

Unitarian Society of New Haven
Board Meeting
Minutes for September 14, 2023
Accepted by the Board on October 12, 2023

Board Members present:

Bobbi Pace, President

Tom Ward, Treasurer

Joan Ciano

Alissa Chapin

Board member(s) absent: Kathy Haskins

Sue Trotta-Smith, Vice President

Terry Bohnhorst Blackhawk, Clerk

Kyle Manning

Becky Reeve

Also present:

David Stagg, Management Team

Reverend Stephen Kendrick, ex officio

Sunny Joy McMillan, Ministerial Intern, Yale Divinity School

1. President Bobbi Pace called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.
2. Bobbi Pace followed the chalice lighting with a reading of “On the Brink” by Leslie Takahashi.
3. Board members responded to President Bobbi Pace’s question re: hopes for the coming year. Responses ranged from gratitude for enthusiasm and cohesion in the congregation to humility about our values to hopes of getting to know one another better and concern about challenges to our democracy (especially given racketeering indictments in Atlanta, which impact a USNH family).
4. Board members each read an item from the Board covenant. A sign-up sheet was passed around and Board members signed up for chalice lightings and readings in the months to come.
5. The agenda was approved unanimously.
6. The minutes were approved, with one abstention.
7. Management Team Report. David Stagg presented and discussed the attached report.
8. Minister’s Report: Placing USNH’s situation in the context of the decline in organized religion vis a vis the US cultural landscape, Reverend Stephen Kendrick encouraged USNH Board and congregation to be “mad scientists together,” to be experimental and consider ourselves a “wonderful test case” as we move into our next chapter. He noted that while USNH pastoral needs are vast he has great confidence in the Pastoral Care team. He is grateful for the gracious welcome afforded him throughout USNH’s various groups and committees and mentioned ideas of using our sanctuary for outreach and programming. Stephen introduced Sunny Joy McMillan who expressed gratitude for the warm reception from USNH as she begins her internship via the Yale Divinity School. She especially looks forward to engaging USNH with Allison Cunningham of YDS’s “Reimagining Church” initiative that helps congregations envision their next chapters.

9. Treasurer's Report: Tom Ward reported on a successful Financial Committee meeting during which Sunny Joy McMillan was added to the staff budget. Sunny expressed sincere gratitude for the offer.

10. "Ends" Discussion and Retreat Proposal. President Bobbi Pace and Vice-president Sue Trotta-Smith reported on attending a regional board retreat focused on addressing congregational challenges and asked for suggestions about possible gatherings that lift up our values, with newly organized USNH potlucks as an example. Bobbi Pace explained that the Management Team (of which she is a past member) has struggled with how to prioritize desired Ends per Policy Governance since the USNH PG Manual lists 16 different Ends. Bobbi and the Management Team have worked with Laura Park, a consultant with Unity Consulting in the past and five hours of consulting with Laura Park remain. Bobbi Pace will explore the possibility of a Board retreat with her. Laura Park is the author of *Nested Bowls*, which Sue Trotta-Smith presented to the Board at the August meeting.

11. A list of draft questions for Congregational Listening and Discerning sessions was discussed; members are encouraged to pitch in with these sessions.

12. Safety and Security at USNH. Some congregants have been the target of phishing expeditions. Stephen suggested warning the congregation and encouraging members to alert the office at once when this happens.

13. Covenant discussion. Board members gave various feedback to the covenant item "respect the agenda" and found it to be useful. President Bobbi Pace asked the Board to revisit the description of the role of "Process Observer," for implementation at the next meeting.

14. The next meeting will be October 12, 2023 at 7 p.m.

15. A motion to adjourn was passed unanimously and the meeting ended at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Bohnhorst Blackhawk (she/her), Clerk

Attachments:
Monitoring Report 1.8: Communication and Support to the Board

MT monitoring of Policy Governance Section 1.8

(MT responses in red)

(The Management Team last reported on this section on September 8th 2022)

We note that the MT interpretations of each of the following sections says:

MT Interpretation: No interpretation required

1.8 Communication and Support to the Board

The Management Team shall not permit the Board to be uninformed, misinformed, or unsupported in its work.

Accordingly, the Management Team may not:

- a. Fail to inform the Board in a timely manner of relevant trends, public policy initiatives, public events of the organization, material external and internal changes.

The Management Team (MT) has attended all the regular monthly meetings of the Board. We have provided reports on financial matters (see c. below). We asked the Board for priorities for the budget, specifically the recommendations of the Endowment and Legacies (E&L) committee in February 2023 and presented our proposed budget for fiscal 2023-24 in May 2023 for discussion and approval. In October 2022 we reported to the Board on the creation of the BPTF (Budget Planning Task Force). At subsequent Board meetings we provided BPTF progress updates including plans for listening sessions with the entire congregation and individual BPTF meetings with the Finance Committee (FC) and the E&L Committee. We sought approval from the Board for a sole-source contract for repainting of the Sanctuary roof and reported completion of that project in July 2023. During the year, we asked for Board approval for the appointment of Becky Friedkin and Mark Bauer to the MT to replace Bobbi Pace and Jean Rosenthal. On July 13th we presented a detailed report to the Board on the work of the Management Team as well as an account of work done and needed on our roof and walls.

- b. Fail to report to the Board, in a timely manner any significant information it requires including anticipated media coverage, threatened or impending legal issues, claims, or lawsuits.

In our report on 1.8 last year we mentioned that Shoreline UU is worked with NPR to create a Radio Spot to “Introduce our Unitarian Faith (of 500 years) to the listeners of Connecticut NPR” and “to encourage listeners to go to the UUA.org website to find a UU congregation to visit online and in person”. Those spots began broadcasting on September 10th 2022. Although some congregants reported hearing those broadcasts there was no increase in connections to our website that we could detect nor any other significant outcomes that we are aware of.

There has been an ongoing issue with complaints from our neighbors Robert and Donna Scymanski of 45 High Meadow Road regarding the noise from the Daycare (the children “screaming”) and spillage of light from our Parking Area and building onto their property. The conversion of our Parking Area lighting to LED only exacerbated the situation and UI were called by Mr Scymanski multiple times to address the problems. For the last few months we have heard nothing about either of these issues but we will report any further developments of this to the Board if problems continue.

There have been no other incidents of the type described in the policy since our last report

- c. Fail to submit the monitoring data required by the Board policy "3.5 Monitoring Management Team Performance" in a timely, accurate, and understandable fashion, and which includes the Management Team's interpretations of the policy.

MT has provided reports as required by 3.5.2 a) according to the schedule determined by the Board. These reports have included statements confirming compliance or non-compliance in accordance with MT interpretations previously determined. We have routinely evaluated the interpretations but no changes have been proposed since our last report. We reported on sections 1.5 and 1.6 in March of 2023 although the report was not audited by the Treasurer (who had previously resigned).

- d. Fail to advise the Board if, in the Management Team's opinion, the Board is not in compliance with its own policies on Governance Process and Board-Management Team Delegation.

There has been no occasion where MT has formed any such opinion since our last report

- e. Fail to report in a timely manner, any actual or anticipated noncompliance with any Ends or Executive Limitations policies of the Board regardless of the Board's monitoring schedule.

MT is not aware of any such actual or anticipated noncompliance since our last report

- f. Fail to recommend changes in Board policies, when the need becomes known to them.

The MT has not become aware of any needed changes in Board policies.

- g. Fail to gather and consider as many staff and external points of view, issues, and options as needed, for fully informed Board choices.

MT has consistently sought the opinion of staff, committee members and others before bringing recommendations to the Board. MT has attended monthly Board meetings with the intention of keeping the Board informed of any matters requiring Board attention

- h. Fail to provide a mechanism for official Board, officer, or committee communications.

MT has worked closely with our congregational administrator to facilitate all forms of communication on behalf of the Board

- i. Fail to deal with the Board as a whole except when (a) fulfilling individual requests for information or (b) responding to officers or committees duly charged by the Board.

Formal discussions between the MT and the Board have taken place at monthly Board meetings in person and from March 2020 until July 2023 by Zoom. Some matters have been discussed beforehand by email or phone with the President or by email with the whole Board before being brought to a Board meeting.

- j. Fail to limit public statements about the official position of the congregation or Board on controversial social, political, and/or congregational issues to what the congregation or Board has formally and explicitly adopted as positions of record. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to infringe upon the fundamental principle of freedom of the pulpit.

Except as mentioned in b) above, MT has not made public statements about matters described in this section.

Section 1.8 of the Policy governance Handbook was approved by the Board: March 12, 2015

Changes to MT interpretation were approved by the Board: September 12, 2019

We report compliance with sections a through j above
MT 9/14/2023