

Regular Attendees		Present
Fifi Ball	Director of Operations	N
Jeff Brainerd	Standing Committee member	Y
Kate Crosby	Standing Committee member	Y
Howard Dana	Senior Minister	Y
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

Howard opened the meeting with words by Rebecca Parker.

Minutes from the 8/16/2015 meeting were approved unanimously.

Chair’s report

Mark reported that he enjoyed a kickoff meeting with Howard, and that they are in alignment on the general goal of raising the perspective of the Standing Committee away from day-to-day operations toward a longer term vision.

Mark sent an email to Paula Vandever, Chair of the Denominational Affairs Committee to suggest that the committee begin early to prepare for the Mass Bay District Meeting, at which topics are expected to include dissolution of the Mass Bay District.

Mark had two meeting reminders: the next October Standing Committee meeting will take place on 10/4/15, the first Sunday of the month rather than the second due to the Columbus Day holiday, and the Standing Committee’s October Retreat is scheduled for 10/24/15, from 9AM-1PM, at Alec Walker’s house (thanks again to Alec!). Retreat topics may include discussion about the relationship between the Standing Committee (SC) and the Senior Minister (SM); and support for SC members as spiritual leaders in our congregation.

Minister's report

Howard reported that it looks like we will have no intern this year – a series of procedural roadblocks at the US State Department proved insurmountable. Howard’s recommendation is to start the internship paperwork process earlier next year. Another challenge to finding a suitable intern is that fewer seminarians are choosing Parish Ministry as a career option.

Howard noted that his goals, as defined in the last Minister's report (appended to the August meeting minutes) are efforts on TOP of his operational duties. Members briefly discussed Howard's goals and requested more information about how those goals had been generated. Alec requested a continuation of the discussion about how to improve the SC/SM evaluation of goals and objectives at our next SC meeting.

Howard reported that our new MRE Amy is settling in and is working well with Dawn and Bethany. Kristin commented that Amy made a good impression at teacher training; Tom noted that she made a good impression at today's worship service.

Howard updated the committee on this year's coming SAC discussions. Bethany Lowe, Janine Olsen, and Roselyn Romberg are central to helping move these discussions forward. The discussion process could potentially take a year, but Howard feels it is best to let the process unfold in its own time. Mark suggested keeping the process as open as possible, using numerous avenues to get out the message, encouraging participation. Mark also asked whether or not Howard would need a charge from the SC. Tom pointed out that the SC's open and active support of Howard and this process is more important than a formal charter. Howard's goal with these SAC discussions is to assess both what are we doing now and what more we could be doing; and suggested that for our size we may not be doing as much as we could/should. It was the sense of the group that a charge is not required at this juncture.

Director of Operations' report

The committee reviewed Fifi's FY2015 and FY2016 Budget Update, which had been distributed prior to the meeting. A motion was made to increase spending on line 5057 in the 2016 budget by an additional \$1,311 for compensation to Dawn Van Patten for time she was unable to take due to the DRE transition. The motion was approved unanimously.

Treasurer's report

Tom reported that Finance Committee's (FC) primary goals for the coming year are as follows:

- 1) Review First Parish's financial policies
- 2) Review Milldam School contract
- 3) Research spending levels at other churches to help answer the question: what is the right budget level for First Parish?
- 4) Begin to develop a longer term financial strategic plan, examining issues including increasing endowment and legacy funding. Research will begin this fall in preparation for next year's fundraising process.

Tom also reported that the FC was considering not holding congregational discussions this fall due to perceived low turnout last year. Mark reminded the SC that this activity is an important component of the charter of the FC, intended to allow parishioners to express their thoughts and provide input prior to development of spending options for the Annual Pledge Campaign. Mark also pointed out that general education of Parishioners about the budget is a step toward increasing the sense of stewardship felt by the congregation.

The committee discussed the idea of inviting interested parties/target audiences (e.g. committee chairs, other smaller groups) to budget discussions to ensure participation. As with the SAC meetings, it was agreed that

more awareness of upcoming meetings would be good; Tom pointed out that last year's budget discussion meetings were poorly attended, so comments received might not have been representative of the Congregation's larger perspective.

SC Subgroup and Liaison Assignments

After reviewing SC member's preferences and balancing the group's experience and existing commitments, Mark's subgroup assignments are:

- SM communications support: Mark, Alec, Kristin
- Evaluation of SC: Lora, Toby
- Evaluation of SM: Toby, Dave
- Nominating: Patty, Jeff
- Governance: Mark, Alec, Kristin, Jeff, Dave, possibly others
- Congregational Outreach: Dave, Kate
- Leadership selection: Alec, Patty, Jeff
- Finance Committee: Tom, Patty

Mark's Liaison assignments are:

- Membership: Kristin
- RE Council: Dave
- SAC/Social Justice: Toby, Lora
- Ministerial Internship: Alec
- Denominational Affairs: Kate
- Trustees: Tom
- WPA: Lora
- Arts Council: Tom
- Auction: Open to all – Mark asked for 100% Standing Committee participation in both the annual pledge campaign and auction. On a side note, the auction will happen in the spring of 2016, not fall/winter of 2015.

Finance Committee member reappointment and proposed charter refinements

Background and discussion: Mark circulated a draft of revisions to the Finance Committee charter. A number of people, including Howard, had suggested that the FC should be more involved in the annual pledge campaign. The revisions highlighted the fact that the role of the FC did not include this activity. Mark explained to the committee that over a decade ago, the FC was responsible for budget development, the annual pledge campaign, and long range financial planning. This proved to be too much for the committee to accomplish and long term planning suffered. Two things were done to help relieve the pressure: the Parish hired a finance manager), and an annual pledge campaign committee was formed, leaving the FC in charge of long range financial planning. However in the years following the change, the FC was disbanded. Mark also pointed out that while fundraising was not a formal responsibility of the FC, interested FC members were free to participate as individuals in the annual pledge campaign.

Howard explained his rationale that raising an annual \$1 million budget is no small undertaking, and that those who will help spend the money should be centrally involved raising it. Mark pointed out that while the FC is available to assist with technical expertise in support of decision makers, it is not the responsibility of the FC to make decisions about spending.

There was a brief discussion about the importance of FC activities not increasing Fifi's workload. Tom offered that the FC has a lot of admiration for Fifi's work and works continuously to ensure that she is supported.

Toby suggested that it might be better from a stewardship perspective if fundraising objectives and priorities were to originate in the congregation, and not be the sole responsibility of the SM. Mark noted that UUA guidelines and First Parish policies call for the Senior Minister to lead the way on fundraising.

After discussion, Alec suggested that the Finance Committee charter revisions should be shorter and more concise, focusing positively on what the committee should do going forward. Alec will provide suggested language refinements to the charter.

A motion was made to reappoint the current Finance Committee members, Gib Metcalf, Fred Van Deusen, Carol Smith, Patty Popov, and Tom Wilson to a term ending in June of 2016. By virtue of their positions, Fifi Ball and SC Chair Mark Russell Prior are ex officio, non-voting members. The motion was approved unanimously.

Trustees of Parish Donations: Line of credit

Following up on previous discussions, Tom outlined suggested line of credit parameters: the line is for \$100,000; Trustee approval is not required to access the line; and if the line of credit is used, money borrowed will be treated as a loan is to be paid back within 5 years.

Kate asked what would happen if, for example, the line is used to pay for items such as a new boiler that may have a payback longer than 5 years? Tom suggested that there are a number of accounting approaches to paying back such loans that would not unduly penalize the church. Tom also reminded the committee that a benefit of the line of credit is that unused money remains invested in the market rather than "under the mattress" (e.g. as cash). The line is a backup/safety valve to cover short term needs until the Parish finalizes the best way forward. The approach is similar to the way in which Boards reach into an institutional endowment to meet immediate fiscal obligations. First Parish's annual budget currently carries a 10% reserve. If used, financial policies require that 80% be replenished in the following year. Members noted that there will be a need for a financial policy on how the line of credit can be used. Alec suggested that the SC retain oversight as to how this line of credit is spent.

Tom moved that he, as Treasurer, submit an MOU to the Trustees for approval, and that the agreement will be brought back to SC for final approval. The committee voted unanimously to accept this approach.

Review Future Agenda Items

Mark reviewed upcoming agenda items; the development of future leadership was of particular interest.

SC annual goals

The committee discussed current and proposed revisions to its annual goals. After a spirited discussion, and incorporating revisions suggested after the meeting by email, Peter agreed to draft proposed goals that would be circulated to SC members for feedback. The SC will discuss goals again in October.

There were no public attendees, so there was no public comment period. Nor was there an Executive Session. Tom motioned for the meeting to be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Patty, and the meeting adjourned at approximately 10:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Nobile, Clerk