

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 2025/05/28
Time: Gather at 6:30pm; 7pm-9pm

Main Goals: To discuss next steps regarding issuing community bonds, to consider a response to Unitarian House regarding their request to own their property and to identify the congregational priorities for 2026.

Attendees: Chuck Shields, Mary Ella Keblusek, Amy Berube, Carmen Contreras, John Emond, Lisa Boulay, Guy Belleperche, Carl Sonnen, Rev. Eric Meter; Michelle Jackson; Jen Brennan

Timekeeper: Amy
Process Monitor: Carmen

FirstU Board Covenant (summary)

- Be considerate towards one another
- Be open, honest and respectful
- Serve our role to the best of our ability
- Foster a spirit of patience and courage

Item
1. Call to Order ○ Welcome to new board members ○ Check-in ○ Opening Reading [Lisa Boulay] ○ Assignment of Timekeeper [Amy] and Process Monitor [Carmen]
2. Consent Agenda: ○ Approval of this Agenda ○ Approval of Board Minutes 2025/04/16 [Att. 1] ○ Confirmation of appointment of the following as delegates to the CUC AGM: Delegates (6): Guy Belleperche Carmen Contreras Mary Ella Keblusek Eric Meter Caycee Price Stephen St. Denis Alternates (2): Linda Goonewardene Lisa Sharp

- Confirmation of appointment of John Emond as a member of the board
- Ajashki Report [Att. 2]
- Odayanhaway Report [Att. 3]
- Approval of representatives to the CUC AGM
- Dashboard [Att. 4]
- Finance and Membership Report [Att. 5]
- Confirmation of the Executive Committee's decision to approve the establishment of a parkette along Cleary at the eastern end of the CPR Strip. [Att's. 6 and 7]

Moved by Guy, Seconded by Amy to approve the consent agenda. Passed

3. Discussion of items from Consent Agenda

- Do CUC delegates need to report back to the congregation? Only when controversial issues arise, such as adopting the 8th principal. Nothing controversial expected this year
- Dashboard stats are excellent

4. Minister's Report [Rev Eric] [Att. 8]

- Staff have (need to add something here?)
- New audio hardware being implemented at back of church. Last service had major audio/visual issues.
- H/W added will require more room in worship hall
- Michelle received a certificate in leadership and non-profit management from Meadville Lombard Theological School
- RE is going gang busters, thanks to Jodi's involvement. CUC is particularly interested in the involvement of children in worship hall and has invited Jodi and Rev. Eric to present a 'lunch and learn' session with other religious exploration people from across the country.

5. President's Report [Note 1]

- Bob is organizing Eric's farewell BBQ for June 29th
- Action item: Carl to send Lisa and John links to Board Announcer's schedule and worship associate's Sunday service list and also board/secretary tags

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

Financial

- Confirm frequency of financial reports [Note 2]
- Reports will be quarterly

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

Identify congregational priorities for 2026 that can guide the budget development process

[Note 3] [Att. 9] Priorities need to be identified in advance of budget planning

Michelle already sent out the requests for team/committee budgets

Discussed at Board retreat last year regarding priorities in order of importance (prior to developing budgets): Congregational and not budget based priorities

1. Odayanaway
2. Time to play – fuzzy idea
3. Staff relations – has been addressed in intervening months
4. Growth involvement in both congregant size, financial contributions and quality (degree of involvement) – we are growing so maybe we don't need this as a priority anymore. How about focusing on visibility and presence in the larger community?

RE has more people attending. Growth as a priority is ambiguous. Has quantitative as well as qualitative components

5. Ajashki
6. Unitarian House relations – should this be part of our priority list? Major ongoing contention between FirstU and UHouse

Budget is largely fixed. Discretionary funds are very small and limited

How should the list of priorities be modified before sharing with all the committees and teams can provide informed budget requests?

Is our priority list too big? Can we reduce priority list to a smaller more concise focus?

Social justice. Would be better if we could reduce list.

What about adult education? Had only partial adult education success last year. Increased community involvement may lead to larger financial contributions and better fundraising

Not enough people in our community to lead all of these activities

Another board member advocated a shorter list of three priorities only

Adult education programs could improve relations with UHouse and other campus partners

Music Jen still would like to have a children's choir

Suggestion that transition to new minister should be a priority.

We're too small to be a complete policy-based board.

Refactored priority list (in order of priority):

1. Odayanaway
2. Transition to new minister
3. UHouse relations
4. Ajashki

Still important (sub topics):

1. Staff relations
2. Adult education

It was agreed that these 4 priorities would be shared with those developing budgets to help guide them, to the extent that these priorities can be reflected in the work of the group.

8. (Goal: A Responsible, Mission-Oriented Campus Development)

Campus-related topics [Note 4] – Discussion regarding community bonds

- Jeff Baysorowich, the Chief Financial Officer from Theia has good knowledge of this process. Tapestry points to 7-year or 5-year bonds as being the ones received most positively by potential investors. Ottawa Community Land Trust, which has issued community bonds will also provide guidance on their community bonds experience.
- We need \$1.5 million by next April 2026.
- We need as many questions answered before we sign on with Tapestry regarding issuing community bonds
- 4 kinds of staff roles required: Project Manager (40%), Marketing manager (20%), Finance modeler, Back-end finance manager. To be filled by contract hires finally decided by FirstU personnel staff hiring process
- Community Bonds – Discuss next steps for issuing community bonds.
Motion: Moved by Mary Ella, seconded by John that FirstU engage Tapestry Community Capital to assist in the planning and issuing of community bonds.
Passed
Motion: Moved by Carmen, seconded by Lisa that FirstU engage a project

manager and marketing manager to manage the planning for and issuing of community bonds. Passed. Caveat that community bond issuance is approved and everything lines up to proceed

9. *(Goal: A Responsible, Mission-Oriented Campus Development)*

Relations with Unitarian House [Note 5]

In a meeting of the FirstU and UHO Executive Committees and Board members, UHO presented their request to own their property. What is the best path forward to ensure the survival and long-term viability of UHouse? Need a new engagement group to interact with UHouse. It was agreed that it would be best for this to be a 5-person group including Chuck, Mary Ella, Carmen, someone from Odaywanaway project team and Bob Armstrong, who will soon be moving into UHouse.

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

Board retreat dates [Note 7]

- Friday night involving staff followed by a full day retreat of Board
- Agreed to September 19th and 20th – Only mutually convenient date(s).
- Likely to use Chuck's residence as the venue
- Lisa and Amy will help plan the retreat – logistics (food, drinks, fun events, etc.)

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

Board self-evaluation process [Note 8]

11. Closing

- Feedback from Process monitor [Carmen]
 - i. Considering the heftiness of the discussion we did very well
 - ii. In-person helped a lot. More productive in person.
 - iii. Currently we limit in-person board meetings to twice a year. May want to change this number in the future
- Closing reading [Mary Ella Keblusek]
- Identify Board buddies for new members Lisa and John:
 - i. Carmen with John and Amy paired with Lisa.
- Adjournment