

Minutes of UUSJ Board Meeting September 27, 2015

Meeting held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, Arlington, Virginia

Attendees:

Bruce Griffin, member, Accotink UU Church
Ed Kringer, alternate, Accotink UU Church (absent)
John Gubbings, member, at large, Cedar Lane UU Church
Pat Karlsen, member, at large, Cedar Lane UU Church
Lavona Grow, member, at large, UU Church of Arlington
Frank Corsoro, member, UU Church of Arlington
Larry Underwood, member, Bull Run UU Church
Kay Scott, member, Cedar Lane UU Church (absent)
Steve Buckingham, member, Goodloe Memorial UU Congregation (absent)
Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson, member, Mount Vernon Unitarian Church
Nancy Boardman, member, Paint Branch UU Church (absent)
Carmelita Carter-Sykes, alternate, Paint Branch UU Church (absent)
Sheila Malenski, member, Towson UU Church
Marti Mackenzie, alternate, Towson UU Church
Al Carlson, member, UU Church in Reston
Bob Schurter, member, UU Congregation of Columbia (absent)
Martha Ades, member, UU Congregation of Fairfax
Ed Butterworth, alternate, UU Congregation of Fairfax (absent)
Gary Mangnuson, member, UU Congregation of Rockville
Pat Bradshaw, alternate, UU Congregation of Rockville
Nancy Sorden, member, Washington Ethical Society (absent)
Patti Absher, alternate, Washington Ethical Society (absent)

Guests and Staff Members:

Rev. Cyn Snavelly, Administrator
Marsha White, guest, Accotink UU Church - Program Committee
Doris Marlin, guest, All Souls Church Unitarian - Green Activists Task Group
Pete Fontneau, Interim Religious Educator, First Church Baltimore
Armele Vilceus, All Souls, Unitarian Church
Sarah Masters, consultant, Director of Congregational Life, UU Church of Arlington
Jennifer Bevin-Dangel, consultant to UUSJ

2:00pm Welcome, Chalice Lighting, Reading, Opening Remarks -

Lavona Grow, Board Chair

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Sarah Masters, UUSJ contractor, and staff member at UUCA Sarah introduced herself and explained her role with UUSJ, working on tasks including cleaning up the database, staffing meetings, assisting on the Gala committee, and membership engagement. Sarah has professional training in nonprofit management and fundraising, and will be assisting us with the implementation of our future development plan.

Call to Order – Lavona Grow, Board Chair

Introduction of Board Members and Visitors, and Review of the Agenda - Lavona Grow, Board Chair

- Three new members were recognized, Larry Underwood, Board member from Bull Run UU Church, taking the place of Jim Alcauskas. And Gary Mangnuson, Board member and Pat Bradshaw, alternate, UU Congregation of Rockville.
- In addition to reviewing the agenda Lavona mentioned that we are putting together a policy and procedures manual.
- We have had a master calendar for several years but we are updating it. It covers all activities and actions that need to be performed throughout the year by staff and leadership. Activities such as sending out the reminder letters to congregations to schedule their fund raising activities for their UUSJ Fair Share. The revision is in draft form.
- Lavona also mentioned her desire to make the occurrence of board meetings more predictable.
- Jennifer Bevin-Dengel was invited to introduce herself and the role she will play as a consultant to UUSJ. She will help us with our grant deliverables, help us get to the point where we are ready to bring on our next Executive Director. She has a law degree, on the Maryland Bar, but went straight into advocacy work.
- Lavona introduced the role Elizabeth Stevens will assume. She will take over most of the duties of Cyn Snavelly. Elizabeth is located in the Charlottesville/Richmond area and so will be working remotely.

Reading of Board Covenant - Read by all board members

Quorum Count and Approval of May 16, 2015 Board Minutes - Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson, Secretary

- The quorum count of eleven was met with four absent board members.
- The minutes of the May 16, 2015 meeting were approved with no revisions.

The Treasurer's and Financial Reports and Discussion - John Gubbings, Treasurer, Lavona Grow, Board Chair

- The Treasurer's report and the Financial report are available [here](http://uusj.net/wp/uusj-september-27-2015-board-meeting-documents/), <http://uusj.net/wp/uusj-september-27-2015-board-meeting-documents/>.

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- John reported mentioned that we are considering establishing a UUSJ legacy fund and already have a significant contributor to the to be established UUSJ legacy to go towards the establishment of the fund. John requested volunteers to help explore the possible establishment of the fund.
- John and Lavona reminded the Board about the new Fair Share Allocation policy adopted in May, by the board at the annual meeting that now, unless someone instructs us to apply their donation to their congregation's fair share, it will go into the general funds. If a donation is made as part of a congregation's plate collection, it will count towards the congregation's fair share. Lavona stated that we need to track the implications of the new policy on annual congregational fair share giving.
- CFC – UUSJ has relied on congregations to promote UUSJ as a recipient of funds from the Combined Federal Campaign. Lavona told Board members not to use the document that was online, that a revised CFC handout (and flyer) would be made available next week to be used to promote CFC. The CFC signup deadline is December 15.
- This is the first year that UUSJ is running an ad in the UU World magazine promoting UUSJ and urging them to contribute at our website or through CFC.
- Doris Marlin, as a federal worker and contributor to CFC, said that if you designate that as little as \$1 to UUSJ through CFC, a portion of the funds from all other contributors, who don't specify any recipient, will be allocated to UUSJ.
- We received a grant from the UU Fund for Social Responsibility to enable us to increase our capacity to fulfill our new mission of advocacy, and to implement our strategic plan.
 - We applied for \$20,000 from the fund, they gave us \$5,000 and told us they would give us another \$5,000 if we raised \$5,000 ourselves.
 - The fund encouraged us to raise our \$5,000 through Faithify.org, the UU crowdfunding website.
 - We launched our Faithify campaign in mid June and it ran for forty-five days.
 - We raised \$5,815 from 47 funders through the Faithify site.
 - Shortly we will receive the additional \$5,000 from the UU Fund for Social Responsibility.

Small Group Discussion – Reflections on Social Justice Engagement

Common denominators that arose within the groups on why the group members got involved in social justice.

- Ministers who have consciousness raising sermons. Such ministers inspire people to involve themselves in social justice work.
- Concern for the environment.
- What metrics or methods do we use to measure success.
- UUSJ offers people the opportunity to come together from different places, and to connect to work on several issues.
- Genetics and culture as well as the example of people we grew up with led us to get involved in social justice.
- Regardless of our personal social justice "passion" or interest, all the social justice areas all touch on each other at some point.

Board Chair Report – Lavona Grow, Board Chair

- In 2013 we developed a strategic plan but soon realized that we weren't making much progress.
- We learned two things about this, one is that we need an implementation plan, and also that organization structure itself was limiting our ability to carry it out.
- After the retirement of Terry Ellen, former Executive Director, we held a retreat in June of 2014 to take a look at our organization, our governance structure.

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- In November of 2014 we brought in a consultant to facilitate a day long meeting to learn about our legal responsibilities as a Board, and we learned that we are practically alone if having board alternates. Our consultant taught us that we can have parallel boards, one a liaison board, the other a governance board.
- The aforementioned grant from the UU Fund for Social Responsibility and the money raised through our Faithify campaign enables us to hire Jennifer to help us develop an implementation plan and to help draft a job description for an Executive Director.
- We are trying to develop a database of people and their associated skills. Not just UUSJ board members but also people in each of our member congregations. We need board members to help identify people with the skills we need. People who worked in certain areas of the government, people who've worked with advocacy and non-profit agencies, people with content expertise.
- Jennifer reminded board members that one of their responsibilities is to work on one of the committees or task groups.
- Lavona and Al Carlson want to update the guidelines for applying for grants through our UUSJ Social Justice Grant Fund for the grants we issue with the money raised at our Social Justice Awards Gala.

Issue Updates and Next Steps

Issue Updates - Lavona Grow & Jennifer

UUSJ co-sponsored the Virginia Immigration Advocates Summit in September. Dean Wanderer of Accotink is chair of the UUSJ Immigration Steering Committee with David Strauss of Rockville and Lavona. Don Cherry of River Road has recently joined. They are considering a get out the vote campaign. There is cultural and historic interest on environment amongst Hispanics.

The Action of Immediate Witness (AIW) Act for a Livable Climate that passed at General Assembly (GA) in June had its origin in this region. A group of local activists, headed by Doris Marlin, created the wording of the AIW, recruited a team of folks to get the required signatures at GA to get it on the agenda of the GA plenary session (the team got several times the necessary number of signatures). Doris Marlin presented the AIW to the delegates at GA where it was easily adopted. There is a national AIW team consisting of several people from the National Capital region as well as four to five others from around the country.

Lavona reported on the delivery of a letter drafted by three members of the AIW implementation team and signed by UUA President Rev. Peter Morales to Ted Stern, the US Climate Envoy and representative to the climate talks to be held in Paris, France in late November through early December; it was delivered to the US Department of State, with copies to Secretary Kerry and Sean Casey, Special Representative, Office of Religion and Global Affairs. Sean Casey accepted the letters and met with the UUSJ delegation. As an outgrowth of the initial meeting there have been follow up meetings. These are great opportunities for UUSJ but at the same time UUSJ doesn't have the bandwidth to handle this type of thing at this time. This raises the issue of staffing.

Also unexpected developments and opportunities raise the questions, such as to what end do we do this type of work? And again how do we measure our success?

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Jennifer noted that since she started with UUSJ she's noticed the tension between our goals and our limited capacity.

Jennifer asked the board members to consider what they think the role for UUSJ is. Do we want it to mobilize membership, driving action alerts, getting people engaged through Facebook? Due to our proximity the national capital, mobilizing people for rallies and protests? Do you see UUSJ members in the capital lobbying? Right now we can't do all those things.

UUSJ Future

Jennifer then asked us to share what we want UUSJ to be "from the thirty thousand foot level". In other words where should we concentrate our resources. Do you want to mobilize at the grass roots to get people to contact their legislators? Do you want to find the "influencers", get them engaged, do direct lobbying "at the grass tops?" The two different approaches require different skill sets in the new Executive Director as well as affecting how you build capacity.

Larry – he feels based on his lobbying work, that there are changing attitudes in Republicans in Congress. – those with changing attitudes. These Republicans need to hear from their voters. Democrats need to help by not playing gotcha politics. Larry is interested in lobbying.

John Gubbings – direct lobbying and leveraging our efforts through partnering with community groups on our various issues.

Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson – direct lobbying but also getting the word out using social media – to get the word out to our congregations so they will continue making fair share contributions.

Shelia Malenski – grass roots approach and direct lobbying. She wants to know if there is a way do both, perhaps concentrating more effort on grass roots but also expending some on direct lobbying.

Marti – wants to see us train people who can also train others. We also need to expend some effort on social media because it is effective.

Armele – told story about how they got a reluctant legislator to meet with them – through community organizing group – IAF.

Doris – The Green Leaders (UUSJ) have been working with community groups, we've collaborated with before but some new ones that we made connections with working on actions around the Pope's visit. Reach out to other community groups/organization/faith groups.

Marsha – use social media to bring in new folks especially younger folks.

Jennifer – we are at the point where we are starting to make others aware of us with about 260 followers on Twitter. The number of Twitter followers is not enough to have much of an impact when we tweet stuff but we are building our

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Twitter presence. As for Facebook we have enough of a presence that people will push out our pictures and events as the past week has shown. We are not yet at the point where we can drive turnout but we are raising the consciousness of our social justice work.

Lavona noted that in working with the folks at the UUA, Commit2Respond, and Multicultural Growth and Witness Office of the UUA, it is hard to reach out to congregations. The recent efforts working with these folks is a good test of the challenges we face.

Lavona also reminded us that there currently are no representatives from the UUA or UUSC doing advocacy work in DC. We are developing a “schematic” of who is doing what amongst the UUA, UUSC, Multicultural Growth and Witness Office.

Next Steps

The CORE Group has agreed to support three major climate change projects:

- Clean power plan (CPP) – EPA released regulations in August, they are the cornerstone of the President’s for reaching our agreement at the climate talks in Paris.
- People working on advocacy have decided on a Write Here, Write Now, campaign to be done regionally only at this time, across congregations around November 15th.
- GCF – Green Climate Fund, a \$10 billion fund to help developing leap-frog to clean energy sources. The President committed 3 billion dollars – wants 500 million right now but the House of Representatives is resisting.
- Gibson Resolution – in works 2.5 years, the Friends (Quakers) and Franciscan Action Network (FAN) have been working with moderate republicans who want to “come out of the closet” on climate change. The resolution will state that is it the sense of Congress that climate change is human caused. So far eleven republicans have signed onto it. UUSJ was working behind the scenes – we identified the congregations around country in the districts of republicans we wanted to reach out to. There is not a good way to reach into local congregations to identify the social justice folks; this is something we need to work on developing in the future.
- Washington Interfaith Staff Committee (WISC) – Lavona was asked to participate, by the UUA, in the energy and environment sub-group.
- Gary – asks what does UUSJ bring to the table. Think globally – act locally. Doris says what we bring to the table – people came out for climate past week around Pope’s visit – a hub of getting involvement in our focus issues – and ability to reach outside our region. Doris also mentioned that the work we did reaching out to the Religious Affairs Office at the State Department for the AIW, is seen as a model of what other denominations can do by that office.

2016-2018 National Priority Issues Survey – Martha Ades

- The report on the survey was passed out and Martha summarized the results. The Board will discuss the result at the November 7 meeting.
- There were responses from people who are from fifteen member congregations.
- The report is attached.

Roles and Responsibilities of Congregations and Board Members

The document on roles and responsibilities is the one distributed previously but with some modifications to clarify a couple of things.

The revised document is available [here](http://uusj.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/UUSJ-09-24-15-Responsibilities-of-Congregations-and-RR-of-Board-Member-List-of-Committees-2-1.pdf). <http://uusj.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/UUSJ-09-24-15-Responsibilities-of-Congregations-and-RR-of-Board-Member-List-of-Committees-2-1.pdf>

It is a different model for people who've served in the non-profit world before. The congregations have a role to play, the primary board member from a particular congregation has a role to play, and the alternate has a role to play.

Congregations need to be contributing their fair share and bring news about the UUSJ programs back to their congregation to get them excited and to participate in UUSJ programs.

Official board members have two primary responsibilities, firstly as a board member of a non-profit with all its rights and responsibilities that come along with non-profit leadership. Insuring the financials look good, paying attention to the financial updates, help with fund raising, and making sure that the organization is behaving as it should. Board members also have the critical role as liaison, being at board meetings, hearing about the important work UUSJ is doing, taking it back to your congregation, getting the congregation to fill out the issue survey, in other words connecting the congregation to UUSJ.

Alternates serve strictly in a liaison role, attending board meeting when the board member cannot, sharing the important work UUSJ is doing with their congregation, and sharing what the congregation is doing with UUSJ.

And everyone, regular member, board member, alternate board member, should be thinking how to further the work of UUSJ: serve on a committee, promoting events such as the Gala, sharing our communications, through various media channels, with their congregation.

Jennifer noted an important thing to consider at the board retreat in November. Given the "two hat" board member position, what is the best way to develop an effective steering committee that is thinking, in a detailed way, how to meet our fund raising goals,

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how does UUSJ organize itself, how is UUSJ going to continue to grow? And while everyone present is interested in the social justice issues, not everyone is interested in keeping the cash coming in, in governance, and as we transition to a new executive director that will increasingly become a very important function. These are the questions we will explore in greater depth at the board retreat. Board members should come to the retreat prepared to discuss their thoughts on building our UUSJ governance.

What Do You and Your Congregation Need from UUSJ

Lavona thinks congregations need materials to prepare for “share the plate” Sundays where UUSJ is the recipient. She suggested that we print up and make available 8.5X14 inch posters that would look good on a display table. Also we need to provide updated brochures.

The question was asked, what do you need when you go to your social justice council, to your ministers?

Shelia said that she has trouble getting people to remember the “alphabet soup” of UU acronyms. If there was an immediate goal, an immediate project, say “Write Here, Write Now”, that that would help solidify who we are with her fellow congregants. Doing so will possibly prompt them to ask questions about UUSJ and then they may retain more.

It was noted that UU’s seem to silo their attentions, that they focus only on one to two items. So it would be nice for board members who have found a time or way to make a connection to such folks, to share that time, that method with everyone else. Call it a set of proven ways to connect.

Doris suggested that we pick a date, say the second weekend of January, have a UUSJ representative at each church, who will give a talk about how UUSJ can amplify that church’s social justice message.

It was noted that we need to get our ministers “on our side”, working with us to get the message of UUSJ out. If it comes from the minister it will have a greater impact than other communications media. Ministers, who’ve been approached about participating, have said that we need to plan something about three months out such as a gathering of ministers for a deep chair discussion. They want to help but are pulled in many different directions so we need to figure how we can help them help us. A deep chair discussion will help.

Lavona suggested that we might reactivate the phone conference of social justice chairs from all our member congregations perhaps once a year as a way to share ideas. These calls could serve as a support community of social justice chairs.

Discussion of Board Retreat and Succession Planning

The succession planning document is available [here](http://uusj.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Succession-Plan-Draft-9-24-15.pdf). <http://uusj.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Succession-Plan-Draft-9-24-15.pdf>. One of the goals we set for ourselves when we applied for the grant from the UU Fund for Social Responsibility was to transition back to

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having an Executive Director but at a higher level than before, twice the number of hours and at a higher salary but still part time.

Finding a part time skilled director is tricky so the time frame for putting together the director's job description is aggressive and should happen soon so we have time to find the right person.

Jennifer's goal is to have a job description in a fairly complete form by the date of the retreat which is November 7th. So it is important to focus on the right skill set. Should the director be good at fund raising, familiar with grant writing, increasing and supporting membership? The primary skill set being sought from a director will greatly influence who is chosen. It is important to get it right the first time as non-profits "think" they want a person with a certain skill set but may find out six months in that they made the wrong choice of what skill/ability is most important to them.

Jennifer will send out a questionnaire of job skills that a potential director for UUSJ might have. We are asked to rank them in importance. She may follow up with phone calls to certain people.

The succession plan (link above) has been updated since its original draft last summer.

Lavona would like to include past UUSJ Board Chairs in the interview process since they have a lot of history with UUSJ and good perspectives.

The question was asked, would the new director assume some or all of the responsibilities of Sarah Masters and Elizabeth Stevens? It is unlikely as both Sarah and Elizabeth bring certain important skill sets that a director would not necessarily need so that we can focus on someone with other important skills.

Cyn's reflections (but first she was asked how many years she's been with UUSJ – thirteen):

She's talked to folks in our member congregations and what she's heard from those doing advocacy, lobbying, is that those being lobbied want to hear personal stories.

When doing advocacy, having a person who has worked in a community, facing environmental degradation for example, and can share their insights, a story or two, is very effective.

A lot of Cyn's time was spent taking information she received about events and information to share, distilling it, formatting it to post to the website and formatting it for eNews.

Part of the discussion, perhaps at the retreat, is a way to improve the workings of our committees, especially our standing committees such as the Nominating Committee.

Other Items

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The possibility of having a monthly conference call for board members and alternates so the chair can give more updates, was broached and will be considered.

We will also investigate using online video facilities such as Zoom for issue briefings such as the one we have in December 6, 2014 on Rising Income Inequality.

It was suggested that we consider having a book group discussing a book such as "The New Jim Crow" and using video technology to facilitate that for people who couldn't attend a face to face meeting.

We will also consider holding a special party for UUSJ members as a social event that can foster conversations, help us get the perspectives of our individual members.

5:30 Adjourn

Following the Board Meeting we held a celebration for Rev. Cyn Snavelly, Administrator of UUSJ for 13 years. Rev. Cyn is moving to Norfolk, Virginia area on Oct. 1.