

FirstU Board Meeting Minutes

Our mission is to “Kindle the light within and inspire courage
to nurture the web of life and to create a just and compassionate world.”

Date: Wednesday 2024/11/20

Time: 7pm-9pm (Hybrid)

Main Goals: To review campus development issues and decide on the format of a dashboard

Attendance: Chuck, Mary Ella, Brent, Amy, Rev. Eric, Jen Brennan, Carmen, Guy, Carl, Phil

Regrets: Michelle, Nancy

FirstU Strategic Plan (2022-26) Key Goals:

- An energized spirituality
- A renewed, growing and diverse congregation
- A firm commitment to social and climate justice
- A responsible, mission-oriented campus development
- Reliable structures and resources to support congregational priorities and growth

Minutes

Item
1. Call to Order ○ Check-in ○ Opening Reading [Chuck] ○ Assignment of Timekeeper [Carmen] and Process Monitor [Eric]
2. Consent Agenda: ○ Approval of this Agenda i. Add FCM debrief and nominating committee to agenda ○ Approval of Board Minutes 2024/10/16 [Att. 1] ○ Randy Hardy to the Finance Committee [Att. 2] ○ Changes to Financial Policy 9 [Att. 3] Moved by Guy, Seconded by Carmen to approve the consent agenda. Passed
3. Discussion of any items from Consent Agenda ○ Financial Policy review. Put common questions right into the policy
4. Minister's Report [Rev Eric] [Att. 4] ○ Eric and Brent will join MBG on Friday to discuss Larry's MBG policy organizational and financial policy documents. Brent has already drafted a response, but Friday's discussion with MBG will only be a verbal, informal discussion. Executive has reviewed Larry's

documentation

- o Eric did remembrance day ceremony for both UHouse and FirstU
 - o Canadian work permit denied. Will work with Allison H. (immigration expert) and Jane L. to get it approved. Also, Eric can consult Guy regarding immigration status. Current permit extension would have expired on Dec. 27th 2024, but current Immigration Canada letter says Eric's work permit has expired (been rescinded). Eric can't leave Canada until the permit is extended/approved. Other American UU pastors recommend hiring an immigration lawyer.
 - o According to Canada Immigration detail clergy should be exempt from needing work permits.
 - o Last 10 weeks over 100 in attendance at Sunday services
 - o Looking to add Mary Ann O'Hagan to his advisory committee
 - o Brent says a lawyer is not needed for temporary work permit renewal.
- Moved: Rev. Eric is authorized to hire an immigration lawyer, if necessary. regarding permanent resident status, to a maximum of \$10,000. |
- Moved: Amy, Seconded Phil. Unanimous

Commented [1]: I thought it would be better to move these because now it looks like they're somehow connected to the motion.

5. President's Report [Note 1]

- o 2 congregants are resigning but 2 + new congregants are joining
- o Chuck and Rabbi Liz (event speaker), Paul M. attended the Welcome Refugees event. Photo provided

6. Treasurer's Report – Phil to provide verbally; also Att. 10, third quarter Investment Report

Pledges

- Goal 205 pledges
- To date 162
- Expected to continue, 25
- Total 187
- Hope to get 18 more

Main campaign

- Goal \$328,000
- To date, \$307,700
- Expected to continue, \$24,200
- Total \$331,900
- Possible from phone calls, \$10,700

Help Staff Help Us campaign

- Goal \$23,000
- To date, \$21,000
- Number of contributors, 54

Detail on main campaign

- 13 pledges lower than last year, \$13,000
- 74 pledges same as last year, \$109,000
 - o Excluding those expected to continue
- 67 pledges increased from last year, \$178,000

- 9 pledges new or returning after absence, \$7,200

Investments Summary:

- Do we record failed pledges? Usually we get 95% of the dollar value pledged
- Investments Q3 – went up 7.4% (0.8% above benchmark)
- All 4 Qtrs of 2024 up ~11% increase – about 5% behind 2nd Qtr
- Total investment gain up about 10%
- After US election, stocks took a large jump. Michelle will talk with our financial advisor regarding US impacts
- Congregational projected deficit was \$175K, but it's actually much lower at \$77,536, due to exceptional investment performance and some reduced expenses and increased revenues.
- Because of the much lower deficit we will use \$17,200 (estimated Ajashki end-of-year deficit) to help cover the Ajashki 2024 shortfall
- The additional \$17.2k being transferred to Ajashki will increase our 2024 deficit to approximately \$94.7K, still much lower than originally budgeted
- Note: The \$94.7k FirstU deficit does not include a potential \$10k in legal fees for Rev. Eric's immigration work status discussed below and for which this cost may be split between the fiscal years of 2024 and 2025
- Compared with other UU congregations across North America we're actually doing better because of investments and with expected Theia building income'

Commented [2]: Carl - This doesn't read right. Is it 'FirstU congregations' or 'UU congregations'?

7. (Goal: A firm commitment to social and climate justice) Proposal to fund Ajashki salary expenses through the end of 2024 [Att.8]

- \$17.2K from FirstU will supply salary deficit for end of 2024, with Kayoki taking on a leadership role
Moved by Guy, seconded by Brent to provide the funding (estimated to be \$17,200) required to maintain the Ajashki Program through 2024. Passed

Fi 8. (Goal: A Responsible, Mission-Oriented Campus Development)
Campus development [Note 2]

- Update regarding the project
 - See President's report for details
 - Wrinkle in the OAHS agreement. OAHS executive director is concerned with the restrictive covenants. Early loans from CMHC had imposed restrictive covenants which OAHS has worked, with success, to remove. They would prefer not to have any covenant restrictions
 - OAHS can't use the land as collateral as effectively if there are restrictions on the land use
 - Our lawyers are working on our behalf to resolve this impasse with the OAHS lawyers
 - Our charitable status from CRA requires that the property only be used for the charitable purposes identified in our Letters Patent
- Review the charette held on Nov. 4
- Development of Odayanhaway-related FAQs

- Chuck has created first draft of FAQ in consultation with Mary Ella. Phil requested to provide financial details to FAQ
- Discussions regarding 797 Richmond
 - Dental property (Dentech) going to build 9-story building
 - They have asked to rent part of the CPR strip, for parking starting in December. They also would like an agreement that would allow them to install tie-downs to support their foundation and to operate a crane over our property.
 - We are responding to Dentech with a proposal regarding rental costs for using our FirstU and UHouse land for parking.
 - We have developed a response to the Dentech draft agreement for installing tie-backs and operating a crane.
 - UHouse should make about \$25k from the tie-back/crane agreement and \$14k from the parking agreement after everything is finalized

Commented [3]: This was all pretty complex. I've modified the wording to fit what was discussed.

9. (Goal: A Responsible, Mission-Oriented Campus Development)
Relations with Unitarian House [Note 3]

- Review Oct. 23 Listening and Question and Answer session at UH
 - Chuck, Mary Ella, Brent, Carmen, Rev. Eric, Bill, Terry all felt it went well.
 - No pointed questions
 - About 35 UHouse residents attended, about 7 of whom were FirstU members
- Review various discussions with UH
 - Eric started doing services there
 - Mary Ella collaborating with UHouse on concert on Dec, 17th
 - Going forward FirstU will hold bi-monthly question and answer/listening events on Campus development
 - They have a focus group consultant working on their own strategic planning process. UHouse can't do major future development without FirstU's input going forward.

10. (Goal: *Reliable, Structures and Resources*)

Review proposed dashboard [Att. 9] Finances, Attendance, Membership. Social media, Building use/rentals, Lay chaplain life events.

- See Chuck's draft.
- January, May, September (every 4 months) to be provided with metrics captured by staff and volunteers. Covers 4 prior month period
- Michelle will still produce Quarterly financial statements – higher level summary detail in the Dashboard only.
- Each dashboard will gradually include year-to-year comparisons.
- Review attrition twice yearly in advance of congregational meetings. Phil: 5 deaths/year on average.
 - People won't likely want to do an exit interview.
- Minister's report can provide regular updates. Obtained in consultation with Jen and other Staff.
- Qualitative analysis in addition to numbered metrics
- Dashboards to start in January 2025

- Allison and Jen to finetune report presentation

11. Nominating Committee

- a. Amy was asked lots of questions regarding Board member terms coming to an end in Spring 2025. Carl and Phil leaving
- b. Will members-at-large be willing to fill executive roles.
- c. Who on the Board will be staying after spring 2025? Nominating committee needs to be clear on roles to be filled
- d. Board members need to be off the Board for at least 1 year before they can be re-appointed to the Board

12. FCM follow-up/debrief

- a. Non-contentious. Collaborative. Kudos to Phil for great clarity and levity on finances. Financial debriefs week before help answer questions in advance. Much less questioning from the floor than previous years

13. Closing

- b. Feedback from Process monitor [Chuck did a fabulous job keeping us on track. Phil (attending virtually) noticed a bit of rambling – off topic. In-person has different feel – allows for more discussion and body language perception]
- c. Guy needs board feedback on Ajashki proposal
- d. Closing reading [Amy]
- e. Adjournment – No December Board meeting.