

Birmingham Unitarian Church
Board of Trustees
Meeting Minutes
October 26, 2020

Present: Rev. Mandy Beal, Mary Gawel-Ensroth, David Greer, Andrew Schreck, Cheryl Shettel, Donna Larkin Mohr, Diane Slon, Craig Stroup

Absent: Brad Corteville (Youth Rep), Neb Duric, Paul Vachon

Visitors: Chris Slon (LDC)

In response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic crisis, this board meeting was held virtually on the Zoom internet platform.

The meeting was called to order by Donna at 7:04 PM. The meeting began with a reflection on the BUC Mission, a chalice lighting by Rev. Mandy, and a check-in by everyone.

Minutes

1. Cheryl moved that the minutes of the October 12, 2020 board meeting be accepted. The motion was carried unanimously.
2. Consideration of the minutes of the October 12, 2020 executive session would be discussed in an executive session following the board meeting.

Monthly Reports

1. Executive's Report – Rev. Mandy
 - a. Rev. Mandy referred to the Minister/Executive Report October 26, 2020 (document attached).
 - b. Rev. Mandy asked that the Board adopt a policy regarding endowment draws. Diane volunteered to collate all the existing documentation regarding withdrawals and draft a policy by the end of November for the board to consider.
 - c. Rev. Mandy clarified that the role of board officers in the electronic bill payment process is to electronically sign the payments rather than approve them. While this process should not be overly burdensome for the board officers, officers should always verify that there is support for the check being written.

- d. Rev. Mandy noted that the budget includes a fundraiser in the amount of \$5000 that was scheduled for October. This fundraiser was overlooked. Donna and Craig will contact Paul, chair of the Revenue Committee, to discuss this matter.
 - e. Rev. Mandy noted that she has not pursued the work of the Safer Congregations Committee. She proposed discussion of this matter be included as a future agenda item.
2. Treasurer's Report – Diane
- a. Diane presented the Treasurer's Report (document attached).
 - b. Diane noted that expenses are being managed very well.
 - c. There was concern that pledges are down \$9000 after three months. Rev. Mandy noted that it is typical to have a slump at this time of the year.
 - d. It was suggested that Diane share her year to year comparison of monthly pledge receipts with the Stewardship Committee.
 - e. It was suggested that the Stewardship Committee communicate with congregants to consider increasing their pledge amount if their financial circumstances have improved since the stewardship campaign earlier this year.
 - f. Craig moved that the Treasurer's Report be accepted. The motion was carried unanimously.

Unfinished Business

1. Planning
- a. BUC's Spiritual Identity – Andrew and Cheryl
 - i. Rev. Mandy explained that BUC's spiritual identity speaks to who we are as a spiritual community. It is the core that holds the congregation together and transcends programs.
 - ii. Rev. Mandy and Donna will meet to discuss this further before more discussion takes place at a board meeting.
 - b. Transparency – Dave
 - i. Transparency is reflected in a church community through open meetings; availability of budgets, financial reports, and meeting minutes; communication with the congregation; and information about the work of committees.
 - ii. Considerations of transparency must also be juxtaposed with the importance of confidentiality having to do with employment law and personnel issues.

- c. Communications – Mary
 - i. A possible goal in communications would be to improve our ability to find out what congregants are thinking and feeling during this time of pandemic church.
 - ii. Possible objectives to meet this goal for communication would include:
 - 1. Board members would commit to attending virtual coffee hour after the service to actively listen and ask questions.
 - 2. Board members would report back at the next board meeting.
 - 3. Board members will address the question of how to find out what is going on with members who are not attending virtual church services.
 - iii. Rev. Mandy stated that having Board members attending virtual coffee hours is a good, actionable item that needs a plan.
 - iv. A question was asked regarding an online format of a suggestion box along the line of what school districts have on their websites. This could be implemented on the BUC website.
- 2. Covenant
 - a. It was decided to consider the existing board covenant from last year.
 - b. Board members are to send any suggestions for changes to Mary by November 16.
 - c. The suggestions will be considered at the November board meeting.
- 3. LDC
 - a. Kathy DuHame has invited Rev. Mandy and Donna to the LDC meeting on November 15.
 - b. Donna will share details of the visit with board members.

New Business

- 1. Diane would like to invite the Planned Giving Committee to attend the November board meeting. Diane will talk with Rich Schreck and Melissa Joy from Pearl Planning and work with Donna and Craig. It was also mentioned that Melissa Joy might want to meet with the Budget and Finance Committee.

2. Donna will send an email to the Planned Giving, Revenue, Budget and Finance, and Personnel Committees notifying committee chairs of the board's expectations and availability to help.

Issues Arising for the Good of the Church

- Rev. Mandy announced that she and Jesse have been approved to become foster parents.

Visitor Comments and Questions

- There were no comments or questions.

Craig moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Gawel-Ensroth, Secretary

Worship

Monthly Vespers services began on October 6th. The sound quality was poor, but the feedback about the service was positive. People enjoyed the spiritual focus and intimate feeling of the service. The next service will be November 3 and continue on the first Tuesday of the month at 7pm.

There was one rite of passage this month, the memorial service for Robert Mohr. The feedback about this service was also positive, especially in regards to the sound quality of the music. It's my understanding that this is due in part to updates by Zoom.

Programming

Religious Education - I have heard very strong praise for the program so far. Official requests for feedback will be sent in November. Something of note is the use of social media to maintain relationships and further discussions/content between classes. It took a few weeks for this aspect of the program to catch on, but Nico reports Slack/Discord use has become regular at this point. Attendance for Building Bridges has been a little low, so Michelle Chapman has begun bringing families into the sessions as well as mixing up the context to be more socially focused. We might need to revisit the time of the class (currently early Saturday afternoons). Finally, a church wide Zoom costume party is planned for October 30. It will feature a story and some fun activities for people of all ages.

Pastoral Care - The PCAs have welcomed two new members in the past couple of months - Rob Davidson and Camille Harris. Other PCAs include Mary Markovski, Kim Schultes, Cindy Goldman, and Ed Sharples. Jennifer Norber is the chair and her role is focused more on training and administration than providing pastoral care. Helping Hands is a subcommittee of pastoral care that focuses on practical care (like meal delivery). This program relies on a network of volunteers organized by Heidi Kapsokavathis.

Worship Associates - Representatives from Worship Associates and the Music Committee will meet on November 9th to reflect on our online worship life. I envision this being a quarterly or bi-monthly meeting.

Music - Plans are underway for our December music Sunday, which will include special guest musicians. Working with the limitations of Zoom will be a challenge, but the goal is to make it something like it has been in the past. This will require pre-recording and overlaying tracks to create a virtual orchestra.

Art - no updates in this area

Social and Environmental Justice

- Racial Justice - Confronting Racism meets every 3rd Tuesday at 7. This is an antiracism skills building and discussion group. The current topic is the film *The 13th*.

- Environmental Justice - This committee is currently weighing goals for the year, which will probably overlap with next program year. Possible goals include partnering with the Board and others to assess (and reduce) BUC's carbon footprint or to install solar panels. Their next meeting is being planned for mid-November. After that point, they plan to approach the Board with a few proposals (or maybe just one).
- Civic Engagement - We've been discussing how to use virtual coffee hour to continue the popular "Write Here, Write Now" program. This encourages people to write letters to elected officials on the spot rather than put it off and potentially not follow through. This committee also continues to sell the rainbow "We believe..." yard signs.
- Income Inequality - As of the date of this report, BUC and our partner congregations (Northwest, Beacon, Farmington Hills, and the Muslim Unity Center) have raised around \$9K for SOS! Our goal was \$7K. The overage will be sent to SOS. Adopt-a-Family is coming up in December, led by Jane O'Neil.

Membership - Our popular Getting to Know UU class series has launched and received a lot of praise. This committee is also planning some kind of community fun night, possibly a game night or maybe trivia.

Fellowship - no updates in this area

Administration

Buildings and Grounds - We recently learned that we need to waterproof our elevator pit. We're currently seeking bids for the work. We've scheduled repairs to the roof leak above the name tags board; it should cost less than \$900. The work to the Commons is basically done. It looks amazing and Marcia is working on plans to have a "big reveal" for the congregation.

Staff managed finance -

- A procedure for how the staff will follow through with requests for endowment draws has been completed. I have recommended the Board adopt a policy that specifies how much will be drawn annually and how it will be applied. I recommend this be given priority, as we typically make those withdrawals in the first quarter of the calendar year.
- Also, we have a draft procedure for how the staff handle their role in automated bill pay. I want to clarify the role of Board members is to electronically sign those payments rather than approve them. This might seem like splitting hairs, but it's important to keep roles and responsibilities clear. The approval of payments is my responsibility and I currently make approvals for non-recurring payments in excess of \$1000 or any unusual/unexpected payments.
- It was recently noted that the budget approved by the board this spring included a fundraiser in the amount of \$5000 scheduled for October. This fundraiser was overlooked. It shouldn't be difficult to recover that amount, but this issue demonstrates a need to clarify how the Revenue Committee is informed of the timing that has been proposed for fundraising activities.

Rentals - Our rental program is stable without much change since the last board meeting. Marcia is currently working with one of our educational renters on the possible long-term rental of our downstairs classrooms for a pre-school.

Stewardship - I've started meeting with the stewardship committee. This is a little earlier than usual, but necessary due to the unique challenges of the year. Some of the questions are how to replace or adapt typical stewardship events and expectations, like picking up physical packages after the Stewardship Sunday service and a reception. Ideas are welcome!

Other

COVID Response Task Force - The task force has not met since my last report.

Town Hall - I hosted a town hall on October 23 to share information about BUC's COVID response, worship, RE, and fellowship. I think the conversation was meaningful and I appreciated the feedback and suggestions that came from attendees. One very good suggestion was to pause the recording of our worship services for Joys and Sorrows so they will not be posted on Facebook. This might encourage more submissions. I hope it does.

Safer Congregations - This is a lingering action item for me. I have some concerns about fully undertaking this work at this time due to the nature of so much of our work being so different at this time, as well as the demands of being in a virtual framework. It feels overwhelming to do this work in a "then and now" mindset. I proposed putting a discussion about this on a future agenda.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Mandy

September 2020 BUC Financial Report

Revenue	Actual	Budget	Variance *	Comments
Pledges - Current Year	\$33,819	\$42,000	-\$8,181	
Pledges Prior Year	\$1,150	\$500	\$650	
Plate Collection	\$1,790	\$2,042	-\$252	Down again, may need to adjust budget
Non-Pledge Contr.	\$520	\$580	-\$60	
Rentals	\$4,535	\$4,840	-\$305	
Other Fundraising	\$103	\$5,000	-\$4,897	Discuss fundraising/Revenue Committee
All Other Revenues	\$97	\$685	-\$588	
TOTAL	\$42,014	\$55,647	-\$13,633	

Expenses	Actual	Budget	Variance	Comments
RE Staff	\$1,480	\$4,746	-\$3,266	
Office/Facilities Staff	\$24,822	\$25,258	-\$436	
Minister Expenses	\$10,199	\$10,706	-\$507	
Facility & Office	\$5,855	\$5,668	\$187	
All Other Expenses	\$4,926	\$5,435	-\$509	
TOTAL	\$47,282	\$51,813	-\$4,531	

Operating Income	-\$5,268	\$3,834	-\$9,102	
Adjusted Operating Income	-\$4,570	\$3,834	-\$8,404	

Fiscal Year 2020/21 YTD Financial Report

Revenue	Actual	Budget	Variance	Comments
Pledges - Current Year	\$97,766	\$107,000	-\$9,234	
Pledges Prior Year	\$11,196	\$2,000	\$9,196	
Plate Collection	\$8,978	\$6,122	\$2,856	~\$3,343 not BUC revenue; offset in expenses
Non-Pledge Contr.	\$1,315	\$1,780	-\$465	
Rentals	\$9,981	\$6,440	\$3,541	
Comm. Found. SE MI Draw	\$9,289	\$0	\$9,289	\$15,400 budgeted in October & May
Other Fundraising	\$233	\$5,000	-\$4,767	\$5,000 budgeted in September, December, March
All Other Revenues	\$262	\$885	-\$623	
TOTAL	\$139,020	\$129,227	\$9,793	

Expenses	Actual	Budget	Variance	Comments
RE Staff	\$2,615	\$14,139	-\$11,524	
Office/Facilities Staff	\$73,993	\$75,399	-\$1,406	
Minister Expenses	\$31,559	\$32,117	-\$558	
Facility & Office	\$19,734	\$19,855	-\$121	
All Other Expenses	\$18,945	\$16,696	\$2,249	
TOTAL	\$146,846	\$158,206	-\$11,360	

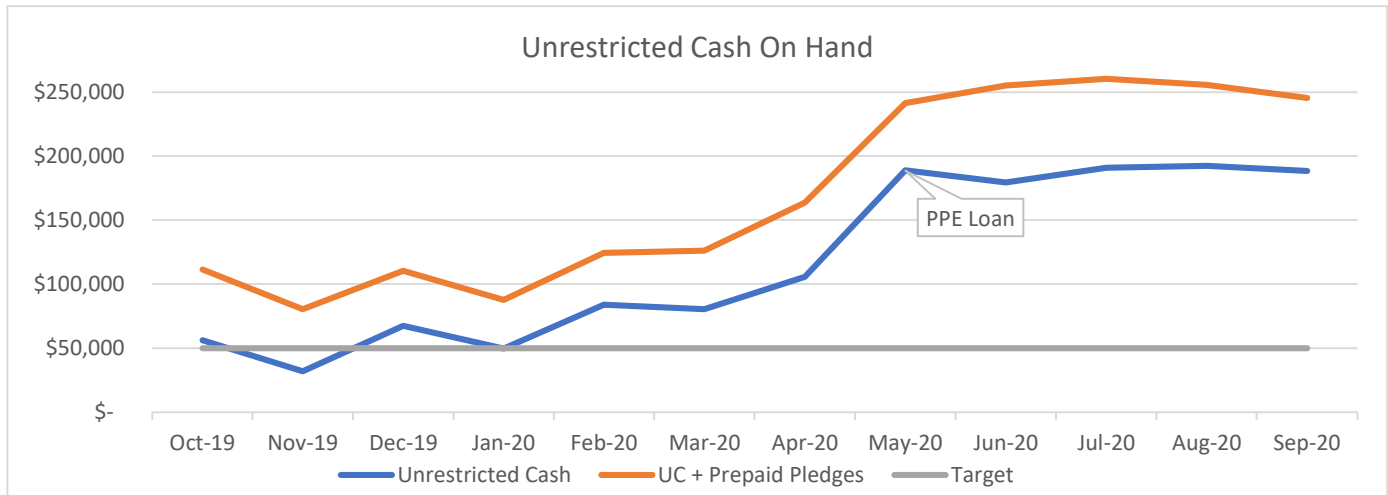
Operating Income	-\$7,826	-\$28,979	\$21,153	
Adjusted Operating Income	-\$5,782	-\$28,979	\$23,197	50% due to lower RE expenses, which will continue

Considerations:

- Pledges are down \$9K after 3 months.
- CFSEMI draw (revenue) is under budget by \$6K
- Rummage was budgeted for \$5 in October
- Fundraising is budgeted at \$15K for the year

*Colors added when variance is > +/-5% or > +/- \$1,000

September 2020 Treasurer's Report



BUC is in a very strong cash position

BUC Debt:

	Amount Owed	Monthly Payment	Final Due Date	Comments
Mortgage	\$371,365	\$2,795	Jan. 2038	20 years: 4/five year cycles. Current interest is 5.69%. Next renewal is Feb. 2023.
Short Term Loan	\$0	\$0	Feb. 2021	Has been paid off!!
PPP Loan	\$90,000	n/a		Will likely be 100% forgiven
TOTAL	\$461,365	\$2,795		

Additional Notes:

BUC's short term loan was fully paid off. This results in a savings of ~\$350/month in savings

B&F Committee approved \$15,808 in excess capital campaign funds to be designated for building needs