

Birmingham Unitarian Church
Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
November 27, 2023

Present: Claudia Kocher, Tony Kubien, Tanya Nordhaus, Julia Pulver, Andrew Schreck, Brian Schandavel, Diane Slon, Amy Smalley, Craig Stroup

Zoom Visitors: Soren Anderson, Drieka DeGraff, Nancy Duffy, Barb Eschner, Heidi Kapsokavathis (NomCom), Donna Larkin Mohr, Cynthia Osterhage

The meeting was held on Zoom.

Andrew called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM. Amy read the Board Covenant. Andrew led the chalice lighting and check-in.

Minutes

- Andrew moved that the minutes of the October 23, 2023, board meeting be accepted. The motion passed unanimously.

Monthly Reports

1. Treasurer's Report – Craig
 - Andrew moved that the Treasurer's report be accepted.
 - Craig presented the Treasurer's report (document attached).
 - The motion passed unanimously.

Open Topics

1. Discussion of Town Hall – Andrew
 - Overall view was that the October meeting went well.
 - Rev. Lisa Presley will lead a town hall on December 10.
 - Board Members may submit topics to Andrew. Suggestions in the meeting included discussing the shortage of ministers, ministry, the changes in the past few months, updates on the office and finances.
 - The January 14 town hall will focus on ministerial updates.
 - We will set up February – April topics and dates soon.
2. Conflict Transformation Task Force – Andrew
 - No report for this meeting.
 - Andrew will talk to Rev. Sharon once she is back.
 - He had a good conversation with the All Souls church in Washington, DC.
 - Brian will talk to the Williamsburg, VA, church.

New Topics

1. Updates to the investment policy – Craig

- Andrew made a motion to approve the updated investment policy.
 - The Board reviewed the Track Changes version of the document. Primary changes include
 - Inclusion for the Planned Giving committee, which is now part of Budget and Finance.
 - Clarity about the investment funds.
 - Improved investment structure for the yearly draw.
 - Reduced risk volatility
 - 60 equity/40 fixed income as the preferred asset class balance.
 - Making it clear that Budget and Finance is acting as Planned Giving.
 - Discussion
 - A question was raised about the use of socially responsible funds. Craig indicated that we use them wherever possible to meet our goals.
 - Craig was asked if there was any plan to restructure Planned Giving. It will remain under Budget and Finance for now.
 - A concern was raised about earnings if inflation reaches 5-6%. Craig concurred but indicated that we are focused on earning the highest possible return with prudent risk.
 - The motion passed unanimously.
2. Working Session for the Board – Andrew
- Andrew presented the need for the Board to have a working session in January to cover topics related to ministry, budget, strategic planning, Article 2, resiliency fund and vision & strategic plan. He will send a Doodle poll to determine the date.
 - For the vision and strategic plan, the thought is to kick off a task force in January that will include one board member and 3-4 congregants. They will start with copies of the last plan and go forward from there.
 - For Article 2 amendments, we will solicit members who want to help.
 - Given the scope of the Board’s work, having two working sessions was suggested.
 - It was noted that a task force makes sense for the strategic plan, but does the Board set the vision? Andrew noted that we’ll work on that in the first meeting.
 - It was noted that we will need a great deal of congregational input for both the vision and the strategic plan. Andrew indicated that we’ll have discussion groups and listening sessions.
3. December Board Meeting – Andrew
- The December meeting will be held on December 18 on Zoom.
4. Exit Interviews – Andrew
- The process for exit interviews is in place, with Pastoral Care, Membership, and the Board conducting interviews. Interview assignment is based on the reason for the departure: Pastoral (Pastoral Care), Programming (Membership), Governance/Finance (Board).

- From a data standpoint, we need to determine what we do with the data. The plan is to look at holistically for trends.
- It was asked if those questions come back to the Board. Andrew indicated that we can determine how we review (e.g., quarterly in executive session).

Issues Arising for the Good of the Church

1. Tanya will be giving the eulogy on behalf of BUC for Ann Throop. She asked everyone to send her stories to use.

Visitor Comments/Questions

1. Donna Larkin Mohr thanked Tanya for bringing up socially responsible investing. At GA, younger people expressed a desire for green and socially responsible investments. She noted that we have to partner with 14 other churches for Article 2 amendments. Regarding strategic plans, both she and Drieka have created multiple plans and have asked to do it for BUC, but Rev. Mandy declined. She stated the Board would do the vision, noting that our current mission has no mention of justice or love and may need updating. The plan would follow. She commended the board for bringing it up.
2. Nancy Duffy expressed concern about exit interviews happening quarterly. Andrew clarified that the reviews would happen quarterly; the interviews would happen as needed.
3. Barb Eschner expressed her support for the Board. She indicated that the Revenue team's work on fundraisers strives to provide engagement "glue" and increased fun. She suggested a town hall about the building needs and planned giving, as when Dick Cantley did a list of building needs (broken into short, medium, and long-term needs), planned giving was discussed at that time. She has done vision and mission work and would be happy to help with the framework.

Craig moved to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Smalley, Secretary

Birmingham Unitarian Church

Treasurer's Report to Board of Trustees

November 27, 2023

1. October 2023 Financial Statements are complete, and the results presented to Budget & Finance are below:

	Month of October			October Year-To-Date			Full Year
	Actual	Budget	B/(W)	Actual	Budget	B/(W)	Budget
Revenues	\$44,013	\$48,981	-\$4,968	\$199,321	\$190,387	\$8,934	\$632,665
Adj. Oper. Exp	-\$83,194	-\$59,749	-\$23,445	-\$246,349	-\$234,992	-\$11,357	-\$716,179
Adj. Oper. Inc./Loss	-\$39,181	-\$10,768	-\$28,413	-\$47,028	-\$44,605	-\$2,423	-\$83,514

- YTD Revenue variance is primarily the Martha Pfaff bequest of \$14,000 that was received in September, as favorable pledge income was largely offset by a YTD shortfall in Rental Income
- Operating expense variance for October and YTD is primarily the impact of the severance payment to Rev. Mandy in October. October had negative variances for timing of payments related to September, and final payment for the Mark Ewert Next Steps weekend. YTD, favorability in all categories (primarily Facility & Office Expenses) partially offset the unfavorability in Minister Expenses.

2. Estimated General Fund (unrestricted) cash at October 31 is \$159,847 (\$203,109 incl, 2023-24 prepaid pledges) Note that these amounts are higher than the amounts shown in Exhibit B of the financial statements because I have adjusted for eliminating the accrual for Minister Sabbatical (\$16,174) which is no longer a BUC obligation and the Deferred Income adjustment for ERTC Revenue (\$86,074), as we intend to use this amount to cover the current year deficit budget that was approved by the Board earlier this year.
3. The Budget & Finance Committee has reviewed the proposed changes Investment Policy Statement with Melissa Joy at Pearl Planning and the revised document is ready to present to the Board for approval.
4. Diane Slon has joined the Budget and Finance Committee. Thank you Diane and welcome back!
5. I received a communication from a congregant after the Town Hall on November 19 proposing the concept proposing the concept of a Long-Term Budget Task Force that could be appointed by the Board once the Board has developed a strategic vision for the future direction of BUC.
6. Endowment fund market values at October 31, 2023 were as follows:
 - General Endowment: \$539,063.14 (down \$12,980 from September 30)
 - Music Endowment: \$43,439.38 (down \$831 from September 30)
 - Memorial Glen Endowment: \$42,013.42 (down \$931 from September 30)

Respectfully submitted by Craig Stroup, Treasurer
November 25, 2023