

DRAFT

Unitarian Society of New Haven
Minutes of the Congregational Meeting, held in person and on Zoom
December 11, 2022

Notes taken by Joanna Scaparotti Norris, Treasurer
Minutes prepared by Terry Bohnhorst Blackhawk, Clerk
Accepted by the Board March 9, 2023

1. The meeting was called to order at 12:06 p.m. by David Jones, President. Dan Gelperin lit the chalice, while David read *Look to this Day*, by Kalidasa. David Jones then read the Covenant. Over 100 congregants attended in person and on Zoom, with 32 required for a quorum. Vote counters were Becky Friedkin on Zoom with Kyle Manning and Sue Trotta-Smith counting in person.
2. **Approval of minutes.** Dick Platt moved to accept the minutes of the May 22, 2022 Congregational Meeting. Carol Cheney seconded. The minutes were accepted with two abstaining and none opposed.
3. **Nomination of officers.** Dan Gelperin from the Nominating Committee announced two candidates to fill current vacancies: Bobbi Pace for Vice President and Terry Bohnhorst Blackhawk, Clerk. There were no nominations from the floor. John Watson moved to approve the nominations and Cindy Chelcun seconded. The motion passed with one abstention and none opposed. (Biographies are attached to these minutes.)
4. **President's Report.** David Jones announced that Reverend Lindasusan is on emergency family medical leave and the Board's Vice President and Clerk positions have been filled. Other items included a November retreat to reinvigorate leadership and vision for USNH. David extended kudos to the Buildings and Grounds team whose 20 volunteers finished cleanup of the outside grounds and to UU the Vote volunteers for stellar work fighting voter suppression. Reports on outside projects included the Clean Slate gains for CONECT and new ways forward for the Waverly project. Masks will now be optional, as congregants desire, in the social hall for social hour as USNH envisions new ways to move forward from Covid, flu and RSV. At the Board meeting in January, the critical issue to discuss is the chronic budget shortfall. A budget task force has been formed to reimagine and revitalize our USNH community.
5. **Budget report from David Stagg.** David reported that the Management Team (MT) consists of Bobbi Pace, Jean Rosenthal, David Stagg and Rev. Lindasusan. Becky Friedkin will replace Bobbi Pace who is now Vice President. The first quarter showed a slight deficit, and the MT is expecting a \$45,000 operating loss by the end of the fiscal year. Balancing the budget is of highest priority. (The budget summary and David's remarks are attached to these minutes.)

In response to questions from the congregation, it was (a) explained that Rev. Lindasusan has been using accrued paid time off leave for December and is applying for Connecticut Paid Leave. USNH continues to cover their insurance. (b) A \$60,000 repayment to E&L for the Dryvit

DRAFT

Project accounts for the mortgage increase from FY21 to FY22. (c) The difference between Line 11 vs Line 13 in the budget is that Line 13 is traditionally 2% and Line 11 is extra per E&L.

6. **Building and Grounds report.** Jason Kyle reported that leaks in the USNH roof have been repaired and the roof's electrical issues have been fixed. The Dryvit project was managed by David Jones. Jerry Clupper reported on fall cleanup; Shirley Dion reports that lights in the parking lot have been switched to LED. Possibilities for future energy-saving improvements include installing a solar array on the north part of the property (there are possible grants for this) and EV charging stations in the parking lot.

7. **Other matters.** Lisa Anderson reports that the Budget Planning Task Force has held three focus groups to date and more are planned throughout January. (Lisa's full remarks are attached to these minutes.) Peggy Ray reports that the Stewardship Campaign will be held from mid-February into April with the theme Return, Reconnect, Recommit.

A motion to adjourn was moved and seconded and unanimously approved.
Adjournment at 1:13 pm

Attachments:

- Biographies of candidates for elected office
- FY23 Operating Budget Summary
- FY23 Budget remarks by David Stagg
- Budget Planning Task Force remarks by Lisa Anderson

Biographies of Candidates for Elected Office

Bobbi Pace, Nominee for *Vice President*

I am a child of this Congregation since the age of 6 and I have been an official adult member for some 33 years. In those years I have participated in many activities and held various roles. Here is a list of some of what I think may be important influences and experience during the past years, as I contemplate leadership on the USNH Board at this time.



- Co-chair of Membership
- Member of the Anti-racism team and received UU anti-racism training
- Member of several Personnel committees
- Chair of the Right Relations Team that created our Covenant
- Member of the early Policy Governance Task Force
- Vice President of a previous USNH Board
- President of a previous USNH Board
- Board member during policy governance implementation
- Policy Governance trainer for the Board
- Member of the DRE search committee
- Member of the Music Director searches x2
- Member of the Management Team currently
- Chair of the MELD team currently

My professional past includes 12 years as a chef and 16 years as an HR Director in a community health center.

What feeds my soul other than USNH today is doing healing work with horses and keeping my hands in part time professional cooking.

I believe USNH is on the cusp of an exciting and challenging period as we reconnect with each other and together discern at USNH what difference we want to make for whom. I hope to be a helpful part of that dynamic process.

I look forward to seeing the gifts this congregation can make in the world and most importantly the gifts we can discover in each other as we create our beloved community.

(continued on the next page)

Biographies of Candidates for Elected Office



Terry Bohnhorst Blackhawk, Nominee for Clerk

In 2016 I moved from Detroit, Michigan to Hamden, in order to lend a hand with my grandchildren, and began attending USNH not long after. My parents (now of blessed memory), one brother, and my sister were or have been UUs for decades. I'd never actually been a UU member, but USNH seemed like a good place to meet like-minded people and work for spiritual and social justice. I loved the music, enjoyed getting to know folks through small group discussions, found friends among fellow writers in the congregation, and became a member in 2018. I got great satisfaction from being a 'gold star' postcard writer and organizer for UU the Vote in 2020 and enjoyed various opportunities to share my poems with the congregation, including a summer lay-led sermon Poetry as Divine Defiance that I had presented as a guest at Detroit's First Unitarian Church some years before.

It has not been easy for me to leave Detroit where I lived since 1968 and had been active in the city's rich cultural life. I made many trips back for events there and began to make plans for a move to Michigan in 2023, all of which made me less available to USNH than I might have liked. I'd enjoyed being in the congregation but didn't feel deeply engaged, especially after Covid, so it came a pleasant surprise last spring when I was asked to submit my name for the board. At that time, I still planned to move to Michigan, so I declined, but those plans have changed. I closed out my Detroit apartment at the end of October and am finally and more fully here.

Rev. Lindasusan's Nov. 6 message about finding ourselves in liminal spaces struck me very personally, so finding that there were still openings on the board almost came as a sign. I would like to serve out the current vacancy as clerk, which seems like an excellent way to get closer to USNH and make a contribution.

Budget Remarks from David Stagg
USNH Congregational Meeting, December 11, 2022

	Operating Budget Summary	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Budget	2022-23 September	% of Budget	2022-23 Comments	
	INCOME						
1	Pledges promised		450,000			Assume Full Open July 2022 - Best estimate	1
2	Pledges collected	456,263	436,500	116,258	27%	Assume 97% collected at year end	2
3	Collection Plate	20,263	18,000	3,405	19%		3
5	Daycare Rental	58,133	60,200	14,350	24%	Over the Rainbow is new daycare tenant	5
6	Other Rentals	10,278	7,000	3,600	51%	Moderate increase expected	6
8	Fundraising	4,704	12,000	2,567	21%	grocery+food bank cards, books, tag&plant & chocolate sales	8
9	CONNECT Fundraising	1,681	2,000	0	0%	special SJ fundraising	9
11	Released from Temporary Restricted Funds	30,000	60,000	0	0%	From Gifts and Donations including \$15,000 in one-time gifts	11
13	Endowment contribution	23,767	52,782	9,429	18%	4% of E&L 13 quarter average of \$1,319,552	13
13a	Other income	1,211	2,575	184	7%	Coffee/Flowers, RE Income, Interest, Misc gain/loss	13a
14	Total Income	606,300	651,057	149,793	23%	Total Income	14
	EXPENSES						
15	Facility						15
22	Facility total	57,036	57,750	8,873	15%	Utilities, Maintenance and Repair, Property Management, Supplies, Landscaping with Snow Removal, Security/Alarm systems	22
23	Communication, Media						23
30	Communication total	11,428	11,910	2,638	22%	licensing	30
31	Committee Support/Member Services						31
40	Committee/Member Services total	1,904	4,255	372	9%	Membership, Covenantal Relations, Sunday Morning Team, Stewardship, Endowment and Legacies, Small Groups, Library/Archives and Pastoral Care Team	40
41	Denominational Affairs						41
43	UUA dues	15,935	16,410	4,103	25%	50% of UUA Request for 2022-23 of \$32,817	43
44	Finance						44
45	Mortgage	37,715	44,075	9,429	21%	Mortgage payment including repayment of \$60,000 loan	45
52a	Other Expenses	13,933	13,977	9,653	69%	Insurance, Accountant Fees, Bank, PayPal and Merrill Edge fees, CT sales Tax	52a
52	Finance total	51,648	58,052	19,081	33%		52
53	Personnel						53
54	Salaries (Minister, DLRE, Administrator, Directors of Music, Associate Director of Music)	267,151	275,309	66,598	24%	3% COLA this year USNH Board Top Priority	54
55	Hourly Wages (Sexton, Membership Coordinator, Child Care)	38,077	42,599	9,598	23%	3% COLA this year USNH Board Top Priority	55
63a	Other Personnel related expenses	142,611	150,207	29,150	19%	Health Insurance, Bookkeeping, Other Insurance, FICA, Pensions, Administration, Professional Expenses	63a
63	Personnel total	447,838	468,115	105,346	23%		63
64	Contribution to Sabbatical Fund	0	2,000	2,000	0%	Minister's Sabbatical Leave after August 1st 2024	
65	Trustees Research and Development	0	500	0	0%		65
66	Music						66
70	Music total	819	1,500	216	14%	Sheet Music/Library, Piano Tuning/Repair, Dues, Miscellaneous	70
71	Religious Education						71
81	Religious Education total	2,552	4,975	513	10%	Adult RE, CYRE discretionary, Teacher training and Support, Supplies, YRUU, Family multigenerational support, Background checks, OWL teacher training, Affirmations class	81
82	Social Justice	4,490	4,500	0	0%	All programs other than Waverly	82
90	Waverly/USNH Partnership TF	9,085	9,000	3,329	37%	Second Highest USNH Board Priority	90
98	Social Justice total	13,575	13,500	3,329	25%	Abrahams Tent/Columbus House, Anti-Racism, Peace, Kid's Service, Immigration and Refugee, Green Sanctuary, Preventing Gun Violence, UU-UNO dues, UUSC dues, Mental Health Awareness	98
99	CONNECT	7,000	7,000	1,750	25%	Second Highest USNH Board Priority	99
100	Worship						100
105	Worship total	1,252	2,225	380	17%	Speakers, Supplies, Sunday Flowers.	105
106	Capital Fund Contribution	6,225	2,249	1,863	83%	Provide some funding for Capital Budget	106
107	Total Expenses	620,539	651,057	150,463	23%	Total Expenses	107
108	Income - Expenses	-14,238	0	-670		Negative means Deficit	108

Budget Remarks from David Stagg
USNH Congregational Meeting, December 11, 2022

One of the tasks given to the Management Team is to review the budget at the annual fall meeting. This year your Management Team has been Rev Lindasusan, Jean Rosenthal, Bobbi Pace and me. As was voted on earlier, Bobbi has just joined the Board as will be leaving us all too soon. However we are very fortunate that Becky Friedkin has agreed to join us.

The handout is a budget summary covering 2 fiscal years, the 2021-22 year that ended June 30th of this year and the first quarter of the current year from July 1st to September 30th.

I will start with how we did last year which is the first pink column. From pledges last year we brought in just over \$456,000. On the left and right of this sheet there are item numbers to make it easier to refer to particular items. So that pledge total is in that first pink box on item #2. Moving down the list of other income items, Item #11 shows the \$30,000 we took from our Gifts and Donations fund as part of the income. That with other sources of income brought our total income to just over \$606,000 at item #14.

The remainder of that first pink column beginning at item #15 shows our expenses for last year. For most of the items only a summary of each category is shown. Let's go all the way to the bottom. Item #107 shows the expenses total and at item #108 when we subtract expenses from income you can see we have a deficit of just over \$14,000. However, that \$30,000 we took from our Gifts and Donations Restricted Fund really isn't income. So really the difference between our revenues and our expenses was a little over \$44,000 last year. If we look back at previous years, we see that we have been steadily eroding our reserves to cope with a steadily increasing gap between our revenues and our expenses.

So, how are we doing this year? The other 3 columns show the budget for this year with income and expenses to the end of September. The numbers are shown both as totals and as percentages of the budget. Since they represent the first quarter of the year we should expect the percentages to be around 25%.

Starting with Income at item #2 we can see we are a little ahead of the expectation at 27%. Many pledges were paid early and this almost certainly accounts for this 27% number. Item #5 is the income from our new Daycare center and item #6 is income from "Other Rentals". We have to give a big shout out to Jamie who is working with the increasing numbers of folks interested in renting our space and has already brought in more than 50% of the budget for rentals so far. Our total income, item #14 at 23% is slightly lower than the expected 25%.

For the rest of the items in you can see that most of our expenses are well below the 25%, the main exception being "Other Finance Expenses" at item #52a which is high

Budget Remarks from David Stagg
USNH Congregational Meeting, December 11, 2022

because we have already paid the \$9,000 insurance premium for this year. Our total expenses all the way down at item #107 are only slightly higher than our income resulting in a small deficit of \$670.

At only one quarter into the year, this tells us very little about how the year will end. We know that our health care costs will increase as the year progresses. Our facility totals will catch up as we have yet to spend the \$10,000 budgeted for snow removal and we will use a lot of gas and electricity for heating and lighting this winter.

At the top of the income section we show \$60,000 to be drawn from our Gifts and Donations funds. We fully expect to need most of that to meet the deficit at the end of the year and although \$15,000 of that is expected to come from one-time donations we have been promised, we are still probably looking at a difference between revenue and expenses of \$45,000.

So, what would the budget for next year look like? Terry Durham and I have started work on it and the numbers look very similar to this year's budget. We hope that the one-time donations promised this year will be repeated next year. Even with that, and the Endowment and Legacies contribution at 4% we are still looking at a \$35,000 deficit. Unlike last year and this year though, we don't have any money to release from Gifts and Donations to shore up the income. We have pretty much exhausted any funds we can use to deal with a deficit of this size.

In May of this year after a discussion at the Congregation meeting, the Board charged the Management Team and the Finance Committee with the formation of a Budget Planning Task Force to address the gap between our income and our expenses. We began work in earnest in August and have had a good number of very interesting and productive meetings. In a short while you will hear about where the work of that group stands. First though, unless there are any questions for me, Jason will tell us what has been happening with Buildings and Grounds.

Budget Planning Task Force Remarks
USNH Congregational Meeting, December 11, 2022

Good morning friends,

My name is Lisa Anderson and I am a member of the USNH Budget Planning Task Force. In May, the Endowment & Legacies Committee urged the Board, and the Board agreed, to charge the Management Team and Finance Committee with creating a task force to develop a sustainable budget model: hence, the Budget Planning Task Force. David Stagg, Terry Durham and Becky Friedkin are co-leading the task force. Other members are myself, Joanna Scaparotti Norris, Fred Morrison, Greg Seaman, Jerry Clupper, Laura Patey, Sally Connolly, and Rev. Lindasusan. If you are here, could you please stand.

We are endeavoring to do our work collaboratively with Endowment and Legacies, the Finance and Stewardship Committees, the Management Team, the Board, other USNH leadership, and you, the members of USNH.

Let's start with some context. As Rev Lindasusan so appropriately noted in a recent sermon, we are traveling together in liminal space. As you heard from David Jones, the Board and the Management Team have developed a congregation-wide theme for the year - **Reimagining and Revitalizing our USNH Community** in this new "post-pandemic" world we now inhabit. We are in liminal space because we are in a transition, a space between waiting for clarity and moving toward a future direction. We are in transition - a big transition. I don't know about you, but there are times when it feels like the world is on steroids - old assumptions we held true and fast are falling, and institutions are shifting dramatically.

Our priority at this very moment is to engage with the congregation around our dreams for USNH and what people need and receive from the congregation. Our goal is to **Reimagine and Revitalize our USNH Community, Post-Pandemic**, and we want to include as many congregants as possible. To that end we are scheduling focus groups with structured questions to help us brainstorm. To date, three groups of USNH members have met, and the comments from these gatherings have been very helpful.

In addition to the focus groups we are lifting up some hard questions such as:

- What is USNH trying to build for the future?
- How do we stay relevant?

Of course, many of our sisters and brothers in other faith communities are facing these two questions as well. The latest Gallup Report on *How Religious are Americans?* reports that less than half of Americans (47%) belong to a formal house of worship - a sharp decline from 70% of in 1999. Our denomination is also experiencing a steady decline in membership in UU congregations, which also preceded COVID.

Each of us in the USNH community are at a crossroads as to how we will engage in the challenges that face USNH. Each of us has a choice to make – do we opt in or opt out as we discuss the aforementioned questions and make decisions about our future together. It is the fervent hope of USNH leadership that everyone participates in the process.

Budget Planning Task Force Remarks
USNH Congregational Meeting, December 11, 2022

USNH is, as are many organizations, facing challenges as the pandemic subsides. We know some of our connections with one another are frayed and, for some, severed. We welcomed Rev. Lindasusan and were locked down for more than a year. In this liminal space, we have an opportunity to think creatively about our congregation. What is the church we at USNH are trying to build for the future? The budget and money, as always, are tied to this inquiry because we all must decide, together, how we spend our money and how these choices are tied to our shared ministries.

What we hear from you will directly inform the work we do to create a sustainable budget. A budget is the tool by which we fund our ministry at USNH. It must be sustainable, meaning we have a fiduciary duty to ourselves and our future to align our dreams with what monies we actually have.

We believe that this may turn out to be the most exciting and invigorating period in our lives at USNH. What we do matters to future generations—it is our legacy. We invite you to participate in a focus group after the holidays. You are free to contact budget task force members with your own questions and concerns or you may reach the entire team at budget@usnh.org.

Most of all, stay engaged and plan to vote in the spring on matters that will come before our community. At the end of the day, the membership votes on the budget, so stay informed and join us in this important work.

Thank you.