

Parish Committee Meeting Minutes

First Parish Unitarian Universalist Arlington

August 18, 2026

7:00 - 9:00 PM on Zoom

Attendees: Marie Meteer (Chair), Amy Speare (Vice Chair), Carolyn Hodges (Treasurer), Joanna Pushee (Clerk), Susan Moore, Ellen Robie, John Shriver, Kate Tranquada, and Al Tosti

Ministers: Rev. Dr. Jonipher Kwong, Rev. Erica Richmond, Rev. Stevie Carmody

Guests:

Lissa McBurney (Finance Committee)

Marilyn Downs (Transition Team)

Katherine Fleming (Settled Minister Search Committee)

FP member Cathy Slesnik

7:02 PM **Call to Order** (Marie)

7:05 PM **Reading and Chalice Lighting** (Amy)

7:07 PM **Financial Review** (Carolyn)

Highlights

- FIRST PARISH PLEDGES finish the year above plan.
 - Special thanks to Annie Hewitt, Assistant Treasurer. Annie monitored pledge status and contacted many to ensure pledges were made current prior to the end of the program year.
- RETAINED EARNINGS USE: First Parish used \$18,400 of retained earnings to balance the year. This was \$48,700 thousand less than the \$67,200 initially budgeted. First Parish remains strong and in a good position: better than expected!
- NEW BOILER SYSTEM UPDATE: The boiler replacement is in process. A deposit was paid in July 2026 (FY 2026-2027). The remainder will be due when installation is complete (Summer 2026). An agreement confirmed with the Trustees to pay back the Trustees for the cost of the boiler over a ten year period, interest free.

- FRONT CORNER PROJECT: Parish Committee funds for the design were paid in July 2026 (FY 2026-2027). A review is in process for next steps in Fall 2027.

- 2025-26 Finalized financial documents

Motion 1: I move to accept the financial documents for 2025 - 2026 including the known overages as proposed by the Treasurer and Finance Committee. (Marie/ Joanna) Seconded (John Shriver). 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed. (7:24 PM)

The Parish Committee needs to ratify the 2025-2026 expenses. Line items include:

1. Bookkeeping
2. Computer services (the Parish Committee had voted in the spring on some software updates)
3. Personnel (offset in salaries / benefits; removed sexton; cleaning service used)
4. Utilities such as a higher water bill in January and March: there was a leak in a fixture in the Bailey Room; Property Committee folks have repaired that; heating was higher due to the colder than expected winter.
5. Elevator maintenance included unexpected bill: in order for the new phone system to be applicable, there had to be a different phone installation in the elevator; the office staff oversaw this work. There were upgrades to the old landline system.
6. Snow removal. More snow than in past years.
7. Garden costs due to cost of mulch (tidy up the garden by the office and do some more work on Pleasant Street side)
8. UUA Program Fund - we had been billed 10% more; ParCom had voted to pay that bill. Note that a subgroup of the Parish Committee worked with the UUA on this matter over the summer.

Total: offset by operating, total \$59,000.

We do need a Parish Committee vote to ratify the financials for 25-26 noting that we had overages. No overages exceed the amount that congregation would need to vote on, so a congregational vote is not necessary.

Questions / Comments:

Al Tosti asked what the bylaws state about overages. Per the bylaws, a vote by the congregation would be required if the overages were to exceed 10% of the total operating budget. The total operating budget currently runs roughly \$1,144,000. We went through the budget prior to and during Annual Meeting. We showed some suggestions that would be over in some areas; offsets would be in retained earnings.

Amy S. asked about the change to the Zoom subscription: Is that still a significant increase? Rev. Jonipher will ask the Office Manager. It would not cost as much as previously expected, so it would be close to what we had budgeted. Carolyn will know more in new program year. The Treasurer typically closes July and August together at the end of August.

Motion 2: I move to accept the revised 2026-2027 budget with the proposed changes. (Al T.) Seconded (Susan). 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

The Parish Committee thanked Carolyn as Treasurer and Lissa as Finance Committee member for all their work on making sure everything was right between May 3 and now.

Carolyn will submit a write-up to The Spire and will post on the First Parish website.

7:25 **Consent agenda items:**

Vote 3: Consent agenda: Minutes, Financials, Ministers' reports

MOTION 3: I move to adopt the consent agenda with edits as proposed. (Marie) Seconded (Al). 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

7:30 PM **Short reports**

- Rose of Recognition (beginning at the start of the church year)
 - September: Annie Hewitt - Rose of Recognition for all her following up with pledge work and ensuring folks met their commitments.
 - Nominations for future Roses:
Kate Lenox - Covenant Groups - leader of the conveners
- **Communications & the calendar** (Kate T.)

The Communications Committee includes Kate Tranquada of ParCom and Elizabeth Hunter of the Transition Team.

 - First Parish has talked about communication improvements for years; we are excited to plan and improve our existing channels.
 - Streamline the e-bulletin and teaser
 - Prioritize the Search Committee updates
 - A communications report was submitted by the Communications folks. There will be a leadership round-table style meeting on Sunday, September 13th at 3:00 pm via Zoom. The leadership of committees will be invited.

The calendar has everything mapped out with the search dates we know about so far.

Questions / Comments:

- A ParCom member highlighted the shared folder. It is another resource we have. Anyone with a link can access the information in that folder; subfolders for the Transition Team and for the Parish Committee are there as well. There is some information in the Google shared folder that is not for the First Parish website.
- A ParCom member thanked Kate for the calendar work. Is a printable version going to be posted somewhere in the vestry?? Updated every couple of weeks?

- **Vote 4:** Limited Access Agreement (LAA)
 - The purpose is for both sides, First Parish and the congregant.
 - This agreement was sent out to ParCom, in advance, from John Shriver who volunteered to edit an original template.
 - The Parish Committee voted to table this matter to the fall in September.

- **Vote 4:** Approve Tom Estabrook as a member of the Transition Team

MOTION 4: I move to approve Tom Estabrook as a member of the Transition Team. (AI)
John Shriver Seconded. 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

Note: Elizabeth Hunter was approved to take Lida's seat, which was announced to the congregation at the Annual Meeting in May 2026. Tom is taking Julie Garry's seat.

- Thank you to Lida and Julie for their participation last year!

7:51 PM **Transition Team** (Marilyn Downs, co-chair)

- Updates:
 - Changes in the team: Lida and Julie have cycled off. We are thrilled that Elizabeth Hunter and Tom Estabrook are on the TT.
 - Kay Snowden and Marilyn Downs are collaborating well as co-chairs.
 - The TT met with Hilary Allen of the UUA in July. The work of the transition has been tense. Opening the door to hearing everyone's thoughts and feelings has been a lesson in how to hold complexity.
 - Next TT retreat: Aug. 30th. Working on priorities for the new program year; sensitive to the "big things" like the Search committee work and the covenanting process. The TT is in service largely to those two committees.

- Working subgroups: Staffing Structure group members: Kay, Lois; Lida is willing to supplement and still work on this subgroup; next steps in the conversation: Oct. 4 for an event on staffing structures.
- Elizabeth Hunter of the TT is working with Kate T on Communications; also has role of TT liaison to Search Committee.
- Sharing the TT bulletin board with Search and the coffee hour table, too; hosted by different members
- Much appreciation Kay/Marilyn and Marie/Amy - yay! How are we doing? What do we need to talk about? What needs attending to? There will be a meeting again in a couple of weeks with the co-chairs and Exec.

7:59 **Settled Search Committee updates** (Katherine Fleming)

- A retreat for the Settled Search Committee was completed in July. Rev. Liz Weber from the UUA led the group and reviewed the timeline and expectations.
- Meetings will be on Wednesdays from 7-8pm during the program year.
- Roles (Katherine provided a spreadsheet and project plan)
 - Search profile is due December 1
 - Key points:
 - Launch survey around InGathering to help inform small focus groups. Survey will be through Google Forms.
 - David Whitford: communications contact

ParCom question:

Will the survey be provided online and on paper?

Search Committee: we plan to have paper copies at coffee hour.

- We are waiting for UUA to confirm our Break Barriers, Build Beliefs (B4) congregational workshop.
 - Amy Anderson submitted the preferences for dates: Nov. 7, or 17, or Oct. 17; We will have more information by InGathering on this workshop.
 - The Search Committee requested a hybrid workshop. It is expected that it would be in person at least.
 - Two ParCom members requested that Search check on the cost of the format. What we are not clear on is if the B4 is billed separately or if it is part of the search fee indicated in the search manual.
- We will request rooms and online space for about 15 "Small Focus Groups" during Oct 13 to Nov. 6. (Katherine is working with Kate T)
- We will be determining a member to join the Negotiations Committee at our meeting on Aug. 24 (Search Committee)
- Search Profile must be submitted by Dec. 1 - Anne Quaadgras leads.

- The plan is to have a draft survey in early September around 9/2 and the Search Committee will share the survey with ParCom for feedback on the questions in advance of launching to the congregation (Sept. 10th launch date target).
 - The Search Committee requested facilitators to help lead (ParCom and TT) - Oct 13 to Nov 6; who would be available and during what time.
 - Amy Anderson is talking to TT on co-tabling during the year so folks can approach the table during coffee hour.

Questions / Comments:

- Rev. Jonipher has been compiling covenants from committees. Rev. Jonipher asked if the Search Committee's covenant was ready for disseminating. Katherine is working on this document.
- Al T. asked if Anne Goodwin has been approached as a suggested person who did the survey for the search for Rev. Marta Flanagan.
- Amy S. asked if there would be an update from the Search Committee to the congregation on InGathering.

The Parish Committee decided to not take the customary break.

8:19 State of the Parish (Rev. Jonipher)

The ministers each submitted a written report.

Rev. Jonipher highlighted the summer with projection and use of a screen at three worship services.

- First Parish is doing well with accessibility and inclusion. One person said they were able to sing for the first time in a year. Others who were skeptics reported they enjoyed the projection.
- Positive feedback included: projecting song lyrics (no heads in hymnals), illustrations for Time for all Ages, and visuals enhance spoken sections.

The Worship Associates will hold a gathering to get more feedback from the congregation on what works and what doesn't in terms of the technology. The Worship Associates reported gratitude for the half lay-led services / half minister-led schedule.

Parish Committee member John Shriver had some details to share on the audio system and feedback from the A/V part-time staff person.

8:27 PM State of the Parish (Rev. Erica Richmond)

Rev. Erica submitted a report. Highlights included:

- Pastoral care

- The memorial service for long-time First Parish member Robert (Bob) McKersie was attended by 200 people in person; 60 people were online. Volunteers helped with the celebration of life. The A/V tech person ran the Zoom component.
- A high school student passed away unexpectedly. The family has lived in Arlington for 20 years. Rev. Erica is officiating at 2 PM on Sunday, September 13. First Parish serves as a leader in the community and opens its doors. High school students will be present. Families who have known this young person, Ian, who is not a member, will attend.
 - First Parish will coordinate with the police department in terms of traffic.
 - K Milano will be available to support the youth.

Rev. Stevie Carmody submitted a written report.

Cathy Slesnick, Rev. Erica, and Rev. Stevie left the meeting at 8:31 PM.

8:31 PM **Executive session on staffing and structure discussion**

8:32 PM **Motion 5:** I move that we go into executive session and invite Rev. Jonipher. (Marie) Seconded (Amy) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

Motion 6: I move that we leave executive session. (Marie) Seconded (Kate). 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

9:10 PM Adjourn

Motion 7: I move that we adjourn. (Marie) Seconded (Amy) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

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Meeting minutes prepared by Joanna Pushee, clerk.