

Unitarian Society of New Haven
Minutes of the Spring Congregational Meeting
May 22, 2022 at noon
Hybrid, Zoom and Sanctuary

Accepted by the Board June 9, 2022
Approved by the Congregation November 11, 2022

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this was a hybrid meeting, held via Zoom and in the sanctuary

1. Emily McCave, President, called the meeting to order at 12:04 pm

2. Rev. Lindasusan V. Ulrich led us in an opening reflection.

3. Emily McCave read the Congregational Covenant.

4. Rev. Lindasusan shared reflections on what the congregation has done this year. Most importantly, we have gotten to gather in person and get to know each other better. Please read the Annual Report - a lot has been accomplished, especially among people who haven't been able to be together as much as we would like.

We have had a number of transitions. We are saying good-bye to our co-Music Directors in June and bringing on our next Music Director in August. We said good-bye to our Membership Coordinator and brought back Jane in that role. Pastoral care is in transition.

We are weathering all of this together. Our full congregational covenant is a beautiful reminder of the ways we promise to be together. In the coming year we will deepen our time together even further. Thank you for being here. This congregation is the gathered community of people.

5. Clerk Aimee Cotton Bogush confirmed that there were more than the 32 members (10% of membership) required for a **quorum**, with at least 70 members present in the sanctuary and on Zoom.

6. Emily made a report to the congregation from the Board, which is attached.

7. Aimee Bogush moved and Jackie Trimble Shapiro seconded to accept the minutes of the December 12, 2021 Congregational Meeting. The MOTION passed with 77 in favor, none opposed, and 1 abstaining.

8. Proposed Bylaws Changes (attached), Emily McCave

Emily referred the congregation to the proposed bylaws changes, most of which pertain to the proposal, approved by the congregation at the December 13, 2020 meeting, to experiment with a smaller Board through FY22.

Gwen Heuss-Severance moved and John Stoehr seconded to approve the proposed changes to the USNH bylaws.

Fred Morrison, chair of the Endowment & Legacies Committee noted that he is not sure what is being proposed with respect to reporting to the Board on "plans for all Endowment and Investment Funds." The committee uses asset allocation to manage the endowment. What

exactly is being looked for? This should also refer only to investment funds under the purview of the E&L committee.

Greg Seaman asked for the origin of changing Article IX to increase the required congregational vote to call a minister from two-thirds to 90%. Emily and Rev. Lindasusan stated that a minister is not comfortable coming to a congregation that votes less than 90% in favor of calling.

Jane and Dick Platt offered a historical note, that in 1955, Rev. Wayne Shuttee was told that it was his duty to come and save the foundering congregation. He accepted the call with an 86% vote and stayed here for many years.

Jayne Kleinman asked for clarification about not having the previous president on the Board.

Emily noted that the Board experimented this year to see what it was like to not have the immediate past president on the Board and attending meetings. The past president was still available for consultation, but we think this makes us more efficient. Leadership development is challenging. The three-year commitment at the officer level is demanding. How do we recruit and retain Board members and officers? This gives more flexibility in that the past president can be involved but doesn't have to commit to 3 years of meeting attendance.

Rev. Lindasusan noted that studies of congregation boards have found that those who deemed themselves to be most effective had 7 or 8 members. Smaller boards felt overwhelmed, larger boards felt unwieldy. The Board felt it was important to do incremental change. Additional changes to board size may be something for future boards to consider. **The MOTION passed** with 87 in favor, none opposed, and 1 abstaining.

9. Nominations for elected office (attached), Gretchen Frazier, Nominating Committee

Gretchen Frazier of the Nominating Committee presented the slate of candidates, as chair Dan Gelperin could not be at the meeting. She noted that the office of Vice President is still vacant and will need to be filled quickly.

Jackie Trimble Shapiro moved and Gwen Heuss-Severance seconded that the slate of candidates be accepted. Gretchen asked for nominations from the floor. Hearing none, the vote proceeded. **The MOTION passed** with 82 in favor, none opposed, and no abstentions.

10. Report on the FY22 Budget, Larry Copes, Treasurer

Treasurer Larry Copes reported that the finances of the congregation are being stewarded with integrity and in compliance with the policies set by the congregation and the elected Board of Trustees. He then shared and explained a Balance Sheet summary (attached). The document includes some metrics of financial health. The current ratio of assets divided by liabilities would be concerning if it were less than 1. In fact, it is well above 1. Depending on how it is calculated, we could pay our bills for 2 to 7 months if all revenue ceased. The final metric, net income less net revenue, is more concerning, indicating we have been living beyond our means. However, Larry opted not to include a 2% contribution from the endowment, which would mitigate this to some extent.

Jackie Trimble Shapiro noted that the balance sheet shows \$124,000 in checking, and asked why we have so much cash in a checking account. David Stagg responded that 15 temporarily restricted funds are listed in the cash section but this is not unrestricted cash.

11. Proposed FY23 Budget (attached), David Stagg, Management Team

David's remarks are attached to these minutes.

Patricia McChesney, chair of the CYRE Committee, expressed discomfort that Jesse Greist's professional development budget was reduced to help balance the budget. She stated that Jesse is a valued staff member and that professional development is a standard part of a compensation package for religious educators.

Fred Morrison underscored the importance of the financial planning task force to explore ways to balance revenue and expenses. Over the past 3-4 years we have had declining membership and revenue and increasing expenses. We have used up unrestricted or temporarily restricted assets, so there are little to cover shortfalls in the future. We have to restructure what we are expected to do with our assets and our expenses. We have to look at our aspirations, mission, and what are our abilities to meet those aspirations. I look forward to the task force bringing into balance expenses and revenue as we project out over the next several years.

Greg Seaman said it is not clear we can afford everything we have done for years. We have used temporarily restricted funds to balance the budget in the past. We need to question CONECT, the number of staff, everything. We have been kicking the can down the road for years. He wishes the task force well.

Lurline deVos noted on Zoom that we are creative people who can find exciting new sources of income.

Greg Feeley moved and Gretchen Frazier seconded to accept the proposed FY23 operating budget. **The MOTION passed** with 71 in favor, 1 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

12. Proposed FY23 Capital Budget (attached), Jason Kyle, Chair, Buildings & Grounds

Jason described the projects the Building & Grounds Committee intends to complete with the proposed FY23 Capital Budget, including the first phase of a multi-year project to repair the stucco siding and its connections with the roofing, which will commence this summer. Jason's remarks are attached to these minutes.

Bob Congdon thanked Jason for the work and asked if there are any issues with siding or roofing for the sanctuary. Jason responded that the sanctuary roof and siding seem to be in pretty good order, aside from some mildew that can be power washed. The current sanctuary roof is good for now and the sky lights have been taken care of fairly recently.

Barbara Orrok acknowledged her naivete, but noted that it seems that we have had recurrent problems with the building for decades. Is our building falling apart or is it in better condition than I am remembering?

Jason replied that our building is a bit of a jigsaw puzzle, since it has grown as the congregation grew. By and large the roof is in good shape with a couple of exceptions. Most of the problems are with the seams and the flashing between the roof and the stucco siding.

Bill Goward noted that the original building was built in 1962 - that's how long it has lasted. Buildings tend to break down, like bodies, and need more help as they age.

Lurline deVos commented in the chat that flat roofs are not the best in this climate.

Peggy Myers in the chat asked if there is a stage 2 to this plan. Jason explained that there is a thorough recommendation for work to be done in the short-term and in 5 and 10 years. The most crucial work is being addressed now.

Jason invited congregants to reach out to him or to building@usnh.org with any items or issues that need to be addressed by the Building and Grounds Committee.

Gretchen Frazier moved and Shirley Dion seconded to accept the proposed FY23 Capital Budget. **The MOTION passed** with 72 in favor, none opposed, and no abstentions.

13. Report from Stewardship, Peggy Rae, Stewardship Committee
Peggy's remarks are attached to these minutes.

Liz Appel asked how many members we currently have and how many we have had in the past two years. Rev. Lindasusan stated that the most recent certification with UUA in February was 308 members. The previous year may have been 329 but there was a quirk in how some were counted, so the change to 308 is less of a drop than it might seem. The year before, was 333, and 365 four years ago. They noted that we are not alone in this trend. It has been difficult during the pandemic to get new members.

Pat and Paul Trotta - Stewardship was short staffed last year, is it fully staffed for next year?
Peggy: We had five people this year, three of whom are continuing, would like another three members at least.

Rev. Lindasusan noted that they often talk about generosity as a spiritual value. Being on the Stewardship team is about building relationships and encouraging people to think about what they value and how they reflect that in their lives. It's a wonderful opportunity for folks newer to the congregation to hear what people care about, what they need from the congregation, their hopes and dreams for the congregation. Don't be scared of talking about money - it is just a tool we use to make our dreams come true.

14. Report on the Council of Chairs

Jean Rosenthal was not present at the meeting. Rev. Lindasusan noted that the Council of Chairs met a week and half ago. In addition to reporting on what they had done since the February meeting, a key thing reported on was how committees are implementing the 8th principle in their work.

Rev. Lindasusan noted that there is a lot of wonderful information in the congregational Annual Report. They suggested that committees review their annual reports when they meet again in the fall, to refresh memories and so that the document helps guide work going forward.

15. Emily closed the meeting with a reading.

16. Emily moved and Bernice Marie-Daly seconded to adjourn the meeting.
The MOTION passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 1:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Aimee Cotton Bogush, Clerk