

Unity Church-Unitarian: Meeting of the Board of Trustees

March 11, 2017

The meeting took place in the Library at Unity Church.

Board of Trustees (BOT) members present: Estelle Brouwer, Justin Cummins, Nancy Evert, Mark Foster, Peter Heege, John Steiner-Manning, Bailey Webster

Executive Team (ET) members present: Janne Eller-Isaacs, Rob Eller-Isaacs, Barbara Hubbard, Lisa Friedman

Others present: Laura Park, Unity Consulting; Nic Cable, ministerial intern; Jennifer Tong, ARLT

Bailey Webster gave an opening reading.

Prophetic Leadership

- **Board Capacity Sub-team**
Bailey Webster reported on formation of the Trustee recruitment subcommittee. Discussion focused on creative ways to recruit Trustees and led to this recommendation: the Board should develop a linkage calendar in order to coordinate communications around Trustee/leadership recruitment, Ends renewal, evaluation, the canvas, and possibly other topics. This task should be handled by the Communications & Linkage sub-team.
- **Communication & Linkage Sub-team**
John Steiner-Manning reported that the sub-team will meet soon to begin work on the task described above.
- **Evaluation Sub-team**
John Steiner-Manning reported on behalf of the sub-team. The group is reviewing the Spirit Map, which will be included in the congregational survey this year, and considering possible revisions and additions to the survey. The sub-team is considering creative ways to encourage participation in the survey, including the possibility of offering individual results for a fee.

Nancy Evert moved that the sub-team should consider the Board's input regarding possible revisions and move ahead with a final survey. Peter Heege seconded the motion. The motion passed.

- **Transitions Sub-team**
Peter Heege reported on behalf of the sub-team. The group has identified and begun discussions, including some with knowledgeable resource people, regarding the pros and cons of a range of possible transition models. An important question arose: at what point does the Board determine whether we will continue to have an Executive Team or some other leadership structure? Consensus was that this decision should happen before the launch of the search but should not be addressed in the recommendations the sub-team brings to the Board in May.

- Policy sub-team
- Estelle Brouwer reported on the Policy sub-team’s meeting with Marg Walker and Bob Peskin regarding the Ends renewal process of 2013. Out of that meeting the sub-team proposes formation of an Ends Task Force. Estelle reminded the Board that this discussion is not “owned” by the Policy sub-team, but rather by the full Board.

Estelle moved and Mark Foster seconded the first motion on the agenda under the Policy sub-team report:

“That the Board convene an Ends Statements Task Force to develop for the Board's consideration a proposed process for adopting Ends Statements at the annual meeting in November 2018 and, to that end, the Task Force will promptly analyze existing congregational data, identify the sequence of steps and related timelines to complete the Ends Statements process and draft the terms for engaging Laura Park as a consultant to facilitate the Ends Statements process.”

Discussion followed as to whether the Task Force is for only the start of the process or for the process in its entirety. The working assumption is that this Task Force is for the whole process, understanding that some initial members may go off the Board this year and new Trustees may come on. The Task Force will need to call upon many people – Trustees and other congregants -- to accomplish the Ends renewal process, but the Task Force is intended to be a core group to launch and facilitate the process. The Policy sub-team reported Marg Walker’s comment that the Ends renewal process is linkage at its highest level, the most sacred work of the Board.

The motion carried unanimously.

- **The second motion on the agenda, as to the makeup of the Task Force, was moved by Justin Cummins and seconded by Nancy Evert. The motion was then tabled as two Trustees were absent and those present wanted to be sure all Trustees have a chance to volunteer to serve.**

The Policy sub-team recommends that the Task Force have four members. A majority of the Trustees present indicated an interest in being on the Task Force. Task Force membership will be finalized at the April Board meeting.

- Proposed Board policy revisions. Given time limitations, Justin Cummins suggested that the Board act only on those proposed revisions not requiring substantive discussion, and that those requiring substantive discussion be deferred to the April meeting.

John Steiner-Manning moved approval of the proposed Board policy revisions not requiring substantive discussion (in the attachment, those under the heading “Basic, presumably not requiring substantive discussion.”) Bailey Webster seconded the motion. The motion passed.

John Steiner-Manning then moved approval of the “shall not fail to” revisions (in the attachment, those following the first bullet under the heading “More substantive changes”). Nancy Evert seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Facilitated Discussion – Board Capacity Development

Laura Park facilitated a discussion of how a strong Board relates to a strong executive team (ET). Data emerging from that discussion is attached in an addendum to the minutes.

Business Matters

- Consent agenda

Peter Heege moved approval of the consent agenda. Bailey Webster seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Monitoring

Executive Team Report

I.B. Program Outcomes

Mark Foster moved to accept the Executive Team Report as compliant within the limitations of Policy I.B. Bailey Webster seconded the motion.

Discussion: Barbara Hubbard explained that the ET reports three times per year on each End (within, among, beyond). This is the second time this year that the ET has reported on the “within” end. Questions and comments from Trustees related to: lower rankings by families of color on some Ends in the annual congregational survey, the large increase in pastoral care visits this year over last year, piloting the revised Sources Supper template/script with the Board, and deleting a question from the congregational survey.

The motion passed.

II.B. Staff Changes

Mark Foster moved to accept the Executive Team Report as compliant within the limitations of Policy II.B. Bailey Webster seconded the motion.

Discussion: Barbara Hubbard reported that the nursery coordinator position has been offered and accepted by Audrey Hommeyer. The ET will keep the Board informed about Harold Watson’s employment status with the church.

The motion passed.

II.E. Financial Condition

Peter Heege moved to accept the Executive Team report as compliant within the limitations of Policy II.E. Bailey Webster seconded the motion.

Discussion: Barbara Hubbard distributed and provided an overview of current financial statements. Discussion took place around the Board’s intent for the use of unrestricted funds. Barbara noted that the ET will have more clarity for the Board by the May meeting, which the auditor will attend.

The motion passed.

II.G. Conflict of Interest

Peter Heege moved to accept the Executive Team Report as compliant within the limitations of Policy II.G. Bailey Webster seconded the motion.

Discussion: The ET noted this is a straight-forward report that possibly should have been on the consent agenda.

The motion passed.

II.H. Communication & Counsel

John Steiner-Manning moved to accept the Executive Team Report as compliant within the limitations of Policy II.H. Bailey Webster seconded the motion.

Discussion: Regarding our sanctuary process, Janne Eller-Isaacs reported that we may not receive a family as soon as we had initially thought. About 100 people came to the training session last Sunday and interest remains high from the congregation. The room is almost completely furnished. Conversations continue within Isaiah group of churches about how decisions will be made regarding how individuals or families are screened, how they are referred and where they are placed.

The motion passed.

Debriefing/Potential Future Training Topics

Justin Cummins asked Trustees for any suggested future training topics arising out of today's meeting. Trustees suggested these topics:

- The Board's responsibility for financial oversight, specifically what level of detail the Board needs, and how the Board can best stay focused on the big financial picture while remaining true to its fiduciary responsibility
- Follow-up to today's discussion of how a strong Board relates to a strong executive team

Bailey Webster offered her opening reading a second time to close the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Estelle Brouwer, Board Secretary

ADDENDUM to Minutes from 3/11/2017 Board Meeting

Facilitated Discussion – Board Capacity Development

Laura Park facilitated a discussion of how a strong Board relates to a strong executive team (ET). Those present identified the following qualities of a strong Board:

- Knowledgeable about policy governance
- Distinguishes means and ends while keeping ET accountable
- Know what policies say
- Sense of independence
- Draw on current and past experiences
- Have independent judgement
- Learn your role to liberate executive
- Relying on what ends ask for
- Is prophetic in its leadership while also financially responsible
- Engages with ET
- Inclusive of its members
- Trusts each other
- Individual spiritual practice
- Look forward with ET through shared priorities, communication and counsel
- Knows that information it needs to do its job and asks for it
- Has the temperature of the congregation and leads ahead
- Support each other in asking and answering the questions of discipleship
- Able to speak to the meaning of their faith in their life
- Integrated and oriented toward deeply held values
- Self-differentiated
- Shift the relationship with ministers
- Serving the eternal institution and not its current leaders
- Trust itself, each other and the covenant with the Executive
- See their service as serving the church's best interest, not to hold the Executive in check
- Does its work: linkage, monitoring, policy development, stewardship