

## Minutes of UUSJ Board Meeting December 19, 2020

Participants: Bob Denniston, John Peterson, Charlotte Jones-Carroll, Emily Koechlin, Larry Underwood, Tanner Wray, Eleanor Piez, Pat Behenna, Jack Lebowitz, David Shilton, Ken Mitchell, Terry Grogan, Bob McCarthy, Sean McCarthy, Gary Magnuson, Martha Ades, Serena Lowe, David Strauss (all are voting members), Suzan Chastain (alternate), Pablo De Jesus (Executive Director), John Gubbings (Treasurer), Evan Junker (strategy consultant)

### Action Steps:

**Pablo:** \* Distribute summary of UUFP<sup>1</sup> grant proposal to board members

- Get Fair Share solicitation letters out to congregations/ministers
- Move board meeting documents to the website, password protected
- Ensure eNews goes to the full mailing list, not just those who signed up
- Follow-up with ministers who attended 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary event (with board members' help as needed) to engage more deeply with UUSJ
- Prepare work plan for UUFP grant implementation

**Bob:** \* with governance team and Exec Director, review by-laws and policies re authorization of cash bonuses to staff and other financial management rules, identify changes needed

- Schedule follow-up discussion of Advocacy Plans for 2021 (with Serena)
- Address Board's need to name PARC chair as soon as possible
- Schedule meeting on membership survey re priorities (tentatively Jan 8)
- Invite Board members to Zoom conversation in January to discuss Widening the Circle (Pablo to contact Paula Cole Jones to seek her participation)

**Pablo/John Gubbings/David Strauss:** prepare brief report on 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary event finances

**Tanner/Jack L/Bob McCarthy:** advice Potomac Partnership congregations of UUSJ response to suggestion on taking action regarding COVID-relief bill (Action Alerts)

### MINUTES:

After Bob Denniston's welcome and chalice lighting, John Gubbings offered a reading from Lao Tzu – simplicity, patience, compassion. The proposed agenda was then approved by affirmation. In accordance with new policies, there will be time for guests to address the board at the beginning (on old business) and end of the meeting (new), but none had asked to join.

1. Quorum: Secretary Charlotte Jones-Carroll confirmed a quorum was in attendance, 17 voting members (11 needed for quorum; Serena Lowe joined later, making it 18).
2. UUFP Grant approved: Pablo shared the good news that UUFP has approved UUSJ's grant request for partnering on the environment with vulnerable communities. We have received a check for \$17,000 and been promised a \$3,000 matching grant. In addition, we have committed \$3000 in our budget. If we raise another \$3000 to release the matching grant, we will be able to dedicate \$26,000 to this advocacy effort. In response to a query about whether overhead was included, Pablo explained that a significant part of the grant was aimed at underwriting staff hours to do this work, including funding to

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<sup>1</sup> Unitarian Universalist Funding Program

extend the advocacy contractor, Anna. Pablo thanked proposal writers Eleanor, Serena, Lavona and Judy, along with John P who helped. Bob noted Pablo's efforts were also critical to submitting this proposal. He asked Pablo to share the summary of the grant proposal so they are informed about this project.

3. Piez ordination: In other check-in news, Eleanor Piez invited the Board to her ordination via zoom on January 31 at 4 pm, at Mt. Vernon UU.
4. Minutes of October 24 meeting: These (circulated earlier) were approved unanimously with no changes. Bob thanked Secretary Charlotte Jones-Carroll for doing these minutes, as well as the Executive Committee meeting minutes, so promptly.
5. Executive Director's Report: All were urged to read this (belatedly added to board documents) if they haven't, for details, but Pablo highlighted, in addition to the grant approval, the success of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary event, the success at finding candidates outside of the board for the Nominating Committee, the positive outcome of the October and December advocacy Zoom meetings (on environment and democracy, respectively) and of the action alerts on death penalty and COVID relief legislation. On the latter, Bob and Pablo elaborated that Jack Lebowitz and Tanner Wray had, as board members, urged quick action on the COVID relief bill and, in a move to show our nimbleness, Pablo had sent out an Action Alert, with a draft prepared by Serena. Jack explained that this request had been an outcome of a triple-congregation social justice leaders' call (Fairfax, River Road, Cedar Lane) and UUSJ response shows we do listen to congregations' concerns. Board members from those congregations should advise their social justice leaders of UUSJ response.
6. Treasurer's Report: (See report) We had close to \$70,000 cash in the bank at end-November to which is being added the \$17,000 UUFP grant and the \$10,000 in fundraising. We have, as typical by this time, only received around 20% of the Fair Share congregational donations. Pablo and Paulette hope to get the request letters to congregations out shortly, after which Board members can follow up. Our fiscal year ends in June, so there will be time to encourage more of these payments. Still, some congregations have stopped "share-the-plate" collections during the pandemic, so not all may be in a position to attain their fair share using this route.
7. Budget Amendment: Charlotte, for Finance Committee, proposed an amendment to the FY20-21 budget (see revision in circulated table) to include a capital budget (separate from operating budget) with one line item for \$2400 – a new laptop for use by the Executive Director (who is currently using a 10-year-old UUSJ computer creating problems from time to time for meetings). In addition, as this capital expenditure will be depreciated over three years, a new line item for depreciation has been added to the operating budget, with \$800 for the first year. This motion was approved unanimously.
8. Membership Committee (see report in Board docs): John Peterson reviewed the data – though a decline in number of members shows in the data, this is a result of many people not renewing after signing up for last year's Gala (thus becoming members). In fact, once those who signed up and paid for this year's Dec 12<sup>th</sup> event are added as members, the total will improve. In the future, renewals will move to a rolling schedule, with reminders. The July appeal with a challenge to prompt new members resulted in only an additional eight members, though the average dues paid more than doubled.

John reviewed the findings of the Appreciative Inquiry calls to donors (large, outside DMV and local – three distinct groups). Many of those called were not fully aware of what UUSJ does. We should remedy this – the plan is to include information on our activities in the thank you communications in the future. Other findings: interviewees wanted UUSJ to partner with both non-UU and UU organizations, and a good number urged UUSJ to do more education programs, not just advocacy. Another significant number felt we should work on cross-pollination/networking on social justice ideas and efforts. Bob McCarthy elaborated on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary event, putting UUSJ on the map for many, with its keynote speaker (Rep. Gerry Connolly) and many other UU and non-UU panelists and participants. Ken noted that he had been briefing the Baltimore UU church on UUSJ, and congregants thought UUSJ should coordinate with other organizations (UULM-MD, environment groups). The following clarifications were made: anyone wishing to join UUSJ can pay whatever amount they want, with \$60 suggested, but also if they pay to participate in an event like the recent one, they are added to membership rolls. Rolling renewals can be complicated by multiple donations, but the committee is working on getting SALSA to use latest donation as a basis. E-news – which details UUSJ activities – should be going to all members, without forcing them to take initiative to sign up for it. Finally, John noted the hard work of Pablo and Paulette on these activities and expressed concern about how restricted UUSJ resources are – only permitting part-time staff. A recent study revealed that non-profits that are successful at fundraising generally have each member of the board and staff contact a list of donors 3-4 times per year, and then ask for money at some point. He said UUSJ needs to move in this direction to address the additional funds needed to fund a FT ED.

9. Development Committee (see report): David Strauss noted that 3 ½ years ago, neither Development nor Membership Committees existed, so we have come a long way. There is a lot of good news. In addition to the UUPF grant, and the successful anniversary event, UUSJ participated in Giving Tuesday, mobilizing more than expected. Again, Pablo and Paulette were key to this effort. Board members had stepped up to make enough donations to match and unlock the \$6,000 challenge donation(s). The Committee was working with Evan Junker and Pablo to prepare a viable development plan, which David Strauss hoped would eventually get UUSJ to the point where we could afford full-time staff and national coverage. Bob McCarthy elaborated further on the anniversary event, which raised close to \$14,000, relative to a goal of \$12,000. This was a virtual event that pulled in participants and viewers from all over the US (and one from Australia perhaps!). It attracted a number of ministerial viewers, a fact UUSJ should build on. Six congregations sponsored (\$200 each). Gary noted that a number of viewers at UUC Frederick are not current UUSJ members, and suggested we follow up with all who signed up for the event to formalize their joining as members. Conclusion: Virtual events have a future!
10. Cash Bonuses: Bob announced that, in response to their work “beyond the call of duty” on these initiatives, Pablo and Paulette would receive salary bonuses (\$1000 and \$500 respectively). This had come to the Chair as a recommendation from two different committee heads, and the Executive Committee had agreed. Several members of the governance task force, while they supported the bonuses, asked whether the EC could in

fact take such a decision. Others responded that this small (under 5%) addition to the existing salary line items is, according to new policies, spending the Executive Director could normally approve, but as it was a decision benefiting the ED, the Board Chair and Treasurer could – though the rule was not entirely clear – authorize it, as an administrative decision. To erase any doubt, a motion to authorize these bonuses was moved, seconded and passed. Financial management rules may need further work.

11. FY21-22 Budget: The Finance Committee and Executive Director, in accordance with new governance documents, are to develop a budget for the following year for board consideration by March and approval by June. Charlotte and Pablo will arrange a meeting in early January to start this process.
12. Nominating Committee (see report): Sean McCarthy reminded the Board of the agreement to name a majority of non-Board members to the Nominating Committee. To make room for this, both Larry Underwood and David Strauss have offered to resign from the Nominating Committee as of January 1. Emily Koechlin, a trustee, is proposed to join. In addition, Sean proposed four other non-trustee members: Martha Durkee-Neuman, Rev. Katie Romano Griffin, Carrie Tilton-Jones and Rev. Amanda Weatherspoon. These candidates provide gender, geographic, racial, ethnic and sexual identity diversity to what was previously an all-white male committee. Pablo had played a major role in identifying three of these (and Charlotte had suggested Rev. Weatherspoon). Sean moved and multiple persons seconded this slate (including Emily) which was then approved unanimously, with kudos for the work done in assembling the slate. Pablo noted that there were several other leads that might become future candidates that are from the SW, SE and California areas of the US.
13. Ad Hoc Oversight Committee on Advocacy (see report): Serena proposed changes in an earlier agreed understanding of how the conduct of UUSJ advocacy would transition from volunteer-led and reviewed to staff-led, with review function by the Board. The Board's review team (called PARC initially) would need to be named, but would have to function just for six months remaining in FY20-21. After that, final By-law changes would become effective and it would clearly fall to the Executive Director to manage advocacy programs. The Advocacy Implementation team (AIM) has been evolving over the past four months, with the ED taking the lead role, but different volunteers – depending on the topic – joining for the specific advocacy effort. Sometimes these were Board members. Thus, a final recommendation was that, for the next six months, there be room for occasional overlap of board and staff efforts on the implementation side of the advocacy program. In response to a suggestion that any budget/staffing proposals be developed by the ED with the Finance Committee only (dropping reference to the Executive Committee), this revision was agreed by the Board. After lengthy further discussion about the clear lines needed between oversight (Board) and implementation (staff including volunteer staff), the remainder of the proposed changes were approved unanimously. The Board still needs to appoint someone to head the PARC and name some additional members to it.
14. Ends (see document): Suzan Chastain reviewed the proposed Ends statement which is part of UUSJ's ongoing strategic planning work. After brief discussion, the Ends statement was moved, seconded and approved unanimously.

15. Further strategic planning steps: (see report) Evan Junker, for the sake of time, urged the Board to read his report and schedule a meeting with him for any comments.

16. Future initiatives:

a. Widening the Circle: This UUA report to General Assembly recommends many actions to address racism, mainly for the UUA and congregations but also for UU groups like UUSJ. Serena proposed that there be a Board “conversation Zoom” in January sometime, possibly with participation of Paula Cole Jones to see what actions make sense for UUSJ. Based on outcome, actions could become part of a future Board meeting agenda. A link was made by Gary Magnuson to the potential “8<sup>th</sup> Principle” which many congregations are now discussing, and which has similar goals. This can be part of the conversation (and perhaps include Rev. Pippin Whitaker, now at Accotink, who is Chair of the Commission on Social Witness and may have insights to offer).

b. Advocacy for January-June: See Pablo’s power point summary of his proposals, basically to alternate months with “full-tilt” advocacy outreach in Feb, April and June, and partnership discussions and other planning and outreach in alternate months. Also see above referenced report from Serena on advocacy oversight, for more detail.

17. New Comments: Several people noted that if we have only quarterly full Board meetings, we should plan on 2 ½ to 3 hours, not the 90 minutes originally scheduled (as this meeting had run almost to 2 ½ hours). People agreed they would be willing to dedicate the needed time once a quarter (with appropriate break). Martha also asked if documents could be provided in a more timely way, not so late the night before. Bob D. noted that all documents involving a motion were made available five days prior to the Board meeting as required but he agreed that we could do better on other reports.

18. NEXT BOARD MEETING IS MARCH 20 FROM 10:00 A.M. TO 12:30 P.M.

Charlotte Jones Carroll, Secretary