

Minutes from Standing Committee Meeting July 14, 2015

Attendees: Suzanne Wilson, Rebecca Gore, Ellen Spero, Ruth Whalen-Crockett, John Schneider, Rose Lerer, Sarah Manning

Minutes:

- Joan Keane sent out minutes of the June 9, 2015 Standing Committee meeting but we did not bring copies for review. These minutes will be reviewed and approved at the August meeting.
- Minutes were taken at the June 28, 2015 Standing Committee meeting with the HR subcommittee. Those have not been received yet but will be reviewed and approved at a later meeting.

Treasurer's Report: There is no treasurer's report this month since we don't normally meet in the summer. Rebecca is closing the fiscal year. The auditors are ready to conduct their audit when the books are fully closed and key personnel are available.

Minister: Ellen is on vacation from July 24 to August 15.

Finances: The annual budget was prepared with a low and high range to allow for different spending based on the results of the canvass. The canvass pledges will provide enough funding for the low range. That means that we cannot afford to give pay raises to our employees this year. (Employee salaries account for a large part of the budget.)

- There will be discussion at a later meeting regarding possible ways to raise additional money to provide employee pay raises.
- Money from the year-end surplus, investments or cell tower cannot be used for to bolster the annual budget. It is bad fiscal practice because we would be raising salaries that we would have to raise again next year and, if we don't have a dependable yearly stream of income each year, we cannot sustain ourselves.
- We agreed that we (the congregation) need to learn to talk about money.
- Ellen indicated that the individuals who consistently provide large pledges to the church are senior citizens.
- If we are to sustain ourselves, we need to better communicate our financial needs to middle aged and younger church members. Our culture has changed over the last 40 years and people's loyalties are split between church and other organizations and priorities. We should discuss estate planning with middle aged and younger church members. Many congregations (of many denominations) are facing this challenge.
- We also need to discuss long term solutions to reducing our budget.
- We would like to have Jim Curley come to our September meeting to discuss the canvass. Rose will contact Jim.

Major Building Updates: John spoke about the report from Brian Raiche of Cornerstone Consulting. Brian spoke to the task force and indicated that the congregation does not have the capacity to raise the amount of capital required for the proposed building updates.

- John indicated that the formal report would be distributed to the congregation and several meetings would be held to discuss it.
- The task force will look at other sources of funding and ways to redefine the project so that it is less expensive.

Policies and Procedures: Rose presented some issues from the subcommittee*. Rose and Dee have been working on three items.

- Key Policy: They have worked with Leila and Cindy on this policy. There are a few details that need to be addressed after the staff returns from vacation but it will be ready for approval soon.
- Bylaws: They are preparing a suggested update of the bylaws and welcome any and all suggestions that the Standing Committee (or other church members) may have.
- Safe Congregation Policy: This is a large policy that encompasses a number of topics related to church safety. It does not replace the safe child policy but two of the other policies may be rewritten. The policy is not ready for review but Rose raised an issue for discussion: Do we want to have a nut-free policy at church?
 - There are many food allergies and we cannot eliminate all of those foods from church. However, peanut allergies can be life-threatening. As such, some churches and many schools (particularly nursery schools) are nut-free.
 - In the spring, one teenager had an allergic reaction to some pesto (which includes pine nuts) that was in a dish served at a First Parish event.
 - The RE program is already very allergy aware. Parents must list allergies on the registration form, the information is in the class notebook and it is communicated to classroom guides.
 - One member indicated that the coffee hour instructions already recommend nut-free foods.
 - A total nut-free policy could extend to Table of Plenty, fudge made for May Baskets, cookies made for the Holiday Fair, etc. It would be hard to control one-time users of our space.
 - There was general agreement among Standing Committee members present that we do not want to specifically prohibit nuts because it would be hard to comply 100% and this would generate significant controversy in the congregation at a time when we should be focusing on other issues. However, the policy includes a statement about encouraging voluntary labeling of food brought to potlucks, etc.
 - Dee and Rose will also investigate ways (outside of the policy) that we can better communicate allergy concerns on an ongoing basis.

**The Policy and Procedures Subcommittee is specified in the bylaws. It had been inactive for a while and, last year, Ellen asked that it be made active again in order to review existing policies and provide policies where none exist. Staff has been asked for answers on issues that they are not prepared to address; the policies are intended to eliminate grey areas.*

August Standing Committee Retreat: Ellen and John will be doing a presentation on Robert's Rules of Order.

New SC Members: Ellen will ensure that SC notebooks (with policies, HR handbook, etc.) will be provided to the new members (Ruth, Carrie, Peggy).

Respectfully submitted,

Rose Lerer