

FirstU Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 2025/01/15

Present: Amy Berube, Chuck Shields, Mary Ella Keblusek, Brent Nicolle, Phil Nagy, Guy Belleperche, Rev. Eric Meter, Michelle Jackson, Jen Brennan, Nancy Cloutier, Carmen Contreras, Carl Sonnen

Regrets: none

Main Goals: To discuss issues regarding the Ajashki program, receive updates regarding campus-related topics and to receive and review the first dashboard.

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
- Speak with one voice
- Develop and promote genuine relationships
- Honour our faith

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 [Carmen] ○ Assignment of Timekeeper [Phil] and Process Monitor [Brent]
2. Consent Agenda: ○ Approval of this Agenda ○ Approval of Board Minutes 2024/11/20 [Att. 1] ○ Confirmation of email approval of memberships of Lamia Deghedi, Taavi Siitam and Carolyn Christie [Att. 2] ○ Confirmation of email motion to reimburse Rev. Eric for his salary and

related compensation between the lapsing of his previous and new work permits [Att. 3]

- Confirmation of the email motion to reimburse Rev. Eric for his travel expenses related to renewing his work permit [Att. 3]
- Status of Burundian refugees [Att. 4]
- Ajashki grant proposals submitted [Att. 5]
- Privacy Policy Update [Att. 6]

Moved by Guy, Seconded by Nancy to approve the consent agenda. Unanimous

3. Discussion of any items from Consent Agenda

4. Minister's Report [Rev Eric] [Att. 7]

- Grateful for FirstU's support of Eric during Canadian work permit concerns
- Kudos to Chuck, Michelle, Jen and many others
- New renter (Senior Pride network of Canada)
- Susan McEwen will be leaving as RE staff person
- Dashboard: Eric has spent about 35 hours on care team visits this past fall
- Brent, Eric met with the Men's breakfast group last month and hopes to meet with them again in coming weeks
- Great RE/OWL Now room meeting follow-up with parents (10+ attendees) and teachers last Sunday – including outside or new visitors to FirstU
- Jodi and Eric and Michelle are looking at Susan's replacement

5. President's Report [Note 1] and [Att. 8]

- OAHS legal concerns
- Ajashki concerns

6. Update regarding finances through Dec. 31, 2024

- Too early in time to discuss last year monthly financial concerns
- Michelle summary:
 - i. Revenue + \$38-40k, increase in \$10k in donations
 - ii. On track for past projections
 - iii. >\$70k original projections more like \$50k
 - iv. \$192k congregational investment, but because of interest most of this transfer was thankfully covered by our investment interest
 - v. Ajashki: \$90k in wages spent \$102k projected in the budget. \$14k support was spent instead of \$17k
 - vi. FirstU's full annual contribution to Ajashki was \$24k over 2024

7. *(Goal: A firm commitment to social and climate justice)* Ajashki [Att. 9]

- Guy's update regarding the program
 - i. 2 word summary: Controlled Chaos
 - ii. Ajashki themes for 2025 are Communications and Accountability
 - iii. No central leader or coordinator for the Ajashki program has been identified (financial, educational, program director)
 - iv. Circle of support (FirstU helpers/leaders), each responsible for their own areas, but no one has a full picture of the program
 - v. Need to sit down with stakeholders to get greater clarity on vision, roles and accountability for Ajashki 2.0

- vi. Kayoki has laid off almost all employees, including himself for winter 2025. Only one staff member remains: Maijor (he/him). Participants (Future Food Warriors) continue to be involved on a volunteer drop-in (non-paid) basis only
- Statement from the Finance Committee regarding the program [Att. 10]
 - i. Michelle and FirstU staff are learning to adjust to increased demands for Ajashki financial mgmt. support, despite budgeted FirstU staff decreased hours/month
 - ii. Kudos to Guy for crafting the appropriate Ajashki statement of concerns on behalf of the Board and FirstU staff.
 - iii. Excellent grant proposal for ~\$270k (over 3 years) of mostly wages submitted. This would resolve most of 2025 budget concerns regarding wages going forward. Jan who volunteered as the financial coordinator for Ajashki highlighted concerns with Ajashki finances for wages but did not feel heard, and resigned in late summer 2024. She is returning to the program as of January.
 - iv. What will Michelle's oversight be going forward? Guy will play an important role going forward and will keep Michelle up-to-date
 - v. How well is Ajashki conforming to and implementing received grants as specified in each of the grants they receive? How could this affect both Ajashki and FirstU's charitable status and compliance with CRA going forward?
 - vi. Big focus for Ajashki is to find a new volunteer, or two, from FirstU to assist and coordinate the work of the Circle of Support volunteers and paid program staff, to ensure the viability of Ajashki programming and leadership and financial accountabilities going forward. Rev. Eric as minister has a potential role as 'staff manager/advisor'. The new coordinator (tbd) to maintain awareness and understanding of all aspects of Ajashki program, coordinate internal and external communications, ensure all stakeholders know their accountabilities and responsibilities, and that the program is respecting its budget
 - vii. Ajashki is considered to be a very important program for reconciliation and as a part of our general social justice focus going forward

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

Campus-related topics [Note 2]

- Update regarding the Odayanhaway Project. Still waiting on their legal response
 - Theia is moving on with responding to City concerns and questions on a regular basis
- Discussion regarding 797 Richmond
 - Dentech has requested parking space for construction workers and tieback space for their new development
 - FirstU and UHouse are now part of a three-way legal agreement with Dentech. Still waiting to hear from Dentech on FirstIU's and UHouse's legal proposal.
 - Dentech seems willing to negotiate with Rodney/Theia for a second access from a water main to the CPR strip, required for Odayanhaway housing project.
 - UHouse originally wanted 100% of Dentech's accommodation fees, but we have countered with a 50/50% (FirstU/UHouse) payment split. Still tbd.
 - Brent, Mary Ella, Chuck, Terry and Bill are the primary reps. From FirstU on this and other Campus development activities
 - Rodney is putting pressure on Justin as ED from OAHS to get a

response regarding our legal proposals
9. (Goal: A Responsible, Mission-Oriented Campus Development) Relations with Unitarian House [Note 3] ● Update regarding the next Listening and Question and Answer sessions at UH ○ Cancelled because of ongoing UHouse Covid issues ○ Restart regular meetings last week of February and then ongoing every other month going forward ○ Continued to provide accommodation to UHouse is one positive element ○ UHouse has adopted a transactional (just-business) relationship is a negative development between our two orgs. ○ They may be in progress to try to undermine our many or even all of our campus developments ○ Rev. Eric will be resuming FirstU services to UHouse in February ○ UHouse lets Jackie as board president have unilateral decision making with FirstU ○ May need to use tough Love, by removing some or many FirstU ongoing benefits (such as years of free parking) to obtain better compromise with UHouse going forward.
10. (Goal: <i>Reliable, Structures and Resources</i>) Review dashboard [Att. 11] ● Need to clarify how many new FirstU members were actually approved in 2024. Carl's provided list from his review of all of 2024's official minutes doesn't seem to be up-to-date. ● Is our congregation increasing or shrinking? ● The dashboard will require ongoing development and adjustment ● Social media statistics ○ Can we capture Sunday services which have online technical challenges that prevent streaming or viewing of our events as part of these statistics ○ Daily and aggregate counts can be used to optimize the date-time and release of announcements and promotions for best affect
11. (Goal: <i>Reliable, Structures and Resources</i>) Timing and process of the minister's performance review [Att. 12] ● Recommend shifting to use full calendar year for review period. ● To be delivered in January of the new year to cover the prior year, just ended ● Current year's review will be much shorter and condensed. ● Alternating yearly reviews will be comprehensive followed by condensed bi-annually going forward BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Minister's review for the prior year will occur during January of the year following the period in review. Moved by Carl, Seconded by Carmen, Unanimous
12. Other Business:

Finance meeting Fall (August) schedule meeting proposal

- In what order should finance committee, executive and Board meetings occur in the month of August going forward, in order to best prepare financial data for review and approval?
- Decided that First week of August the finance committee will meet, followed by Executive in the second week and the Board meeting the 3rd week.

Chuck recommends approving the cheque exchange tax receipt of his expenses, which will be required when he keeps connected to the internet by buying a pre-paid service while he's on vacation in Mexico

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the President's phone expenses out-of-country be reimbursed by cheque-exchange. Moved Carmen. Seconded Carl. Unanimous

13. Closing

- Feedback from Process monitor [Brent]
 - i. Lots of attachments
 - ii. Hard to determine what all the acts of the board are, if they're embedded in so many meeting attachments
 - iii. Someone other than Chuck should share the agenda during the meetings in the future
- Closing reading [Carl]
- Adjournment