

Regular Attendees		Present
Fifi Ball	Director of Operations	Y
Jeff Brainerd	Standing Committee member	Y*
Kate Crosby	Standing Committee member	N
Howard Dana	Senior Minister	N
Dave Elwood	Standing Committee member	Y
Kristin Haddad	Standing Committee member	Y
Peter Nobile	Standing Committee Clerk	Y
Patty Popov	Standing Committee member	Y
Toby Smith Ropeik	Standing Committee member	Y*
Mark Russell Prior	Standing Committee Chair	Y
Lora Venesy	Standing Committee member	Y
Alec Walker	Standing Committee member	Y
Tom Wilson	Standing Committee member	Y

*via telephone

The meeting opened at 6:00PM with a chalice lighting, and the reading of a poem by Rev. Joseph Cherry, *Prayer for Living In Tension*.

Minutes from the last meeting (6/14) had been approved unanimously by email prior to tonight’s meeting. The following is an abridged record of the 8/16 meeting discussion.

Chair’s report

Mark reported that calendar and Standing Committee agenda planning sessions during June and July went very well, thanks to all who participated.

Mark had a discussion with Trustees of Parish Donations chair Tim Jacoby, who has been talking with parishioner Mel Bernstein and the Trustees about increasing public access to the Wright Tavern. The Trustees will charter a group to explore the topic. Tom Wilson, who is the liaison to the Trustees will be the SC liaison.

Mark reported that parishioner Hank Sorett emailed Mark and Kate Crosby expressing a desire to have a First Parish discussion about the recent US Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage. Such a discussion would not be a responsibility of the Standing Committee. Hank was directed to the policy on congregational groups.

Mark thanked the committee for submitting ideas for potential Auction leaders, (including people involved in past auctions). He compiled and sent them to Howard.

This year, Howard will be leading an exploration of the topic of Social Action at FP. Topics will include: how the SAC is funded and what percent of our annual budget should be targeted to social action; how funding is allocated; who is involved in social action; and how to engage the community more deeply. Roslyn Romberg has been gathering data on these topics (from some 80 plus churches) with an eye toward rethinking the social action charter at First Parish. Toby has been working on a draft charter and has volunteered to be one of the Standing Committee liaisons to the project.

Mark is to meet with Leslie Pelton, Caroline Minkin, Howard Dana and our incoming MRE, Amy Friedman regarding the Standing Committee's congregational groups policy and the role of the RE council.

Minister's report

There were no comments on Howard's report, which is appended at the end of these minutes.

Director of Operations' report

Fifi summarized her report of the current Parish Budget and Financials. Of note are the following items:

- Our FY15 budget shows a lower than expected **net loss of \$44,000**. We anticipated a loss (use of savings) of \$55,000. Income was \$23,000 more than expected and expenses were \$12,000 more than expected. This \$44,000 loss will roll onto our balance sheet, reducing our savings, showing as a reduction in Retained Earnings.
- The Parish received another \$19,000 as more donors pre-paid their FY16 (7/1/15-6/30/16) pledges (see balance sheet 2025). We will start our next fiscal year with **\$176,000 in prepaid pledges** and non-pledge contributions.
- The full outstanding balance (**\$60,000**) of the **Capital Campaign loan was repaid** to the Trustees in June 2015.
- The only expense related to the building renovations that remains unpaid is the organ rebuild. We are **holding approximately \$50,000 to pay the organ rebuilder** when that project is completed.
- At the end of this fiscal year (FY15), a net of **6% of pledges remained unpaid**. We typically budget for 5% unpaid pledges. This gap might partly be closed by FY15 pledge payments made in FY16 ("prior year pledge payments"). Last year at this time, pledges were *overpaid* by 3.3% rate, and we still had over \$12,000 in prior year pledge payments come in during FY15.
- We end the year with **approximately \$59,000 "available" cash**, after accounting for our cash reserve and other claims on cash

Alec asked about Howard's reporting of an unanticipated windfall of \$15,000. Fifi said this gift is in addition to a donor's original pledge, and that this additional \$15,000 gift to the Parish was initially

thought to already be part of that larger original pledge. Fifi reports that Howard is excited about the possibilities that this money might allow.

Fifi also reports that there is no Ministerial intern planned at the moment; Julia May be coming from Transylvania, but due to visa issues (J1 vs H1) her arrival date is still unclear. If we do have an intern he or she will not begin until October.

Treasurer's report

Tom reported that the Finance Committee has been looking at the Finance Committee structures of other Parishes, discussing ideas with the Trustees, and planning for a new model budget. Mark noted that the group will need to schedule the October and May congregational meeting dates. The Finance Committee charter calls for the Standing Committee to review and modify the charter as needed. He would like the Finance Committee to provide input on this.

Tom also reported that the Finance Committee members have all signed on to another "tour". The Committee recommended beginning staggered terms at the end of this year. Mark also suggested that the Finance Committee consider reviewing financial policies this year to determine whether refinements are needed.

Group reports

Nominating Committee: Patty would love to hear from Standing Committee members regarding nominations for two upcoming Standing Committee membership seats.

Members' reports

Fifi reminded the Committee that Amy Friedman's title will be Minister of Religious Education, so that we should begin to refer to her title as MRE rather than DRE.

Standing Committee subgroup and liaison signup

Mark would like each Standing Committee member to express 3-5 preferences for subgroups/activities in which they would like to be involved, and to email them to Mark as soon as possible. Standing Committee subgroups include:

- **Governance** – This group is responsible for reviewing Standing Committee policies and procedures and identifying opportunities for refinements. Highest priority policies will be selected for improvement..
- **Evaluation** – This group is responsible for managing the Standing Committee evaluation process, of both itself and the Senior Minister. Last year's group included Toby, Kristen and Lora – should there be a 4th person involved? The work is to pay attention to progress on annual goals throughout the year, and develop and examine congregational and ministerial surveys as needed.

- **Congregational Outreach** – The role of this group is to organize conversational conversations on a variety of topics. Last year these efforts were led by Alec, Dave, Kitsy.
- **Nominating** – This group is responsible for developing a list of candidates to be considered for service on the Nominating Committee. The group is led by Patty.
- **Leadership Selection** – this subgroup is tasked with working with Standing Committee members to identify candidates for the following year's Standing Committee chair. The work involves surveying SC members about leadership interest as well as important issues that future leaders will face.

Standing Committee Liaisons (role can be observer, participant or observer-participant) include:

- **SAC** – may include 2 Standing Committee members; requires attendance at meetings.
- **RE Council** – need 1 person to observe the activities of the council.
- **Membership** - 1 member to observe the activities of a new membership oriented group.
- **Denominational Affairs** – 1 member to observe the activities of the Denomination Affairs committee, especially its preparation for the Mass Bay District meeting where the future of the district will be considered.
- **Auction** – 1 or 2 members to support the efforts of the group planning the upcoming auction fundraising event. The Auction is expected to occur either in November, January or later in the spring.
- **Trustees of Parish Donations** – Tom, in his role as Treasurer, is currently serving as liaison.
- **Ministerial Internship** – 1 member to observe the activities of the Ministerial Internship committee.
- **Arts Council** -- 1 member to observe the activities of the Arts Council. Toby has been performing this role.
- **WPA** -- 1 member to observe the activities of the Women's Parish Association.

Mark will assign members to activities, He will try to give everyone their preferences, balancing work as much as possible.

Welcoming and greeting schedule

Mark would like a new volunteer to develop a schedule for the coming year. Efforts seem to have worked well so far. Duties include greeting people at the door on Sundays, and standing at the membership table during coffee hour. Alec and Mark remind the group that our presence is important; it was suggested that perhaps SC members should carry red mugs at coffee hour to let people know that we are available for conversation. Peter volunteered to transition this duty from Alec, who will train him in the particulars.

SC annual goals

Standing Committee annual goals are to be discussed at our next meeting in September. Goals should incorporate the lessons learned in the Standing Committee and Senior Minister evaluations. Alec pointed out that our current goals came out of a period of chaos and lack of resolution; as we are emerging from that period, perhaps new goals can be more forward looking, e.g. looking more broadly at the church. Members suggested that larger congregational discussions, similar to the “springing forward” conversations of the past might be helpful. Toby reminded us that a comprehensive all-congregational visioning assessment is written into Howard’s contract. This assessment is 3 years away and we don’t want to fatigue either the congregation or the staff with too many survey efforts.

Mark reported that we will discuss goals in September, and finalize our goals in October. Dave suggested that SC members arrive at the September meeting with prepared with ideas for goals.

Other SC Member Business

None.

Review of Future Agenda Items

Mark reviewed the Future Agenda Items list, identifying those that have been completed and those that will be addressed in the future.

A motion to close the main meeting and enter in to executive session was made, seconded, and approved unanimously.

Executive Session

The Committee entered into an Executive Session. During the session the committee decided that In order to follow up on internal communication issues arising from the recent DRE search and to address other more general concerns and patterns, the Committee will form a three member working group to discuss communication strategies with Howard.

Minister's Report to the Standing Committee

First Parish in Concord—June and July 2015

Rev. Howard N. Dana

Director of Operations' Goals for 2014-15

Goal One – Use technology where possible to streamline FP operations. For example,

- i. explore whether Vanco (our credit card and auto debit payment processing company) can upload pledge payment data directly into our eTapestry database. Progress: between 100 and 200 households are using this method of paying their pledges.
- ii. improve my Excel skills by taking a course; share knowledge with staff
- iii. use, and encourage other staffers to use, our eTapestry database to its full potential (for letters, newsletters, RE tracking, committee memberships, volunteering, etc.) Progress: ETapestry is being used to set up the data base for the 2016 photo directory. In preparation for the new photo directory we have been cleaning up our roles some.

Goal Two – Revise and reproduce a comprehensive Staff Policy Manual that clarifies existing policies and adds new ones. Progress: Much work has been done on reviewing the Common Competencies that are part of many of the staff's contracts. We will likely turn these competencies into a Staff Covenant that will cover all First Parish staff.

Goal Three – Clean up personnel files; complete a checklist of required documents for each current employee. Progress: Fully complete and being maintained. We need to work on revamping the Safe Congregations policies as they pertain to employees and have each employee sign a form verifying that they have read them. This is still a summer project.

Goal Four – Make good and appropriate use of Finance Committee—assign research projects and review and implement findings, get help with accounting and finance questions, use expertise for brainstorming solutions to problems. Progress: The Finance Committee held two sessions in June with the congregation regarding the budget. The committee worked hard on a slide presentation to answer questions and give an overview of the budget. Roughly 30 people attended the review sessions. The Finance Committee was helpful in presenting at the Annual Meeting.

Senior Minister Goals for 2014-15:

Goal One—Attend to the emotional systems at First Parish to determine how well people feel cared for, included, encouraged to serve, and spiritually fed. Measurements: participation in a variety of First Parish worship services and events; health and vitality of the congregation's pastoral care network; success and effectiveness of various First Parish groups, councils, and committees.

Progress: We finished up the interview process for the new Religious Educator. The process was not without its misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and need for Standing Committee intervention. Ultimately the search team proposed two candidates and of those two, I chose Rev. Amy Freedman to be our Minister of Religious Education. She has enthusiastically accepted the offer. We have negotiated a contract with her and she will begin on August 18th. Leslie Pelton has decided to chair the RE Council next year. The first work to be done for that council will be to revise its charter and better define how it works.

Goal Two—Team with the Standing Committee to lead in a harmonious, proactive, and visionary way. Measurements: Standing Committee members will feel informed about how First Parish is running, what its needs are for the future, and how their leadership might help the church achieve its mission. The Senior Minister and the Director of Operations will feel empowered to attend to day-to-day matters while partnering with the Standing Committee to look to the congregation's future. Progress: I was grateful for the Standing Committee's help during the Religious Educator search. Mark Russell Prior, Patty Popov, and Alec Walker were able to keep us from having a failed search. I am grateful for their kind leadership and for the trust and communication that exist between the Standing Committee and me.

Goal Three—Encourage a culture of abundance at First Parish. Measurements: building its stewardship base by further cultivation of larger donors, broadening the base of medium-range donors, and encouraging all members and friends to make a financial pledge. Ensuring that a robust team of volunteers leads a dynamic Annual Pledge Campaign. Progress: We were gifted with an additional \$15,000 after the budget was passed. This extra padding will be helpful as we move through next year. We were able to end FY 2014-15 using only \$44,000 of the expected \$55,000 we were willing to take from unspent prior year pledges. With plans for an auction and additional fundraising efforts this coming year, we are making stewardship progress at First Parish.

Goal Four—Further develop the First Parish staff team so that it might work more harmoniously, cooperatively, and humanely. Measurements: Assess the effectiveness of all staff members in their ability to reach professional goals. Monitor job performance and use of time off to ensure that staff members can efficiently do their jobs. Encourage teamwork, cooperation, and direct communication in all areas of the church's functioning. Progress: Some staff took rest and vacation in June and July. Others were busy with summer projects. All staff members are encouraged to not work more than their allotted hours each week and to take all their earned vacation and holiday time.

Updates on day-to-day ministry

- I attended Ministry Days and General Assembly in Portland, Oregon.
- We celebrated Doug Baker's 35 years of service to First Parish with a reception and a generous gift.
- I took the month of July as study leave. Thank you!

Update on Staff issues and changes

- The Ministerial Intern, Director of Membership and Communications, and the Interim DRE all completed their service to First Parish on June 30, 2015.

- We have hired Victor Curran to be our Electronic Communications Specialist for 10 hours a week. He will focus on the First Parish web site, FP Announce, and the First Parish Facebook page.
- Wendy Wolfberg has volunteered to edit, and publish *The Meeting House News*.
- We have hired Rev. Amy Freedman to be our Minister of Religious Education starting mid-August. She, Dawn van Patten, and Bethany Lowe all spent RE Week on Starr Island thinking about religious education at First Parish and how they will work as a team.

Senior Minister's plans for denominational work, study leave, and vacation

- August 1-17, 2015—Summer Vacation
- October 19-21, 2015 Cedar Hill Study Group, Cape Cod
- January 11-25, 2016—Winter Vacation

/end of June-July Minister's Report