

DRAFT First Parish of Brookline Annual Meeting

MINUTES

382 Walnut Street, Pierce Hall

May 19, 2024. Meeting opened 12:30 pm

Minutes by Sarah Luchansky (Board Member) and Jody Leader (Board Chair)

Quorum confirmed (55 people in attendance)

Moderator: Marilyn Tressel

Proceedings of the meeting:

- Meeting called to order by Marilyn Tressel. Marilyn states that we have a quorum of >33% of active members for the meeting.
- Ed Page presented on the process to arrive at a draft budget, a summary of where we are today in terms of members, operating expenses and endowment draw during FY2024. Ed then presents the proposed FY2025 budget.
- Marilyn proposes to move into small groups for discussion. Proposal not to move into small groups, but instead general discussion (Laura W)
 - **VOTE** to bypass small group discussion is approved. In favor: 53. Opposed: 2.
- General discussion questions regarding the FY2025 budget:
 - The actual amount of the endowment is more than last year.
 - Yes, but if we had not spent out of the endowment it might have grown to 5 or 6 million over the last 10 years (Ed Paige)
 - How much income do we get from VOICES? Has this increased?
 - We have a complementary relationship with them and have negotiated for them to pay what they can afford. (Bob W)
 - Where might the additional rental income come from?
 - There is reference to this in the Annual Report, community engagement with nearby music school and Lincoln School (Bob W)
 - Are additional rentals compatible with our commitment to use the building to support migrants through IFSI?
 - Not yet determined if IFSI will bring people here. They would be here on weekdays 9-5. Most of the rentals are after 5. We also couldn't give them all the space (Laura W)
 - The RE committee will be reflecting on what we just had and what we can do. The 5 year idea of how we might grow. If this is our size, how do we serve them and be compatible with our budget. There are a lot of unused rooms upstairs, unused. There may be office space upstairs that could be rented.
 - The Board is going to create a task force in the fall and the goal will be to make a plan for the sustainability and we will consider all of these options. We will consider looking at other buildings as well. Maybe a smaller space is suitable. (Jody Leader)

- What is the plan for a fundraising event?
 - This is aspirational. It needs to be planned amongst us (Ed). In other years, we have had an auction, so we consider \$5000 is conservative based on prior years (Whit).
- How much money might we raise by having dance events open to the community?
 - The Board will be considering things like this. We don't know yet.
- Can someone give us an update on the Canvass so far? How many members are yet to pledge?
 - We are 2/3 of the way to our goal. We are still working on it and have extended the pledge deadline. Everyone is being called, not everyone has yet been called. (Ed)
- When we grew, we thought we'd grow ourselves out of financial challenges. But the costs then go up to the UUA and salary scales went up. Are we accounting for this as we project our budgets? (ie. That our expenses to the UUA and salary scales will grow if we grow)
 - The UUA looks at the reported budgets, not our membership, that determines our fees to the UUA come out of our operating budget. (Rev. Joe)
 - We have been paying 70% of what the UUA requests so we are already underpaying (Ed)
- We are a non-profit in Brookline. Are we expected to pay property taxes in Brookline?
 - There is no expectation that our funds support the town. There is a voluntary program to support the town. We could be approached, but it would be voluntary and we have never paid this (Ed, Clint). We do pay town services (recycling, waste, etc.) (Bob W)
- Why does OWL cost \$4500?
 - It costs that because we pay a teacher because we don't have enough trained staff members. This year it was Bob, me and a hired person. It could cost \$0 if we have trained people within the congregation to teach it and have volunteers. (Kiara)
- Will Ketih be able to replace Adrian?
 - Yes, and be able to pay section leaders appropriately.
- Can we see the program breakdown?
 - Ed reviews the program breakdown. Most expenses are similar. (Ed)
- Member comments they are dismayed to see that there is zero money in the membership budget, but \$1000 for a welcome team. What does this mean for attracting members? What is this for? How does the welcome team and membership team work together?
 - We had a membership team, and it was dissolved during the COVID pandemic. It is my intention to re-convene this welcome/membership team. This is a single function. It is something I hope we will address soon. (Whit) We are also looking at how to fill the gap of social media presence (Sarah)

- We also have a capacity issue, because everyone here is already doing a lot, and doing the best we can (Jody)
- The role of the DFCM was partly to have welcoming, outreach, was also hard. Always thinking we have a paid staff to do stuff, but he has lots of experience managing websites for non-profits. We have lots of stuff we can share out. I have ideas here, and we don't need to hire someone for this necessarily (Nathan)
- Member comment that they see us as a struggling congregation financially, yet we will give an increase to the music section leaders. The question is about the expenditure when our goals are towards multiculturalism and justice, even though the music is loved.
 - We haven't had a search committee in a long time. Music came up in our surveys as #1 or #2 of importance in the eyes of the congregation. (Laura W)
 - Keith couldn't hire a bass section leader for the rate we were paying (Carol S)
 - Music can be a tool for an inclusivity (Ron W)
 - What makes us a church and not a non-profit social justice organization? We are a worship organization, and music is one of those things, plus the potential for community. (Eliza B)

Additional comments/suggestions:

- Please think about overall efficiencies as we look across the staff and positions. The idea between the DFCM position, it was meant to help coordinate across groups and harness the volunteer energy efficiency. How do we use our skills, systems in place, easy for volunteers to do their work so that we don't keep re-inventing the wheel. (Barbara S)
- Music may be an outreach tool. We want to attract families, but he knew one family who left because there was too much ask to join committees and too much burden on families. (Hobson)
- It may be helpful to have an added column in the budget next year, which covers how much we actually spent. (Suzanne F)

VOTE on the budget

48 people present to vote on the following (>33% as needed for quorum)

- Vote on Budget item #2 to approve the Board's recommended FY2025 operating budget of \$550,538 and Building and Grounds FY2025 capital budget of \$80,000 and authorize the withdrawal from the endowment of \$260,000 (10.9) for the total FY2025 budget. Two amendments were made to the budget and voted on and approved:
 - Vote to add \$500 for First Friday community dinners.
 - Merge the \$1000 budget line item for welcome and membership committee.

- Vote to accept the budget is approved. In favor: 48. Abstentions: 0. Opposed: 0.
- Vote on Budget item #1 to approve the Board's April 11, 2024 withdrawal of \$65,000 from the endowment to balance the FY2024 budget.
 - Vote was approved. In favor: 48. Abstentions: 0. Opposed: 0.

43 people present to vote on the following (>15% as needed for quorum):

- Three nominees to join the Board for three year terms: Ralph Child, Sara Hansen, Tim Daly. We also need to elect Jody Leader to the Board to continue in her position for one more year as Chair. The treasurer is Ed Page, and clerk is Nancy Clark.
 - Vote is approved for the new Board members and officers. In favor: 43. Abstentions: 0. Opposed: 0.
- Vote to approve the minutes from the May 2023 Annual Meeting.
 - Vote is approved. In favor: 43. Abstentions: 0. Opposed: 0.