

Unitarian Universalist Church of Buffalo
Fall 2023 Congregational Meeting – 10/1/23 – Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 12:20pm by Bobby Withrow.

It was acknowledged by Bobby Withrow that with 64 members in attendance at the meeting, enough of the membership was present for a quorum.

In terms of a Parliamentarian for the meeting, Christine Slocum made a motion to appoint Tom Petrocelli as Parliamentarian. Kate Bell-Schwede seconded the motion. Attendees voted unanimously to have Tom serve as Parliamentarian for the meeting.

Rev. Cathy Harrington provided some opening words for our meeting.

In terms of a Moderator for the meeting, Christine Slocum made a motion to appoint Martha Malkiewicz as Moderator. Gigi Helliwell seconded the motion. Attendees voted unanimously to have Martha Malkiewicz serve as Moderator for the meeting.

Martha Malkiewicz announced the need for Tellers for the meeting. Martha identified Board of Trustees members Christine Slocum and Kate Bell-Schwede as Tellers for the meeting.

Martha Malkiewicz announced the need for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 2023 winter congregational meeting. Fran Manly made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 2023 winter congregational meeting. Michael Shanahan seconded the motion. Rachel Clark interjected and inquired about who she (or anyone in the congregation) would turn to in regard to a typing error in meeting minutes. Bobby Withrow and Martha Malkiewicz informed all in attendance that such errors should be brought to the attention of the Board of Trustees. Rachel Clark indicated that her name had been spelled incorrectly in the meeting minutes. Bobby Withrow and Martha Malkiewicz informed Rachel Clark that this error would be addressed. Attendees voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the January 2023 winter congregational meeting.

Beth White provided a presentation on behalf of the nominating committee. She indicated that two members needed to be elected to the committee itself – Rachel Clark and John Petrocelli. Doris Poodry asked that the candidates stand up during the meeting to be readily identified (and both candidates did so). Martha Malkiewicz asked for a motion to approve the appointment of these two individuals as nominating committee members. Michael Shannahan made a motion to approve the appointment of these two individuals as nominating committee members. Lynn Mancuso seconded the motion. Attendees voted unanimously to elect Rachel Clark and John Petrocelli as nominating committee members.

Sharon Walker interjected and asked that the “value words” that attendees had written down and been collected be read-aloud for all to hear. These “value words” (which we designed to express the hopes and wishes of attendees regarding the tone/tenor of the meeting) were read aloud by Sharon (and these “value words” had been posted at the front of the church during the meeting for all attendees to be able to review/see).

Joel Cohen presented two 2024 budget options on behalf of the finance committee.

Gerry Evans asked about the “worship” line of the budget (which Joel Cohen explained was a line that was specific to the proportion of time that the minister’s salary is spent on worship).

Joel Cohen clarified the fact that the two potential budgets were largely different in that one budget included expenses specific to an Office Administrator that was working a part time schedule versus an Office Administrator that was working a full time (or a 40 hours per week with benefits type of position) schedule.

Beth White interjected and asked Rev. Cathy Harrington if she felt as though a full time Office Administrator was a necessity. Cathy indicated that she felt as though it was. Cathy also indicated that the newly appointed Office Administrator asked about whether or not the position could morph into more hours/full time eventually, and Cathy indicated that yes, such an arrangement was a possibility (so Cathy is confident the newly appointed Office Administrator would be open to working a full-time schedule if it was offered to her). Cathy was very complimentary of the newly appointed Office Administrator’s knowledge/skill set with technology, web design, and more. Nancy Wilkins interjected that she was not in favor of budget 2. Nancy indicated that she appreciates what a full time Office Administrator would bring to the church, but feels that the Gatekeeper position, which was taken down from a full time to a part time position approximately 3 years ago, should be reinstated as a full-time position (and such a move should be the church’s first priority, as opposed to funding a full time Office Administrator position). Kate Bell-Schwede spoke in favor of budget 2. Kate acknowledged that the Board of Trustees takes the potential deficit involved with having a full time Office Administrator seriously, but feels we are facing some unique administrative challenges in the next few years and feels a full time Office Administrator is a necessity. Kate feels there are a plethora of things that have historically not been done in a timely fashion because of the part time nature of the Office Administrator position. Kate acknowledges budget 2 is a risk, but feels it is worth it. Gregory Rabb asked some follow-up questions about some items in the budget that were unclear to him. Gregory asked for clarification regarding how many full time and part time employees we have (which Joel Cohen clarified for him), questions about the endowment draw and how that is budgeted (which Joel Cohen clarified for him), and questions about personnel versus non-personnel-related expenses (which Joel Cohen clarified for him in that historically individual staff salaries have not been disclosed as a part of our budget, as that specific salary information is kept private). Gregory encouraged a reconsideration of keeping such information private. Tony Keller expressed dissatisfaction with the UUCB paying less than its fair share to the UUA and encouraged attendees to send a portion of their pledge dollars to the UUA (instead of the UUCB). Nina Sheehan shared that having a full time Office Administrator could go a long way towards both attracting and retaining new members. Nina also indicated that because the Office Administrator is currently a part time position and supervises the Gatekeeper, perhaps the part time status of the Office Administrator played into the Gatekeeper’s position moving to part time (i.e., a part time Office Administrator doesn’t have time to effectively supervise a full time Gatekeeper). Karen Streech indicated that she does a lot of work as a volunteer (with website content, with our photography board, and our monthly newsletter), and while she happily does this, she would like to retire from this volunteer work someday...and that a full time Office Administrator would be well-positioned to take on some of these duties. Joel Cohen made a point of publicly thanking Karen Streech for her volunteerism and hard work. Sharon Walker expressed her support for budget 2, as she has volunteered in the office in the past and saw firsthand just how much work there is to do (and how hard it is to complete it with part time hours). Charlene Montgomery asked for clarification for part time hours versus full time hours and what that

looked like. Joel Cohen indicated that the Office Administrator role is currently set at 25 hours per week, and a full time Office Administrator would work a full 40 hours per week.

Martha Malkiewicz asked for a motion to approve budget 2. Kate Bell-Schwede made a motion to approve budget 2. Liz Park seconded the motion. The “yeas” were 47, the “nays” were 5. Attendees voted in favor of approving budget 2.

Martha Malkiewicz indicated that the other agenda item for the meeting, approval of changes to some language in the by-laws, could not be voted on as the Board of Trustees was unable to properly present the wording changes in the timeframe required and with proper notification. A vote on these by-law language changes will have to wait for another time – be it a special session or the winter 2024 congregational meeting. Until then, the vote on this will have to be postponed.

Rev. Cathy Harrington offered some closing words.

Martha Malkiewicz asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Bobby Withrow made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Charlene Montgomery seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 1:22pm.