

Parish Committee Minutes

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington

November 25, 2024, 7 - 9 pm

Via Zoom

In attendance: Anne, John, Carolyn, Al, Kate, Steve, Joanna (at 7:30pm), Susan, and
Jeff Keffer

Ministers: Rev. Marta Flanagan and Rev. Erica Richmond

7:04 Call to Order (Anne)

7:05 Reading and Chalice Lighting (Jeff)

Reflections on grief; need for a balm of gratitude. Appreciations.
Poem: Jane Kenyon's "Otherwise"

Two minutes of silence (let us bring our best selves to this meeting)

7:10 Rose of Recognition proposal(s) (all)

Nominated David Dreyfus, a member of the First Parish tech team, for
extraordinary efforts to support tech for hybrid services for memorials

Nominated the Ferry Beach Committee that worked to make the UnFerry Beach
program happen. (Mike Rie, Rachel Stark, David D'Antonio, Mary
McCartney, and Monique Chaplin)

Nominated Aaron Kitzmiller and everyone who worked on the Harvest Moon Fair

Carolyn volunteered to write up the "bouquet" of Roses of Recognition.

7:15 Review of Financial reports & dashboard (Carolyn)

- October financials:
 - Graphs are updated
 - Trends are on track
- Summary of Financial Summit held on 11/12/24
- Staff payroll corrections
 1. Undercharge of health insurance cost and reporting discrepancy
 - a. Back in July, it was discovered that Ebiere, the office manager, was incorrectly set up in payroll.
 - b. Liz McKirsey combed through and discovered the 2024 payroll did not update withholding for employees, so we

have withheld too little from some employees. That was from January 2024 forward.

- c. Suggestion is to not ask employees to pay for our error.
- d. Suggestion to make the correction on Jan. 1, 2025.
- e. This would mean First Parish UU Arlington will pay more for healthcare than was planned. That cost stretches over two fiscal years.
- f. The request put before the Parish Committee is to acknowledge the mistake and to vote.

MOTION 1: I move that we approve increased payroll expenses of \$3,025.02 due to administrative errors in which some employees were undercharged for Health Insurance withholding costs for calendar year 2024. The Parish Committee acknowledges that First Parish made this error and will not seek repayment from the impacted staff; there is no tax impact on the reporting correction. (Anne) Seconded (Steve M.)

Discussion:

Where will the money come from on our budget lines?

Half of the funds will come from the contingency fund and the other half from the Parish Committee budget line.

Friendly amendment: I move that we approve increased payroll expenses of \$3,025.02 due to administrative errors in which some employees were undercharged for Health Insurance withholding costs for calendar year 2024. Half the funds will come from the contingency fund and the other half from the Parish Committee budget line. The Parish Committee acknowledges that First Parish made this error and will not seek repayment from the impacted staff; there is no tax impact on the reporting correction. (Anne) Seconded (Steve M.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

It was noted that Liz M has offered to walk First Parish staff through their pay stubs carefully to help them understand everything and all the information they contain.

Payroll corrections, continued:

- Liz M discovered that Rev. Stevie Carmody's employer retirement contribution match was set up incorrectly.
 - Corrected effective July 1, 2024
 - Need to make a correction from Rev. Stevie's start date to June 30, 2024.
 - Long and short, the Parish Committee is making Stevie whole. For Rev. Erica and Marta, Liz has researched several years to be sure employer contributions have been correct.
- In January, when the Parish Committee votes on updated housing allowances, Liz is also willing to walk through those items with staff to help them understand.

The Parish Committee thanked Carolyn, Liz, and the First Parish staff for their patience. Thanks for the efforts to prevent future errors.

Consent agenda: Minutes, Financials, Ministers' Reports including two reports from the Minister of Religious Education.

MOTION 2: I move that we accept the consent agenda including the Minister of Religious Education's October and November reports. (Jeff) Seconded (Anne) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

Financial Summit in November

The Finance Committee, Treasurer, Stewardship Committee, and other groups provided updates during the Financial Summit in November. Last year's "bike rack" of things moved to the side was reviewed as was a wishlist, which was updated. There was a continued focus on volunteerism, especially in the areas of finance and graphic design projects, Property, and to ask First Parish committees to think about succession planning, including succession planning for the Parish Committee, well before May when First Parish holds its annual meeting. Getting a sense of how leadership will be transferred is important.

At the summit, electronic giving was reviewed and First Parish will stay with Realm as the primary system. Ebierre Omoregie, the office manager, and Allison Sillers, the office and communications associate, will do some training on Realm along with Marie Meter as a volunteer from the Stewardship Committee.

Stewardship Planning is a priority and focal point. The Trustees are exploring issues and addressing operating funds held in the Trustees' funds (their funds are not just the endowment).

Charting the course themes were discussed and identifying the First Parish congregation's priorities in light of the retirement of the lead minister, Rev. Marta Flanagan. The settled minister search was mentioned (timelines forthcoming based on guidance from the Unitarian Universalist Association and the transition office there).

The Racial Justice Committee is working on Reckoning and Repair reparations piece.

The Parish Committee Treasurer expressed gratitude for all attending and getting to know one another well.

Gratitude was expressed for organizing the summit and the impact of financial pieces on behalf of the Parish Committee to the treasurer and committees involved.

7:40 Updates from Parish Committee Executive (Anne & John)

- Flag proposal status:

In late October, input was gathered from the congregation during coffee hour in person, during a listening session online, and through direct email; the Defending Democracy working group had made a proposal for three flags originally. In the meantime, Parish Committee Executive heard from Joanne Pohl of the Defending Democracy group that the group is holding off on asking the Parish Committee to vote. The group is meeting in December to discuss timing. The group also proposes a set up of two flags: the US flag and below that the progress pride flag. First Parish would continue to have the Black Lives Matter banner on the lawn. The Defending Democracy group is considering congregational input. There are 13 pages of notes from the Listening Session and related activities; 24 people stopped by the Parish Committee table during coffee hour in addition to the 23 people at the Zoom session; there were 28 emails sent by individuals. Rev. Erica provided the notes in a shared Google Document to the Parish Committee. For the timing, the Defending Democracy group is considering either pre- or post-inauguration of the U.S. president in January.

[Note: The clerk submitted an article to the First Parish newsletter, The Spire, to provide the congregation with an update on the flag pole proposal and to say that a decision and timing would be forthcoming after the Defending Democracy working group meets in December.]

- A covenant request from First Parish member Jim Hall

In late October, Jim Hall sent a request to the Parish Committee regarding the principles of Unitarian Universalism. The request was in regards to Article II of the Unitarian Universalist Association bylaws. As Parish Committee chair, Anne Quaadgras met with Jim, and they spoke together. At this time, Jim has withdrawn the request.

- Parish Committee ballot for the First Parish annual meeting

The Parish Committee is starting early regarding finding people for leadership including Parish Committee seats. There has been work done and reviewed on who is cycling off the committee and which seats are or may be opening. Anne Q is ending her six-year term on the committee. Steve is ending a one year term. Joanna is ending her first three-year term. At this point, Anne is required to cycle off as she has completed the maximum term. The committee is in search of a chair. Anne is willing to stay on as chair through the end of her term. The Parish Committee chooses the chair from the group. Thank you to John A for being vice chair this session.

- Lead Minister Rev. Marta Flanagan's retirement party date will be on the only open Saturday night: May 31, 2025. Gratitude was expressed by the Parish Committee for Anne's organizing this date. There is a need for an organizer who likes party planning.
- Climate Action Working Group heating system strategy options - with Lori Kenshaft
 - Outline of ways First Parish can live our values (How do we move away from fossil fuels?) There was a proposal shared with the Parish Committee previously. It is about two pages and can be accessed in the shared Google folder: see folder / readings for this month.
 - Challenges with regard to different proposals and timelines: Understanding that there is some urgency with climate continuing to change. There is an aging boiler at First Parish as well. First Parish has been investing in maintenance and at some point, First Parish will need to replace the boiler. The thinking is that it would cost approximately \$60,000 for a new boiler. First Parish would need to look into getting a new system and figuring out which path to go down. The project could potentially be included in a Capital Campaign.
 - Cooling the sanctuary and vestry matters to both being a community center, from being available for emergencies, to being a year-round place for people to gather, including summer services and potlucks.

Discussion:

There was a question about if the Climate Action Working Group is able to put together a proposal if the boiler goes within next couple of years. The Parish Committee is thinking logically about spending and timelines.

Air source heat pumps could be installed relatively quickly. A Parish Committee member mentioned that heat pumps take a lot of electricity, especially when it is really cold or really hot (times when needed most). Any individual unit would be economical but not the whole building.

A Parish Committee member highlighted that about eight hours was spent with a repair person regarding the boiler: the First Parish Property Committee has put in a lot of time. There were shorts occurring and the boiler was shutting off. The idea that the boiler currently installed needs maintenance is reasonable for its age.

A Parish Committee member commented on looking at options and middle ground. To have a near-term option for planning purposes would be a good place to go as a next step.

8:04 Updates from Parish Committee working groups established during the fall retreat (all / Joanna, Susan, and Carolyn)

- Communications - Joanna and John
 - Going pretty well
 - Joanna spoke with Diane to gain insight on *The Spire*
 - Reminder - we need photos for the First Parish website
 - Next step: connect with the office (Allison / Ebieri)
- Volunteer Engagement/database - Susan (with Steve and Anne)
 - Database
 - Met with Kiki Giatis (Leadership Development) who agreed to help
 - If we had a database, what would you look for? (skills: graphics, sheets/Excel, etc.); clarify uses; what is already out there?
 - Is it possible to make Realm a tool for this? Are there other things/products/tools, or build something ourselves?
 - Ask Ebieri and Allison after their training on Realm (volunteers are “novice” users; Your PT Controller is doing the trainings - Dec. 2nd and Dec 5th for two hours)
- Charting a Course - Carolyn (with Kate, John, Jeff, and Al)
 - Carolyn thanked Kate for updating the survey
 - Will be meeting on Zoom to go over the two surveys in December

8:11 pm Break

8:19 pm Resume

The Parish Committee went into executive session for about 46 minutes. There are no notes taken during executive session.

8:22 pm - **MOTION 3:** I move that we go into executive session. (John) seconded (Kate) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

9:08 pm - **MOTION 4:** I move that we come out of executive session. (Jeff) Seconded (Anne) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

9:09 Adjourn

MOTION 5: I move that we adjourn the meeting. (Jeff) Seconded (Anne) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

Motions

MOTION 1: I move that we approve increased payroll expenses of \$3025.02 due to administrative errors in which some employees were undercharged for Health Insurance withholding costs for calendar year 2024. Parish Committee acknowledges that First Parish made this error and will not seek repayment from the impacted staff; there is no

tax impact on the reporting correction. (Anne) Seconded (Steve M.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 2: I move that we accept the consent agenda including the Minister of Religious Education's October and November reports. (Jeff) Seconded (Anne) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 3: I move that we go into executive session. (John A) Seconded (Kate T.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 4: I move that we come out of executive session. (Jeff) Seconded (Anne) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 5: I move that we adjourn. (Jeff) Seconded (Anne) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

Minutes prepared by John Anderson, vice chair (until approximately 7:30 PM) and Joanna Pushee, volunteer clerk.