

# UUSJ Board Meeting

December 9, 2017

Held via Zoom due to inclement weather

## Board Members Present:

Martha Ades, at large, UU Congregation of Fairfax  
Peter Bishop, member, Washington Ethical Society  
Al Carlson, member, Reston UU  
Carmelita Carter-Sykes, member, Paint Branch UU  
Christopher Croft, outgoing member, Towson UU  
Jane D'Ambrogi, incoming member, Towson UU  
Bob Denniston, Board Chair  
Dave Feser, alternate, Bull Run UU  
Lavona Grow, at large, Arlington UU  
John Gubbings, member, Cedar Lane UU  
Martha Neuman, alternate, All Souls, Unitarian  
David Strauss, alternate, Rockville UU  
Adam Wasserman, member, UU Congregation of Fairfax  
Marsha White, alternate, Accotink UU

## Staff Present:

Pablo DeJesús, Executive Director

## Guests Present:

Bill Alsmeyer-Johnson, Communications Committee Chair, Mount Vernon Unitarian Church  
Bill Cranmer, Frederick UU  
Gary Magnuson, Frederick UU

## Action Items:

- Pablo DeJesús to email CFC flyers to Board members
- Members send to Lavona the immigration and/or refugee contact person
- Martha Ades to organize a data needs meeting with Lavona, Peter, and Martha Neuman
- Bob Denniston to send out Doodle Poll for proposed January face-to-face meeting
- Pablo DeJesús to meet with new Board members
- All Board members to think of who they know that can volunteer on the Governance or Development Committees
- All should look for a volunteer accountant/bookkeeper, Martha Ades to send short job description to Board members

## **Meeting Notes**

Bob Denniston opened the meeting with introductions at 2:05pm. He introduced new members... Martha Ades provided a reading.

Announcements included

- Fair Share letters were mailed on December 8.
- The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) ad has been sent to UU World. Pablo will email the flyer and small ads each person can post at their congregation for UUSJ #17271.
- Board members need to provide a contact within their congregation who should get the immigration and refugee survey being prepared by the Immigration Task Force.

Secretary's Report: Martha Ades

Adam Wasserman moved to accept the minutes from the September meeting as written. Lavona Grow seconded. All approved. A quorum was determined to be present.

Treasurer's Report: John Gubbings provided the treasurer's report and announced the receipt of a \$2500 donation granted from the Milner Family Foundation. It was given because they believe in our advocacy efforts and have a personal contact with UUSJ. David Strauss asked about our reserve level. John Gubbings referred to the amount in our checking account as our reserve. We are looking for a volunteer accountant.

### **Programs**

Martha Ades presented a report of the Awards Celebration held Oct. 29th at Cedar Lane. Awards were given to 8 individuals/groups, more than \$1600 was cleared for the grant fund and over 100 people socialized together. Lavona Grow reminded us that in the past we have moved some of the grant funds to other causes when there is a surplus in the account. Comments on the event showed an interest in repeating it.

- David S – It's good to give awards and acknowledge our works; it deepens our mission
- Peter B – it was good to get connected with others at the event
- Bill A-J – the event spreads knowledge of UUSJ in the community; we need to get all congregations involved maybe by assigning tasks to Board members; the awards committee needs extra people on it to avoid conflicts of interest
- Bob D – we might consider making the number of categories smaller
- Lavona G – comments from attendees say we are known for elevating UU work in the area
- Pablo D – we should look for a fundraiser that boosts the income; we need to be able to schedule this event with our other fundraising events

Discussion of fund raising ideas continue. David S volunteered to work on funding/development work.

### **Advocacy**

Lavona Grow reported on work the Advocacy Corps has done recently, continuing to meet with congressional staff and delivering constituent letters. She pointed out what's working and what's not. She referred people to her report for details. Our model for organizing the Advocacy Corps is working. We are recognized in many offices and now known for showing up and delivering UU constituent letters. We are piloting with a church in Iowa the "Write Here, Write Now" (WHWN) monthly letter-writing campaign. We have had more than 100 downloads nationwide of the WHWN kit. The big task is managing, documenting and organizing for Hill delivery incoming letters and for feedback to the congregations, for the State Action Networks (SAN) and for our own tracking. It is also challenging to manage multiple issues at one time both volunteers and Advocacy Corps Day logistic details.

Lavona said this is not sustainable. We need to professionalize our volunteer efforts. Martha Ades reported that we are working to collect the data we need to support national advocacy. We are looking for data solutions that are affordable. Other faith communities doing advocacy work have paid staff and can afford systems like CapWiz which costs about \$7,000 per year. Infrastructure needs for both data and communications will need to be addressed by the Board. Martha Neuman worked with Oxfam America and can help with data issues. Peter

Bishop, a self-described computer jack-of-all-trades, will help with data too. Both have volunteered to help with data system needs.

David Strauss suggested we review how the issue committees should and do interface with the Advocacy Corps. Bob pointed out we have an organization chart that might be a good place to start the discussion. Gary Magnuson encourages the Advocacy team to build relationships with committee staffs as well as with members of Congress.

### **Going National**

We expect to do a face-to-face Board meeting in January to discuss going national. We need to get more visibility with the UUA, SANs, etc. This discussion will be tabled for now.

The Governance Committee needs volunteers. It should be described as a short-term task force. We have already had one congregation in Colorado ask about how to join UUSJ. Each Board member should be thinking of who you know or have in your congregation that can help with this.

### **Fund Raising**

Pablo DeJesús explained the current funding activities and how they have been fairly successful. The CFC kickoff email was new but so we don't have prior success metrics for this activity. Our e-News open rate is 23.8%, on the higher side of standard practices. For Giving Tuesday, another new campaign, the open rate was a more committed 35%. This activity was only a pilot with a simple message. All these and the end-of-year appeal will be compared to prior year's results. Bob says this is a good start. Lavona Grow asked if we had goals set for these campaigns. The answer is no – the Thanksgiving holiday greetings were soft asks and to test to see if the never-given group would respond. Bob Denniston pointed out that we do need a development plan and we are trying to get both membership and development team together to build a plan.

Next Meeting should be a limited agenda but face-to-face. Bob will send out a Doodle poll. Pablo reminded new Board members he would like to meet with them.

Next Board meetings:

- January, TBD
- March 24, Maryland
- June 2, Virginia

Meeting adjourned, 3:15pm

Submitted by Martha Ades, Board Secretary

POST MEETING NOTE: After the initial request, we learned that the Colorado congregation asked about joining UUSJ because they thought we were local to them.

Attachments: Fundraising Report