

Parish Committee Meeting Minutes

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington

May 13, 2025 7 - 9 pm

Via Zoom

Attendees: Anne Quaadgras, John Anderson, Joanna Pushee, Jeff Keffer, Carolyn Hodges, Kate Tranquada, Al Tosti, Susan Moore

Ministers: Rev. Marta Flanagan, Rev. Tricia Brennan, Rev. Erica Richmond; Minister of Religious Education, Rev. Stevie Carmody

Guest: Marie Meteer - Interim Search Committee (ISC)

Guest: Mary Fusoni, First Parish member (Rocking for Refugees concert)

7:03 Call to Order (Anne)

Parish Committee tabling signup
Rev. Erica, welcome back.

7:05 Reading and Chalice Lighting (Kate T.)

7:10 **State of the Parish** (Rev. Tricia Brennan)

Rev. Tricia offered her thoughts on First Parish before leaving:

- It is an amazing congregation! There is such depth and breadth of what exists here at First Parish. Worship feels layered.
- There are trusted and capable leaders.
- The facility itself is pleasing.
- Religious Education is supported by the congregation at large.
- Adult programming is varied; some is provided by ministers and some by lay leaders.
- The lay ministers are awesome. Lay ministers and Worship Associates - I like that you select them!
- The social justice mission is alive and expresses itself.
- There is a well-organized membership program: to bring in 23 people is great!
- Thinking about what a healthy congregation looks like and using the metaphor of a 3-legged stool with ministers, staff, lay leaders: You have solid legs that hold up the stool.
- Not a lot of connection denominationally, but this connection happens during an interim time. Think in terms of each staff person/each part of church being able to know the resources outside the meeting house to support the church.
 - Mutual benefit (you would get support; the UUA/group would benefit)

- Fun ways to strengthen: pulpit exchange (ministers); choir; youth get together; make friends! It will be an enriching experience.
- Committees: A committee has a chair and that chair does so much work; work does not always get distributed and the chair can become fatigued. Rev. Tricia did not see this everywhere (the Lay Ministers did not fall into this category, for example). Chairperson work requires a lot from the person and is something common that Rev. Tricia has seen in many churches. She suggested perhaps the Leadership Development Committee could take up questions such as: Are we balanced in the work? Is there too much fatigue? Are we doing too much?
- Regarding the reality of Rev. Marta leaving and what that feels like: Rev. Tricia started days before the new federal administration began in January. She has witnessed the congregation living through and meeting both the new administration and the departure of the lead minister. Giving space for these has been important. There is a grieving process which does not end when Rev. Marta departs. Her departure will be felt a lot in the first year. The current federal administration is not going away. Rev. Tricia has experienced an active social justice program at First Parish. Rev. Tricia advised First Parish members and leaders to be real with each other and to support one another; to keep a sense of ease about us along with a non-anxious presence. Model openness.

The chair thanked Rev. Tricia for her report and observations, for her calm presence, and for reminding us that we are doing really good.

The vice chair gave Rev. Tricia a big thank you especially for diving right in, for reminding First Parish of joy, and for her reflections.

Thank you, Rev. Tricia for these past four months! The Parish Committee thanked Rev. Tricia for her work.

7:28 - Interim (minister) Search Committee oral report - Marie Meteer, ISC chair

Marie Meteer provided an update on the process for the Interim Search Committee. The ISC has been in the interview period and has finished the interviews. The ISC is entering the process of contacting references. After the First Parish Annual Meeting, which is on May 18, the ISC submits the choice and sees if the person is a match. We have had great choices! The process and questions such as asking the "Why us?" question has been very insightful.

Rev. Marta Flanagan thanked Marie and the ISC. Good work!

The Parish Committee expressed gratitude to the whole committee and all the work going on behind the scenes.

7:35 PM **[HR report](#) acknowledgement (part of Consent agenda)**

A summary of the check-ins that the Human Resources committee did with staff was provided to the Parish Committee. This two-page report included highlights such as: appreciation that the Human Resources team reached out and asked staff for feedback; the workload for part-time staff is challenging (the seasoned staff handle the juggling well); First Parish health insurance is unaffordable for part-time staff.

Financial updates, if any (Carolyn)

Holding the regular Parish Committee meeting a week early, the treasurer reminded the rest of the Parish Committee that the books are not yet closed for April.

Pledges remain on track; First Parish is in good shape.

The forecast is showing on the conservative side; the Treasurer is working with Liz and Ebiere on a number of things going through the books at the end of the week and early the following week.

A note for the Consent Agenda: The ministers' reports at the June meeting will cover remainder of program year.

Vote 1: Consent agenda: Minutes, HR report, Minister annual reports

7:39 PM - I move that we adopt the consent agenda. (Al T.) Seconded (Jeff K.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

7:40 PM **Annual Meeting update** (Joanna, Anne, Carolyn)

Planning for the Annual Meeting is going well and is on track. The clerk requested the following:

Plans/needs: timekeeper, slide deck person, additional counters

- Timekeeper (Rev. Erica volunteered; except the emerita vote when ministers will be outside the sanctuary)
- Slide deck person (John Anderson)
- Additional counters (Marie Meteer, Annie Hewitt will be for only the emerita vote, not the officers ballot counting as they are on the ballot)

Anne and Carolyn noted that three sessions for the budget and emerita were offered. These listening sessions occurred both in person and on Zoom at various times of day (after the service on Sunday, in the evening, etc.)

The Reckoning & Repair working group will provide an oral report as a way to update the congregation from the last annual meeting (note: the congregation voted on and approved the Reckoning & Repair affirmation and the Land Acknowledgement in 2024).

The clerk will post reminders in the e-bulletin and on the FP connection board online that to vote, members must come in person. Lunch will be provided by the Youth group for \$5.00 as a fundraiser.

7:50 PM **Standing committee ballot exceptions vote** (Anne Q.)

Vote 2: approve exceptions for standing committees: Mary McCartney, Greg Ruccio

Per the Leadership Development Committee (Kiki Giatis serves as chair), certain members of committees have agreed to stay on as the committees transition to find other leaders. Per the First Parish bylaws, the Parish Committee must vote to approve any leaders who would be placed on the ballot and would serve more than two consecutive terms.

Mary McCartney has agreed to the nomination for a third term on the Membership Committee. Greg Ruccio has agreed to the nomination to complete the calendar year on the Property Committee.

MOTION 2: I move we vote to allow for those exceptions for Mary McCartney of the Membership Committee and Greg Ruccio of the Property Committee. (Al T) Seconded. (Jeff K.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

7:52 PM **Database project update** (Susan)

At the Parish Committee's annual fall retreat last September, the small working groups included a group to look at a databas for membership and skills. Questions the working group tackled included how might First Parish create such a database? Can it be used to both find people with skills/interest/ experience that are needed for different roles or projects as well as find a way for people to engage? Would it include new members and existing members? For example, someone with an interest in gardening would be able to find the gardening group. It's not easy for working groups and committees to find those people who would be interested. So far, the working group includes both Parish Committee and non-Parish Committee folks: LDC chair Kiki Giatis is involved, and Parish Committee members Steve M. and Susan Moore with some critical help from Carolyn H at the beginning to get connected with Your Part-Time Controller (YPTC).

Currently, the working group for the databas project is in phase one, project design. The group has developed a list of fields people would like to see in the database). The database can be done via Realm.

The working group talked to some other congregations, not just on what fields should be included but also how the fields should be implemented and how to get the information to populate the database.

The working group is finalizing the list of fields and narrowing the number of fields down.

Office staff have not been involved in the process yet, but a connection / invitation will be needed.

The final phase of the setup will be getting the information.

The Parish Committee was reminded that worship is the biggest event of the calendar and that In-Gathering has a huge audience. This year, it is early in the year since Labor Day is early (Labor Day is September 1; In-Gathering will be September 7th). There will be a big curiosity factor about the interim minister; we can expect a higher attendance. It will be a great opportunity! We'll need more ParCom members involved! (ie in the summer: August).

It was suggested that training people within the congregation would be a good idea to maintain the database (not building and handing it off as admin infrastructure to the office staff); it is expected that volunteers are going to own and maintain the membership database.

8:01 Break

8:07 - Report on the Youth Coordinator hiring team / Religious Education updates (Rev. Stevie Carmody)

Rev. Stevie provided an update on the hiring process for the Youth Program Coordinator. First Parish is saying good-bye to Rose Sawyer Marsh, who had joined in the fall of 2019 and will be stepping down in June 2025.

A great hiring team has been formed - Andrew (Andy) Kobayashi (adult advisor / RE committee representative), Katherine (Kat) Cass (adult advisor), Lauren McNeill (youth representative), Lettie Carswell (youth representative), and Conard Anderson (youth representative). Rev. Stevie Carmody is chairing the hiring team which has met twice already. There is a good pool of candidates.

The Human Resources Committee representatives - Sara G and Lauren - consulted with the hiring committee and provided advising around the interview process.

There are 4-5 people in the applicant pool as of today. The next part of the process is to conduct 30-minute Zoom interviews beginning next week, 5/19. The plan is to arrive at two finalists and invite them each to an in-person interview and a tour of the meeting house campus.

This two-round approach is necessary given the group of applicants, but may extend the process that Rev. Stevie presented last month. The final interviews are hoped for by the week after with final deliberations wrapped up hopefully in early June.

Overall, Rev. Stevie reported that the hiring team is in a good place with the process and the group feels well-supported.

A note on process: the Parish Committee chair signs the offer letter; the Minister of Religious Education makes the hire (is empowered to make the hire).

Gratitude for the clear process was expressed.

Rev. Stevie conveyed thanks for the opportunity. Successful hire for the next program year!

8:14 Rose of Recognition nomination (all)

At the last couple of Parish Committee meetings, the long-term youth group advisors have been mentioned as great people to recognize. They are: Paul Franzosa, Bill Licea-Kane, and Andy Kobayashi. They do incredible amounts of work behind the scenes for the youth group.

8:16 [“Rockin for Refugees”](#) fundraiser & alcohol policy exception for June 14 (Mary Fusoni)

Background information was provided by Mary Fusoni to the Parish Committee.

There will be a fundraiser on June 14 for the ArCs cluster, a group which was started in 2016 by a First Parish member, Eric Segal, and grew to help support refugees in the greater community. Note that the ArCs cluster “mobilizes local volunteers who want to make a difference in the lives of refugees in Arlington, Cambridge, Somerville, and nearby communities.” The ArCs cluster is no longer financially supported as a group within First Parish and instead has lifted off with its origins having been in First Parish.

The band Stanley and the Undercovers has volunteered to perform at the ArCs cluster concert. A group of First Parish members is organizing the fundraiser: Steph Miserlis, Lyn Fulton-John, Jim and Phylis Brown, and Mary Fusoni.

The Arlington Brewing Company has offered to provide beer at a steep discount. Mary Fusoni is completing the paperwork and has approached the Parish Committee to seek permission to approve an exception to the First Parish alcohol policy, as this is a community event and underage people may be present.

Vote 3: alcohol policy exception for ArCS fundraiser/Arlington Brewing Company

A summary of answered questions and seeking the go-ahead

- Who is sponsoring this event? ArCs Cluster (not an official FP group)
- The event is after the program year.
- Because outside people are coming, there needs to be communication with the Town of Arlington.
- There could potentially be underage people present at the event, so the Parish Committee would need to vote on the exception to the FP policy about alcohol to allow the event to occur.

I move that the Parish Committee approve the ArCs Cluster fundraiser event which includes the sale of alcohol which observes the FP alcohol policy and the other policies in the rental agreement. (Carolyn H.) Seconded (Kate T.) 8 of 8.

This approval specifically emphasizes that:

- We are allowing the selling of beer.
- We are providing the space to ARCS; ARCS is ensuring the professional insurance through the Arlington Brewing Company and professional coverage for alcohol that they are providing, including the exception that they are potentially having underage people present.
- Be sure the ARCS cluster is selling tickets; no tickets are to be sold to minors; be sure organizers / volunteers are carding folks who are attending
- Town licensing - be sure there is NO unattended alcohol; sweep the area to remove any cans laying around.
- There was a question about whether the group must HIRE someone - Have an official on the premises? - Mary Fusoni to look into this.
- There will be soft drinks on offer.

Arlington Brewing Company has a TIPS-certified person; sending information to Office Associate Allison Sillers (part of the rental agreement; coming in as a group that wants to rent).

The sexton: The bill for the sexton will be covered by ARCS.

Will there be wine or just beer? No wine; just beer and soft drinks.

Suggested to have a written confirmation from the host that they have read and understand the First Parish policy. Does Mary Fusoni's memo cover that? Yes, mostly; plus the rental form.

ARCS is going to sign a rental form.

Gratitude for Mary Fusoni and the team of volunteers to do a fundraiser for a good cause.

8:25 Nursery school update (Carolyn)

There is a small task force which includes Rev. Stevie, Jeff Keffer, Steve McMullin, Carolyn Hodges, and the Office Manager Ebiere. The task force met with Adventures in Montessori (AIM). The task force drafted an amendment; renew the lease for a new 3-year period. Waiting for a signature from Christina, the head. Hoping the head will provide to Anne Q BEFORE May 18th. The wall - not ready - not enough information, so this will not be included in the lease. The task force would love to have the lease signed by end of month.

BIG Appreciation - Thank you thank you.

8:36 Marta Good Goodbye updates (Anne/all)

Letter Book

Art show

Emerita vote

Big party on the 31st

End of program year worship being planned
All-congregation picnic
Monetary gift

8:38 **Executive Session** (ParCom members only)

MOTION 4: I move to go into executive session with the ParCom members and include Marie Meteer (Anne). Seconded (Joanna) 8 of 8 in favor.

The Parish Committee thanked and excused Rev. Marta, Rev. Erica, Rev. Tricia, and Rev. Stevie. Marta thanked the Parish Committee for the extra time given back. Farewell to Rev. Tricia.

8:53 PM - **MOTION 5:** I move that we leave exec session. (Al) Seconded (Anne) 8 of 8 in favor none opposed.

Monetary gift to Rev. Marta Flanagan

8:54 - **MOTION 6:** I move the Parish Committee approve to fund the difference to do the tax gross up for the amount that is raised from the congregation, coming from the contingency fund (Carolyn) Seconded by (Anne) 8 of 8 in favor.

Jeff - friendly amendment ; gross up is the State and Federal taxes. Divide by .73.
Where is the money coming from? From the contingency , from the surplus.

All other business:

The all-congregation/Rev. Marta party planners have requested \$450.00 for a pizza oven rental. This request is outside of the planned budget for the party. (Anne Q)

The Parish Committee chair conveyed the request to the Parish Committee.
There will be a lot of appetizers and a lot of desserts.
Some discussion was conducted.

MOTION 7: I move that we approve the pizza oven rental for Marta's party on May 31. (Anne) Seconded (John) 8 of 8 in favor.

9:00 Adjourn

MOTION 8: I move that we adjourn (Joanna) Seconded. (Jeff and John) 8 of 8 in favor.

Motions

MOTION 1: I move that we adopt the consent agenda. (Al T.) Seconded (Jeff K.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 2: I move we vote to allow for those exceptions so stated for Mary McCartney of the Membership Committee (to serve out a full 3rd term of two more years) and Greg Ruccio of the Property Committee (to serve out a term to the end of the calendar year). (Al T) Seconded. (Jeff K.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

MOTION 3: I move that the Parish Committee approve the ArCs Cluster fundraiser event on June 14, 2025, which includes the sale of alcohol which observes the FP alcohol policy and the other policies in the rental agreement. (Carolyn H.) Seconded (Kate T.) 8 of 8 in favor. None opposed.

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Minutes prepared by First Parish volunteer clerk, Joanna Pushee; edited on 6/15/2025 for clarity and accuracy.