

Annual Meeting Minutes May 23, 2021

Note: *The 2021 Annual Meeting was held via videoconferencing (Zoom) due to federal and state guidelines prohibiting in-person gatherings due to the Covid-19 pandemic; at the time of the Annual Meeting all Sunday services, committee meetings and other First Parish meetings and gatherings had been held virtually since mid-March 2019.*

Attendees were welcomed to the Annual Meeting at 12:32 by a recording of music.

At 12:35 pm Clerk Karla Baehr confirmed that more than 36 members had joined the meeting, the minimum number to achieve a quorum which is 15% of active members. She explained that a larger quorum would be required for the vote on the Annual Budget because the budget as proposed will require a withdrawal from the endowment. First Parish Bylaws require that any vote to withdraw funds from the endowment requires a one-third quorum, or, in this case, 80 of our 240 members.

At 12:35 outgoing Parish Board chair Janet Britcher called the meeting to order and invited Rev Lisa to offer a “Land Acknowledgement”, light a chalice, and offer opening words. Rev Lisa read words from Rev Heather Janules.

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Because Moderator Kimberly Rand had stepped down from that position earlier this year, the Clerk called for a vote to accept the Nominating Committee’s recommendation that Jami Jordan be elected Moderator. After a motion and second, members present voted overwhelmingly to elect Jami who then proceeded to lead the Meeting.

Newly elected Moderator Jami Jordan turned the meeting over to Board member Alfred Brownell who invited members to share a word or two in the chat that convey something that has moved them to become part of this community that is consistent with the mission. He then led members in a unison reading of the Mission. Jami then invited everyone to read together our Covenant, explaining that our mission is the why we are here, while the Covenant speaks to how we will be together. She reviewed the ground rules for the meeting:

- One speaker at a time
- Listen with an open mind
- Speak for yourself (“I”)
- Tell your truths and let others tell theirs

Parish Board co-chair Bob Williamson recognized out-going Board members Steve Pratt Otto and Janet Britcher, describing specific gifts and contributions each had made.

Jami described the “combined vote process” for deciding on the more routine business. accepting the Annual Reports of last year and this year, accepting new members, and electing new officers and members of Standing Committees, and accepting the minutes from last year’s Annual Meeting.

- Outgoing Board Chair Janet Britcher called for acceptance of the 2020 Annual Report, the 2021 Annual Report and the minutes from the May 31, 2020 Annual Meeting
- Janet presented for membership the names of the 2 people who have signed the membership book since the last congregational meeting: Barbara Cone and Tai Melendy
- Nominating Committee chair Mitra Morgan presented that committee’s nominations:
 - For the Parish Board: Jody Leader & John Mignano
 - For Officers: Jami Jordan for Moderator, & Marilyn Tressel for Alternate Moderator, Margaret Williams for Treasurer & Karla Baehr for Clerk.
 - For Nominating Committee: Lori Day & Carol Spitzer

After a motion and second, members voted overwhelmingly to accept the above recommendations.

Parish Board co-chair Bob Williamson recognized out-going Board members Steve Pratt Otto and Janet Britcher, describing specific gifts and contributions each had made.

Outgoing Board Chair Janet Britcher presented slides to summarize the Board’s recommended budget for 2021-22 (FY 2022), highlighting sources of income and major expense categories, reasons for changes from FY 20 and FY 21 with a focus on personnel costs, and the endowment draw. She reminded members that all budget documents are available on line. Her presentation was followed by small group discussions in breakout rooms, each facilitated by a member. The session lasted 15 minutes and participants were invited to respond to these questions:

- What clarifying questions do you need answered?
- What concerns do you have about the budget?
- Think about First Parish mission and what works for you about the budget, and ask: Where are you on the consensus ladder about the budget?
 - 5: I can say an unqualified “yes” to the decision.
 - 4: I find the decision perfectly acceptable.
 - 3: I can live with the decision. I’m not especially enthusiastic about it.
 - 2: I do not fully agree with the decision. However, I do not choose to block the decision. I am willing to support the decision because I trust the wisdom of the group.
 - - - - - - “the line”
 - 1: I do not agree with the decision and feel the need to stand in the way of this decision being accepted.
 - 0: I feel that we have no clear sense of unity. We need to do more work before consensus can be reached.

Facilitators recorded the questions posed and the range of positions on the consensus ladder.

Members returned to the whole group. Karla reported that 80 members participated in breakout rooms, the minimum number required for a quorum to decide on the budget requiring a draw from the endowment. Jami organized questions recorded by facilitators and invited appropriate members of the Finance Committee and Board to respond. The issues and topics addressed included:

- Explanation of why our building costs more to maintain than other churches
- Staffing and budget implications of the departure of Laci Adams, our Director of Religious Exploration
- Timing of receipt of the anticipated \$20,000 federal Payroll Protection Payment
- FPB membership in the UUA Health Care program for staff
- Costs for guest ministers as a consequence of the departure of our intern minister, Jud Wolfskill
- Salary implications of our senior minister's stage in the ministerial fellowship process
- Reasons why professional development expenses vary for different staff positions
- Anticipated fundraising expenses
- How the administrative portion of the budget is allocated
- The system or process used to ensure the Finance Committee applies a justice lens to its deliberations
- How our budget reflects our mission and could reflect the mission more going forward
- Plans for more congregational conversations about sustainability
- The failure to budget the full amount of First Parish's "Fair Share" payment to the UUA and whether the Board would consider directing any surplus revenue that accrues next year to filling the gap in funding

A number of members expressed appreciation to the Finance Committee and Board for the process used to develop and present the budget, including mention of specific supplementary materials including "First Parish by the Numbers".

When members offered no more questions, the Moderator called for a vote, noting that approval would require a 2/3 majority because the recommended budget requires a withdrawal from the endowment. The motion was moved by Jody Leader and seconded by Tanya Gurian. Members voted overwhelmingly to approve the budget: 81 yes, 2 no, and 1 abstention.

Board Co-chair Bob Williamson and Board member Jen Guillemain explained the Board's plans to engage the congregation in a look at what long-term financial and environmental sustainability can look like at First Parish. They explained that the Board is recommending that funds be allocated for external consulting and planning support to address both our financial and environmental sustainability challenges. The Board is calling for another congregational meeting to consider its proposals. They invited members to complete a poll asking for member preferences for the date and time of the meeting. Subsequent discussion clarified that a quorum of 80 will be needed because the recommendation calls for a direct withdrawal from the endowment. Bob explained that they hope to conduct the meeting before summer.

The Moderator asked Rev Lisa to extinguish the chalice and share closing words. Jami then asked for a motion to adjourn. Members overwhelmingly approved and the meeting was adjourned at 2:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted as a draft pending Congregational approval at the next Congregational meeting,

Karla Baehr
Clerk of the Parish