

FRS Parish Board Meeting – October 16, 2024

Present: Rev. Rebecca Bryan, **Tina Benik**, **Tom Himmel**, **Kathy Desilets**, **Jim Supple**, **Laurie Evans-Daly**, **Vern Ellis**, **Minnie Flanagan**, **Bob Higgins**, **Sarina Kahn Reddy**, **Andy Lobb**, **Lori Clark**, **Liss Larsen**

Note: Names in **Bold** are voting members.

Not Attending: **Renée Wolf Foster**

Call to Order: Tina Benik called the meeting to order at 6:07pm

Opening: Rev. Rebecca opened the meeting with references to how we can remain grounded in challenging times and with a poem, "About Standing in Kinship."

Tina Benik initiated the practice of reading the opening of the Board Covenant and one of its numbered parts. Bob Higgins read the introduction, and all joined in reading #5. We will do this at the start of each meeting as a way of keeping our covenant in mind.

Minister's Report: Rev. Rebecca

- Staff met with two people from Avita who presented on Alzheimer's and ways to support people who have this condition, including an exercise demonstrating how people with Alzheimer's experience the world.
- Board members expressed interest in this presentation and thought it would be useful for the whole congregation.
- Building issues: Firehouse has moved into the space they are renting on the 2nd floor of Parish Hall. Problems with heating there and in the Meetinghouse are being addressed.
- We are looking to clarify the advisory role of committees as well as the need to address questions and ideas with the appropriate staff members.
- Board members can be helpful by clarifying the advisory nature of all committees.
- Working to define the specific responsibilities of each of the teams and committees with a focus on overlaps, how we should manage project ideas, overall consideration of communication, and consideration of funds needed for projects. The processes need to be clear to the Board so that we can appropriately redirect questions and support the defined processes and procedures.
- Since the Stewardship Committee has significant spending and no dedicated budget, a set aside budget for this committee was discussed. Jim Supple said that consideration is underway to build a program-centered budget.
- Rev. Rebecca also reported that the retired minister of the Bedford UU church and his wife had a major fire in their home. Keep them in our prayers and good intentions. No other help requested at this time.

Stewardship Report: Vern Ellis for Renée Wolf Foster

The auction went well with an effective team effort. Final figures on the funds raised will be available soon. Men's breakfast signups are still in progress. Special kudos to Renee and Vern for planning and organization, and to Cynthia Walsh for a great meal.

Grants Team Update: Andy Lobb

Andy distributed a first quarter report on the group's work showing substantial progress in identifying potential grantees and securing funders. Since these are familiar funders, the grants team expects that as efforts expand results will not be as good, but the group still anticipates success both in developing resources and in raising money. The team needs a prioritized list of projects from leadership to assist in identifying appropriate grant sources for these projects.

Finance Committee Report: Jim Supple

- The Committee voted to accept six goals to define roles and priorities more clearly.
- The Capital Campaign will focus on Parish Hall.
- Rental of Parish Hall 2nd floor to Firehouse gives us immediate income, most of which so far has been spent on necessary steps to prepare for the group to move in. In the future, funds are expected to cover the cost of utilities for Parish Hall and to leave funds for other purposes.
- The Annual Giving Campaign is coming soon. The brochure defines accomplishments and needs. More stories may increase impact.
- A final version of the September (1st Quarter) financial report will be available prior for the November meeting. The report's new format should be more self-explanatory.

ACTION: Approval of Finance Committee Goals

Tina Benik moved that the Board accept the Finance Committee goals as presented at this meeting. Andy Lobb seconded, and the motion passed without opposition.

4th Century Report: Vern Ellis

The planning group had a good discussion about looking forward and connecting with the community. Looking to increase communication and agreement on goals among all parties.

300th Anniversary Report – Laurie Evans-Daly

- Expect the 300th Anniversary book to be available for sale at the Cookie Walk.
- Sales on weathercock pins continue.
- The little art gallery is reserved for the year. Bettina Turner will curate the presentation of materials related to church history.
- We will hang banners inside the church in January and a newly designed banner will hang outside for the full year.
- An initial schedule for the year is in place with a definitive schedule expected soon.

Afghan Family Report: Sarina Kahn Reddy

- Family members are working and/or studying, and they are saving to buy a van to allow everyone to travel together.
- Working on Visas and helped the brother and his wife and child to get an apartment.
- The family still has extensive community support.
- We will soon need to raise funds for our share of rent. This is not specifically seeking funds from FRSUU members and is separate from FRSUU fundraising.

Safety Policy Update: Bob Higgins

- Bob will lead a new task force to make recommendations on this policy.
- Policies and procedures will address issues such as lock up, emergencies including health issues, e.g. (do we need defibrillator?), how to manage a health emergency in the church, assessing and addressing dangers to church members and staff (should we have monitors, cameras, digital locks, other precautions?), and many more.
- The task force will get a start on the long list of safety issues. The whole project will be a continuing one. We need to find balance between our desire for openness and our responsibilities for caring for the safety of people and facilities.
- The first meeting will focus on short-term goals; additional members are welcome.
- Liss Larsen suggested looking into working with local fire and police departments. At the school where she worked, these local agencies conducted a very helpful audit.
- Thanks to Bob for taking on this issue.

Discussion of Steeple Lights Process: Tina Benik & All

- American Steeple notified us that the cost for fixing the lights will be higher than expected. We did not have a formal contract with them and the number of fixtures needed was greater than initially reported.
- The Facilities Team is working on this with the Executive Committee, and they expect a final estimate soon. American Steeple estimates that work will take 8 –10 weeks.
- The Facilities Team, like all committees, should recognize that their role is advisory. We should establish a policy to bid out large projects and enter into a contract with a set price for the project.

Consent Agenda: Kathy Desilets

ACTION: Approval of Parish Board minutes for May 22, 2024, and June 19, 2024, and for August 13, 2024, and September 13, 2024

Bob Higgins moved to approve the minutes for May and June. Jim Supple seconded and the motion passed without opposition. Jim moved to approve the minutes for August and September. Andy Lobb seconded, and the motion passed without opposition.

Adjournment:

Rev. Rebecca closed with a reminder that our next meeting is November 20 and called attention to the various church events/services around the election. Then she offered a prayer for us to accept the results of the election while remaining true to our beliefs.

ACTION: Adjournment of the meeting

Lori Clark moved to adjourn at 8:10pm. Tom Himmel seconded, and the motion passed without objection.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Desilets, Parish Clerk