that the Nominating Committee has assembled a full slate of candidates for the four Board vacancies anticipated for next year: Alfred Brownell, Emily Cherry, Jen Guillemin, and Margaret Williams (Treasurer)
- Gene reminded Board members to access the document she and Janet have posted to give input into the annual performance evaluation of our senior minister; she explained that with consent from the UUA, she and Janet have added an eighth category to the evaluation: leadership in the face of the Coronavirus pandemic.
- Gene will write the announcements inviting members to the Budget Conversations
- Gene will draft the Annual Report for the Parish Board and circulate it for Board members' comment

Ministers' Report

Due to time constraints, Rev Lisa offered abbreviated highlights of her report (attached):

- Pastoral Care: While some members have been touched directly by the loss of fragile loved ones to Coronavirus, overall the congregation is being challenged more by mental health issues than physical health issues
- Social Justice: in less than a week, the GoFundMe campaign in support of Chelsea Collaborative has raised \$6,000 toward its \$10,000 goal. As of this time, First Parish has not been called to offer host housing to neighbors released from ICE Detention at Bristol Jail.
- Membership Growth: A new member ceremony is scheduled for May 24th at which Rev Lisa anticipates six to eight new people will be joining.

Special May 19th Meeting

Gene reminded Board members that the Board will be meeting again on Tuesday, May 19th to finalize its budget recommendations for Annual Meeting on May 31st. Because of time constraints, the Board decided to defer to that agenda the discussion of RE programming and accountability planned for tonight.

Minutes of Board Meeting on May 3, 2020

The Board approved with revisions the minutes for its May 3, 2020.

Gene adjourned the meeting at 7:40pm

Respectfully submitted,

Karla Baehr, Clerk