

**First Parish Unitarian Universalist – Canton  
Minutes of the Parish Committee  
September 11, 2024  
7:15 PM on Zoom**

**In Attendance:**

**Kitty McGregor**, President  
**Dave Williams**, VP-Administration  
**Larry Cotton**, Treasurer  
**Debbie Radovsky**, VP-Member Services  
**Jonette Nagai**, Clerk  
**Don Seaman**, Member-at-Large  
**Bette Wells**, Member-at-Large  
**Rev. Dr. Michelle Walsh**, Minister

**2024-25 Parish Committee Guests:**

**Rev. Dr. Clyde Grubbs**  
**David Bryant**, Assistant Treasurer

**Absent:**

**Welcoming and Check-In:**

Realizing this was the anniversary of 9/11, Kitty took a moment to remember all of those people affected by the tragedy particularly all of the firemen and other first responders. Dave noted that this was also his parents' wedding anniversary.

**Call to Order and Chalice Reading:** The meeting was called to order at 7:18PM. Bette lit the chalice and gave the following chalice reading:

**Why We're Here**

By Erik Walker Wikstrom

Here, today, in this place and with these people,  
May we listen so that we can feel;  
May we feel so that we can know; and  
May we know so that we can change ourselves and this world.  
May this chalice we light,  
Light our Way.

**Consent Agenda:**

The Parish Committee (PC) voted to approve the minutes of the August 28, 2024 Parish Committee meeting with clarification revisions from Michelle and a correction to the vote taken to approve the signers for the Fidelity account for the Parsonage Fund. A clean final version will be circulated to the PC and posted on the web page. A clarifying sentence to the August 28, 2024 minutes is added here regarding the minister(s)' housing allowance: The ministers are designating \$60,000 as their housing allowance and this amount will continue indefinitely until changed.

The Parish Committee unanimously voted to approve Tom Hanold and David Bryant as signers for the Fidelity account for the Parsonage fund so they have the power to make appropriate transfers.

It was agreed that draft minutes of the prior meeting be made available one week after the meeting. The clerk requests everyone respond within a week of receipt with comments or at least an acknowledgement so that final minutes can be included as part of the consent agenda prior to the next PC meeting. Too much time was spent on this item because the minutes were not finalized prior to the meeting.

**Ministers' Thoughts and Concerns:**

Michelle noted that communication between members of the PC needs improvement. She did note that there are a lot of exciting things happening and progress made toward some of our key goals. The programs for the Neponsit River Mind-Body-Spirit Center are getting a lot of positive responses, and last Sunday's service had great energy with 35+ attendees including 6 newcomers and 1 child. Michelle appreciates all of the good work being done. However, we need to be better about responding in a timely manner to email, affirming and hearing each other. Too much time is spent following up when people don't respond in a timely fashion and completing tasks/projects end up taking longer than necessary. If email is ineffective, it might be better to pick up the phone in some cases. This will help things to move more smoothly and more can be accomplished with less effort.

**Rent Policy Review:**

This topic took a good amount of time. Dave Bryant attended since he is responsible for managing our long-term renters. He and Kitty provided context and history around our current practice and what's been happening recently.

There was agreement that there needs to be better clarity around the process of managing rentals and what our goals are for rentals. At the end of the discussion, the general consensus was that: 1) our rental rates are too low; 2) we need to have more specific language in our contracts as to what is included and not included in the arrangement, particularly for some of our long-term renters and; 3) there should be language that makes it clear that rental rates will increase with in the contract.

We need a better handle on what others, both non-profit and for-profit groups, are charging for similar spaces. Kitty noted that we are not “A” class renters, but we are also not generating enough revenue to even aspire toward becoming an “A” class renter. No final decisions were made, but members of the PC were in agreement with the direction proposed. Two follow-ups were identified:

1. Kitty will be working with Carol Smith for short term rentals; there are posted rental rates which are generally used which need to be updated. The posted rates have not been updated in at least 3 years.
2. Kitty, Dave Bryant, and Debbie will actively work on developing a policy and rental agreement language for long-term rentals. This will impact the rental agreement coming up for renewal at the end of September for our largest current renter, Faith Tabernacle of Prayer (formerly Unity Tabernacle). It was suggested that access to certain areas of the church might need to be locked when not in use.

### **Dignity Fund Policy:**

This item was tabled until the next meeting. There has been no time or immediate need to address this topic. For now, we will continue the proposed policy of having Michelle informing Larry of any potential disbursements from the fund. She has no intent or expectation of the need to write a check for any material amount.

### **Financial Status Update:**

Kitty asked that Larry send the financial report to her as an excel file since she has difficulty looking at a pdf file.

So far, we are more or less on target relative to budget. Debbie questioned why there appeared to be no expenses related to the PC retreat this summer. Larry noted that there can be delays in entering in some entries into QBs. However, expenses were lower than budget since the event was held at Larry’s condo, and it is possible that Kitty may have absorbed the costs for the food. Debbie noted that was certainly possible and that she would be making a similar gift-in-kind for some carpentry work that needs to be done.

Clyde noted that we should have a formal policy around gifts-in-kind both for budgeting and understanding the true cost of things. Michelle and Larry voiced agreement. Clyde suggested having someone write up a formal policy to be passed by the board at the next meeting. Michelle asked Larry to consider this.

### **Sanctuary Roof Repairs:**

Prior to this meeting, the PC agreed on an allowance of up to \$38K to be spent for the repair of the Sanctuary roof through an email vote. This bypassed the constitutional requirement to get formal approval from the congregation. However, given the immediacy of the need, we all agreed that this approach was necessary. The why and how of this decision will be communicated to the members through the monthly newsletter, an email announcement, and

during service. The Ministerial Fund Trustees felt that the Parsonage Fund would be the more appropriate funding source for this expense. Dave and Kitty will draft up a statement for circulation.

### **Other Issues of Immediate Concern:**

**Vision Mission** – Dave Williams wants to move forward on setting up a mechanism so that we can start funding the DBA Neponset River Unitarian Universalist Community (NRUUC) or Friends of NRUUC. He asked for Larry and Dave Bryant’s help. Michelle indicated this should be fairly straightforward since we have filed for a DBA and First Parish will continue to be the legal holder of funds for the DBA.

We have a temporary logo for the NRUUC designed by AnneE Holden that is being used; potentially, this will become more permanent if people like it. The other immediate focus beside the funding mechanism is the website for the NRUUC. Although Michelle has reserved names for a website, we need to find others to take the lead on setting up a website or link to a page for the NRUUC on our website or something. A first step will be to meet with our current consultant Bill Taussig.

### **Updates on Follow-up Items from the August 28th meeting –**

- Develop process for handling cash donations at events.
  - No immediate need for this since Michelle has decided not accept any cash donations at the Thursday Neponset River Mind-Body-Spirit Center events.
  - Assigned to Larry to develop.
- Think about what the Dignity Fund policy should be. (All)
  - Tabled to next PC meeting in October.
- Michelle to circulate summary notes from retreat to Dave Bryant, Tom Hanold, Dick Mezger, Dave Biggers, Felisa White, and Laurie Burkhardt.
  - Done
  - No one appeared to have any reaction to the summary notes circulated.
  - Dave noted that Dick Mezger had questions, perhaps around the new structure, that Dave will try to answer separately.
- Kitty to write an article for the September Newsletter laying out information about Parish Committee meetings including policy and where to find out when/where they are. (Done)
- Others who are contributing to the September Newsletter to send their write-ups to Barbara Casaly and Michelle by Friday. (Larry Treasurer’s report, Kitty Welcome, Dave Vision Mission report, Jim Music Notes, Jonette Clerk’s report) (Done)
- Don to call together with Dave a meeting of the Congregational Life and Stewardship Ministry with Debbie, Larry, and Barbara Foley. (Done)
- Finalize repair of sanctuary roof. (Kitty)
  - Done. Approval obtained from PC to spend up to \$38K (see more detail above). We will be engaging the contractor Able who provided a quote for \$35K.

- Debbie to reach out to Nancy Devine and Susan Johnson to set up a time to start review the membership list.
  - In process
- Michelle to send Debbie the last version of membership list used for the annual meeting vote which is incorrect in not including Annie Holden as a member.
  - Done
- Arrange for celebration of Golden Anniversary of FPUU Canton. (who?)
  - Perhaps consider a fund-raising dinner?
  - Still under consideration.

**Follow-up Items for September 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting (including ones not completed from earlier):**

- PC members to work on responding in a timely fashion to requests and communicating better with each other. (Ongoing for all)
- Kitty and Carol Smith to work on rate charts and process for one off rentals
- Dave Bryant, Kitty, and Debbie to work on contract language and policy for long-term rentals.
- Continue thinking about Dignity Fund policy for next PC meeting. (all)
- Draft up formal policy for handling in-kind donations for approval of PC at next meeting. (Larry)
- Draft up statement for circulation to membership about the approach being taken for the Sanctuary Roof repair. (Kitty and Dave)
- Develop process for handling cash donations. (Larry)
- Debbie to reach out to Nancy Devine and Susan Johnson to set up a time to start review the membership list.
- Arrange for celebration of Golden Anniversary of FPUU Canton. (all)

**Next Meeting of the Parish Committee:**

In general, Parish Committee meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month at 7:15pm on Zoom. The next meeting will be Wednesday, October 9<sup>th</sup>

**Closing Words:**

Michelle read the closing words: “We extinguish this chalice flame daring to carry forward the vision of this free faith that freedom, reason, and justice will one day prevail in this nation and across the earth.” From the UUA Worship Web by Rev. Maureen Killoran

<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/chalice-lighting/daring-vision>

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 PM.

*Minutes prepared, and respectfully submitted, by Jonette Nagai, Parish Committee Clerk*