

Minutes

Board of Trustees: December 15, 2021, Virtual Meeting

First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh

Board Members Attending: Julie Downs (2022); Lee Carnes, Vice President (2022); Sam Hens-Greco (2022); Heather Masterson, President (2023); Kyle Gracey, Treasurer (2023); Kate Snow, Secretary (2023); Bob Mitchell (2024); Rob Schwartz (2024), Amy DeChicchis (2024)

Board Members Absent: none

Ex Officio Members: Rev. Kate Walker, Minister

Others: Kurt Summersgill, Recording Secretary

Visitors: Peggy Parsons, Jim Pashek, Martin Schmidt, Sue Oerkvitz, Eleanor Mayfield

1. **Call to Order (7:01) (Heather)**
2. **Opening Words (Sam)** from William Ellery Channing
3. **Welcoming Guests (Heather)**
4. **Announcements (Heather)**
 - a. The next regularly scheduled Board meeting will be on Wednesday, January 19, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.
 - b. Start-up Retreat. (Lee) Rev. Sunshine will facilitate.
 - i. Saturday, January 8, 2022, 12:00pm-4:00pm Board of Trustees (BOT) 12:00pm-1:30pm. Congregation 2:00pm-4:00pm.
 - ii. Saturday, January 22, 2022, 10:00am to 4:00 pm. (Leadership 10am-12:00pm, BOT 1:00pm-4:00pm
 - iii. Sunday, January 23, 2022. Worship
5. **Consent Agenda (Heather) (Document)**
 - a. November 17, 2021 Board meeting minutes. Motion to approve, by Heather, seconded by Julie. Approved unanimously.
 - b. Minutes of the December Finance Committee meeting.
 - c. Investment Committee Meeting Minutes
 - d. Annual Budget Drive Committee Report.
 - e. Building and Grounds Committee Report
 - f. Minister's Report
6. **Church Ventilation is a high priority capital expenditure. (Peggy Parsons) (7:10)**
 - a. Reopening Implementation Working Group had concerns starting back in April about church ventilation. Our answer from the contractor was that it is inadequate. We need to gather, but how can we do it safely? There are two stages of mitigation: 1) is preventing getting into the same spaces where there are people with Covid, and 2) is if we are in the same space, what do we do to prevent letting the virus in. Not gathering is the easiest way to keep from being exposed, but folks are ready and willing to gather, so we need to push forward. In a study done in Germany a third of the people over 80 didn't respond at all to the vaccine

(compared with only 2% of those under 60). In our congregation 11% of the congregation is over 80. Immunity wanes over time, so boosters are really important. The variables we have most control over are the number of those who gather, vaccination/booster status, masking, and ventilation/filtration. Her recommendations are to start incrementally: fewer people, KN95 masks, all boosted, musician guidelines, since we have no ability at this point in time to change ventilation. She highly recommends that we pursue filtration mitigation measures.

- b. Martin Schmidt: The other UU churches here have been meeting as hybrid. Pitt is in person. At a certain point it becomes personal responsibility.
 - c. Rob Schwartz: What does the UUA recommend? Peggy: Look at the link at the end of the document she provided.
 - d. Sue Oerkvitz: Reinforces what Peggy is talking about. She has been following musicians' guidelines.
 - e. Heather: She is looking for specific recommendations for filtration, since we are limited on what we can do with ventilation, asks Bob to get more information with cost estimates.
 - f. Jim Pashek: We need to figure out some systems that can be adjusted/tweaked. Can we bring in an engineer for a couple thousand dollars to tell us what we can do with the prices? Bob agrees.
 - g. Heather: The building committee has the expertise to search for an engineer.
 - h. Sue: She has the names for consultants from another church. She is to give that information to Bob.
7. **Solar panel proposal (Kyle) (7:41) (Document)** We got an additional proposal for the solar panels. We are still looking into loan possibilities. Feedback on this from the Budget meeting was either positive or neutral. We do not plan to make a decision today. He would like us to decide at the January meeting.
- a. Jim Pashek: Our two prior bids were for about \$134,000. The newest bid was for \$126,000, which could be reduced to a cost \$88,200. They would take ownership with the tax credit and with the equipment depreciation over 6 years. So, even though we would not have the tax credits for ownership, we would have the electricity savings, as well as the energy credit. Kyle has reviewed the figures with and with this proposal, we could end up with net savings over 30 years.
 - b. Sam: Sounds great! What is the down-side? Kyle: There doesn't seem to be a downside for us. The company is benefitting from the tax credit.
 - c. Rev Kate: Funding stream to the company? Is that established? They had a bad situation at her prior church. Jim Pashek: This is a federal tax credit, so it's in the IRS law. Kyle: This is established in tax law, so it should not be a problem. The credit is scheduled to expire in 2024, which could be extended. Jim: Even if they own it, we would be responsible for maintenance. He talked to St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Mt. Lebanon; they said their maintenance was basically just hosing down the panels once a year.
 - d. Rob: It sounds too good to be true. Can we contact the other bidders? Jim Pashek: The other two companies do not provide that model.

- e. Bob: As a church, we do not qualify for the credit, but if the company owns it, it does. Jim: Most of these companies are filled with enthusiastic young people, who do not think it's right that non-profits cannot participate in the tax credit. Kyle: This is a legal business model.
 - f. Kyle: What needs to happen before the January meeting? The only outstanding issue is the loan application, but if any Board members have questions, they can be presented so we are ready to proceed at January meeting.
8. **Vote—Recommendation of Reopening Implementation Working Group to allow in-person services (Kyle) (8:02) (Document)**
- a. The recommendations are from a majority, not a consensus. This will continue to need modification. There is a strong desire to re-open.
 - b. Rev Kate: HVAC on full time? Need to check with Brian Junker because of the motor noise.
 - c. Bob: It would be nice to be able to leave the HVAC on.
 - d. Heather: With these recommendations, there are many layers of responsibility to put these into play. How will this be managed? Kyle: Vaccinations are already required. The recommendation is worded to be at the minister's discretion.
 - e. Rob: Ushers and Greeters Team is ready to help implement. Rev Kate likes Peggy's idea of handing out the good masks.
 - f. Bob: Implementation: Roping off every row. Rev Kate is picturing a working group that helps with the implementation.
 - g. Vote: Kyle moves adoption of the proposal. Kate seconds. Motion carries, 8 in favor, one abstention.
 - h. Rev Kate: She has discussed with Kyle about getting HEPA filters for the office.
9. **Vote—2022 Budget (Kyle) (8:17) (Document)**
- a. There are very few changes from the last proposal.
 - b. Kyle moves to adopt the proposed budget. Second by Kate. Motion to adopt the budget carries unanimously.
 - c. Future budget items: Hybrid service capital expense. Consultant for ventilation. Capital expenditure for solar panels, for ventilation/filtration.
 - d. We also will need to set aside money for Erica's sabbatical fund. (up to \$4000); and moving some staff up to full time.
10. **Vote—revision to Investment Committee Charter (Kyle) (8:24) (Document)** The committee has been doing this already, but these are the changes to be incorporated officially into the Charter: 1) responsibilities should be addressed specifically; 2) explicitly investing in accordance with UU values; 3) avoiding market timing. Kyle moves to adopt amendments to the Investment Committee Charter. Second by Lee. Motion to adopt carries unanimously.
11. **Vote—Authorizations related to Parnassus and Fidelity investment funds (Kyle) (8:27). (Document)** The Investment Committee needs authority to open a new investment account, in order to sell some of the portfolio and invest in others. Motion by Kyle to adopt the 4 documents, second by Bob. Motion carries unanimously.
12. **Vote—Consider adding First Unitarian to other churches in putting public pressure on the police regarding the death of Jim Rogers (Rev. Kate) (8:38) (Document)** The bylaws require Board authorization for any official statements representing the church.

Community pressure needs to be on-going. Motion by Heather to support Rev. Kate to draft and send a letter, modeled on the proposed draft, signed by Rev Kate and the Board of Trustees. Second by Kate. Motion carries unanimously, 8 in favor.

13. **Review main takeaways from the Nov. 20 climate justice meeting and discuss the path forward for the Climate Justice initiative (Bob, Rev Kate, and Rob) (9:03).**
 - a. Is there a consensus? People have different justice priorities. Racial justice and climate justice have a large intersection. Consensus was that we can do both.
 - b. What is the process? Congregational vote in May, 2022. There is a major educational component. VIM will play a role with that.
 - c. Rev. Kate has scheduled two sermons in January on this topic. She will then invite discussion.

14. **Adjourn (Heather) (9:12)**

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt Summersgill, Recording Secretary

Approved by the Board: January 19, 2022

Kate Snow, Secretary