

First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington
Parish Committee Meeting Minutes
August 29, 2023
Online meeting via Zoom

Attendees: Sara Galantowicz (chair), Anne Quaadgras (vice chair), Joanna Pushee (clerk), Carolyn Hodges (treasurer), Celia Wcislo, John Stutz, John Anderson, Jeff Keffer, Al Tosti.

Ministers: Rev. Marta Flanagan, Rev. Erica Richmond, Rev. Stevie Carmody

7:03 Call to Order (Sara G.)

7:05 Reading and Chalice Lighting (Sara and ministers)

The Parish Committee extended heartfelt congratulations to Rev. Marta on her wedding, a very happy birthday to Rev. Erica, and a warm welcome to Minister of Religious Education Stevie.

The Parish Committee shared brief introductions.

Welcome MRE Stevie Carmody and RE update (10 minutes)

- Rev. Stevie Carmody, he/him, will be going by Stevie, except in formal introductions. He shared gratitude for onboarding support from Sara Hidalgo, Rev. Erica, and Rev. Marta.
- RE Committee and transition team [Melissa Nailor, Paul Franzosa, Lois Fine, and Marc Jacobson (chair)] has supported the introduction of Stevie to the congregation.
- To support a goal of creating continuity for the nursery through high school programming, for the start of the program year Stevie is using programming that focuses on First Parish as the curriculum so that children feel a sense of belonging, learn about the history of First Parish, and settle into the church year with a moment of high interactivity.
- There are new families around First Parish. Young adults are returning and reconnecting.
- An intergenerational potluck on 8/23 in the First Parish courtyard was well-attended, with about 90 attendees. (Update: This second-to-last summer potluck was hosted by the Ferry Beach Committee (Monique Chapin, John Chamberlain, David D'Antonio, Mary McCartney, Mike Rie) The Property Committee hosted the last summer potluck of 2023 on 9/6 where over 75 people were in attendance. The Worship Associates organized summer potlucks as a means of bringing FP members and new people together in person while summer services occurred online.

- There is a need to support RE volunteers who have been doing the work through a traumatizing time. There is a need to bring in new volunteers. People can step up and in, finding ways to support RE in a right-sized way.
- RE is looking at best practices and appreciating what we loved about before the pandemic: What did we teach? What did we learn? Goal is to reflect this back to the community.
- RE assistant, Rowan Wheeler, resigned from the position to focus on graduate studies. First Parish wishes Rowan good luck in her next phase.
- RE is working with the HR committee which has October 1st as a target date to hire an RE assistant.
- Stevie has an open door and is happy to meet for coffee.

Discussion followed with highlights:

- Gratitude for the RE Transition Committee - Melissa Nailor, Paul Franzosa, Lois Fine, and Marc Jacobson (chair) - was expressed.
- A question about the nursery coordinator: What is the plan to cover the nursery? Stevie explained there will be assistants (three) who are high school or college-aged folks available on an ad hoc basis.
- A question about developing relationships between our neighboring congregations and our new Minister of Religious Education arose. Stevie said he received recommendations from Tina included who to start networking with, such as our neighbors in Lexington, for important collegial support.
- The Parish Committee confirmed their great joy that Rev Stevie has joined the First Parish community.

(Vote 1, Discussion). Housing letter for Stevie.

Ministers are allowed to designate a portion of their salary as an allowance to cover housing costs. This housing allowance is not subject to federal tax.. The First Parish governing board votes annually to approve the ministers' housing allowance, for documentation purposes. The most recent vote was in January, 2023 for Rev. Erica and Rev. Marta's requested housing set-asides.

Rev. Stevie has requested \$2,000 per month of his salary be considered a housing allowance.

Motion: I move that we approve that of the total compensation paid to Stephen Carmody for partial year 2023, that \$2,000 per month be designated as a housing allowance. (Carolyn H.)
Seconded (Celia W.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

Review of Financial report & dashboard (Carolyn, 10 minutes)

- July financials have been updated and corrected as the start up month for the new fiscal year.
- First Parish received a number of pre-paid pledges for the 2023-2024 year.
- Expenses showed that there was not a lot of activity over the summer 2023. Accruals went fairly well. The Tina Schultz garden project expenses are to be incurred in the next month and a half.
- Committee overages: As of June 2023, there were two committees plus the Parish Committee that were over-budget. Religious Education was over budget by \$1200. The Music Committee was over by \$1,000. Religious Education is still pending a credit coming back for the service trip of about \$1,000. Tina was working really hard to keep things in the budget. For the Music Committee, there is uncertainty regarding the cause of the overage. Music Director Jonathan Colby, with Carolyn H and Sara H, are working with guest musicians who did not cash their checks. This delay may have caused the discrepancy. Overage information is being shared for the Parish Committee's awareness.
- First Parish received a bequest from Iclal Sirel Hartman, formerly from Lexington, and the Trustees were notified. The bequest totals \$14,000 to 14,500 (depending on market). The ministers are all aware of this bequest. There was no designation to put the funds towards operations; therefore, the amount goes to the Trustees.

Discussion and questions highlighted:

- For the year-end wrap up, showing the surplus as a total of \$90,000 could be misleading. There was \$60,000 carryover from the prior year. The surplus is actually about \$23,000 which is great considering earlier concerns about the budget. It is recommended that the Treasurer clarify the template and provide clarity to the congregation in May 2024 at the Annual Meeting.
- For the bequest, there was a question about the processing and designation. Carolyn confirmed the bequest goes to the trust funds.
- There was a question about the relationship with the new bank, Leader Bank: Is it going well? The Treasurer replied that the two bank strategy (Cambridge Savings and Leader Bank), which was put in place because of the FDIC limits on balances at a single institution, has been working well. Revenue from interest is now about \$5,000 per year being earned, compared to less than a thousand earned previously.

(Vote 2, Discussion). Consent agenda: Minutes, Financials, Minister's Report (Minister of Religious Education only).

I vote that we adopt the consent agenda. (Celia W.) Seconded (Anne Q.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

Montessori Children's House of Arlington update (Sara, 10 minutes)

- Parish Committee chair Sara Galantowicz had a June check-in meeting with First Parish's tenant, the Montessori Children's House of Arlington, which included the Director, Hannah Lafronza, as well representatives from the board and management. The directors had positive feedback about the relationship with First Parish and support received Sara Hidalgo, who is the school's primary contact. The school is committed to forming a long-term partnership with First Parish.
- The lease agreement includes an annual cost of living increase to the base rent, which the treasurer confirmed has been reflected in payments. The rent structure includes a flat fee plus a per pupil amount. Per the First Parish Treasurer, both the cost of living and student enrollment has been applied. The school is still not at full enrollment.
- There is a lot of demand for toddler enrollment. There is less demand for pre-school slots, but the school expects to fill these as current toddlers age.
- The school has requested to meet with First Parish's board, the Parish Committee, to talk about plans and philosophy. The Parish Committee invites the Arlington Children's House to the September monthly meeting on 9/19/23.

Discussion highlights included:

- Rev. Stevie feels that communication with the school is clear. Sara G echoed the tenant being clear on sharing space with ongoing communication and collaboration among First Parish stakeholders and the tenant.
- There is new school signage as of early summer 2023. The Montessori's Children's House of Arlington approached the First Parish office and Parish Committee Executive about installing new signage to make it easier to find the program's entrance in the back of the RE wing. There had been no signage previously. The school went through the proper procedures for permits and received permission as the location is in a historical district. The Town of Arlington approved their permit after about four months.

The school had mockups created and Parish Committee Exec reviewed these along with the Property Committee. The first request for a location included at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Pleasant Street, which was turned down due to the fact that this area is reserved for First Parish public witness. After reaching out to the Gardening Committee, an alternative location was chosen in the garden facing Pleasant Street. The Gardening Committee expressed some concerns about the size of the sign following installation.

Parish Committee chair, Sara G., met with FP office manager Sara Hidalgo and Hanah LaFranzo to explore more options. Sara G has been keeping the Gardening Committee abreast of the discussions

- Gratitude expressed to Sara G. by the rest of the Parish Committee.

Arlington Children's House is invited to the 9/19 Parish Committee meeting.

Website update (Anne, 5 minutes)

- Marie Meteer has been coordinating the website developers so that it will be easier to use and change the website. They are going to reduce the size of the initial pictures, especially helpful if users are on a mobile phone. Volunteers are re-writing some of the text. The group is making the website more user-friendly for newcomers.
- Anne updated some pages related to governance. It is easier to make page changes in WordPress now.
- About 8-10 people volunteering and working on parts of the website
- Stevie working on pages for RE.
- The project is going well. The designers have done a good job. There are some new ways of showing content.
- There is a need for more photographs on the website.
- The project timeline is roughly on target: it is only taking a little longer than expected.
- Anne Q or Marie Meteer are available to answer questions.

Discussion:

- The website updates are a good project for low-level commitment for a volunteer effort! Volunteer photographers would be another good task with not a lot of commitment needed.
- A question if the cost is still accurate: there was a \$12,000 ballpark estimate. Any financial surprises? Carolyn, FP Treasurer, notes that a portion of the cost was paid in June 2023; Marie gave total estimate of \$12,000. Carolyn accrued the difference: \$7500 remaining which is the total estimate less what we paid in June as a deposit. Anne Q. to check with Marie Meteer on the amount and will get in touch with Carolyn, Treasurer.
- Gratitude was expressed for Anne Q to put the time in and to Marie Meteer.

(Vote 3, Discussion). **New Property Committee members.**

Background on Property Committee request: Last year (2022-2023), there was a comprehensive energy audit done and Bill Gardiner presented the finding to the Parish Committee. One recommendation that came from the energy audit was that First Parish establish an energy manager voluntary position to monitor energy use and make further recommendations. This role or roles would reside within the Property Committee.

Currently, Lori Kenshaft and Adrian Trilling, a youth in our program, have come forward as nominees to fill these roles.

These volunteer positions were not on the slate at the Annual Meeting in May 2023. The Parish Committee has been asked to appoint them to the Property Committee, in accordance with First Parish bylaws.

Motion: I move that we appoint Adrian Trilling and Lori Kenshaft to the Property Committee. (Al T.) Seconded (Anne Q.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

Welcome to Alice Panniello, Music (7:53 PM)

The Parish Committee welcomes Alice (Austin) Panniello of the Music Committee to join the meeting.

Motion: A motion to move into executive session was made and to invite Rev. Marta and Alice Panniello to join. (Celia); John Anderson (seconded). Unanimous 9 of 9 in favor.

There are no minutes taken during executive sessions and no formal decisions are made. The Parish Committee extended courtesy invitations to Rev. Erica and MRE Stevie who left the evening's meeting at this time.

Break: 7:58pm - 8:03PM

8:05 Executive Session - Staffing

The Parish Committee voted to end the executive session. (Anne Q.) Seconded (Celia W.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

Motion: The Parish Committee moves to empower Alice Panniello to convene an interim search committee for music director staffing. (Carolyn H.) Seconded Al Tosti. 9 of 9 in favor.

The Parish Committee extended its gratitude to Alice for joining the meeting and extended heartfelt congratulations on the birth of daughter Julia Jo.

8:45 - State of the Parish (Rev. Marta)

- With one more week of summer to go, there is a possibility of increased summer participation compared to last year's services.
- September 10 is Ingathering. All are invited to bring water.
- The painting of the meeting house spire begins in September.
- Marta noted that three members of First Parish are living with diagnoses of pancreatic cancer. There are other disclosed and nondisclosed chronic illnesses. We hold these members in our hearts.
- There are marriages and births the congregation is celebrating.
- There are three members of staff in transition into and out of their roles. First Parish has 9 staff members: four full-time and 5 part-time.
- Summer potlucks have been a success: averaging 30-90 participants.
- The number of people attending summer worship online: 35-82 people. (82 people attended Amy Anderson's racial justice service)
- There is a bench that a youth group member has been working on that will be dedicated within the next month. This bench will serve as a marker and memory of First Parish's history with enslavement.
- The mural for Tina Schultz has progressed under the coordinator of Randall Thurston, Allison Schultz, and Anne Goodwin.
- There have been significant pastoral issues, transition, and a lot of vitality.

Retreat (All, 10 minutes)

The Parish Committee will hold a retreat on Saturday, September 16th, from 9:30 am to 3pm, held at Anne Q's house, which is pet-free and accessible. The Parish Committee will kick off long-term planning for the congregation.

Review 23-24 Parish Committee calendar (All)

Parish Committee members are asked to sign up to host the monthly Parish Committee meetings. Sept 19th to be in person at First Parish in the parlor.

Sara G. reached to the office assistant to make sure the calendar will be publicly available and links provided for any Zoom/online meetings.

The Parish Committee extends gratitude to Amy Anderson for leading her excellent and well-attended summer service, to Joanna Pushee for connecting folks on the Workings Booklet [gratitude extended to Sara Hidalgo, Joe Cook, Rev. Erica Richmond, Kiki Giatis, and Alan Linov], to Jeff Keffer and Sue Costello for the lovely thank you notes sent to those with donated

to the Honor Tina fund which were sent over the summer; and to Marie Meteer and to Anne Q for the website updates along with the team of volunteers.

Motion: I move that we adjourn. (Celia) Seconded (John A.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.

9:03 PM Adjourn

Attachments: Last month's Minutes, Financial Documents, Ministers report

MOTIONS

1. I move that we approve that of the total compensation paid to Stephen Carmody for partial year 2023, that \$2,000 per month be designated as a housing allowance. (Carolyn H.) Seconded (Celia W.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.
2. I move that we adopt the consent agenda. (Celia W.) Seconded (Anne Q.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.
3. I move that we appoint Adrian Trilling and Lori Kenshaft to the Property Committee. (Al T.) Seconded (Anne Q.) 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.
4. The Parish Committee moves to empower Alice Panniello to convene an interim search committee. (Carolyn H.) Seconded (Al Tosti). 9 of 9 in favor. None opposed.
5. I move that we adjourn the meeting. (Celia) Seconded (John A.) 9 of 9. None opposed.