

**First Parish Church in Concord  
Minutes of the Annual Meeting  
June 11, 2017 11:30am**

The meeting was called to order at 11:34am by Moderator John Stevens. Rev. Howard Dana opened the session with a prayer.

**Article I:** To hear and act upon the reports of the Senior Minister, the Standing Committee, the Trustees of Parish Donations, and other committee reports. A motion to this effect was made by Kristin Haddad, Chair of the Standing Committee (SC).

Senior Minister report: Howard's report was gratefully received. A full Senior Minister's report was included in the handouts.

Standing Committee report: Kristin Haddad reported on a successful year of collaborative leadership model with Rev. Dana. Kristin briefly reviewed the work done by the SC this past year, including subcommittee, task force, liaison and other informal connections throughout First Parish, committee retreats, visioning, fiscal management and several other efforts. A full SC report was included in the handouts.

Trustees of Parish Donations report: Tim Jacoby reported that the Trustees will be giving about \$140,000 out of our endowment to the Church in FY2017-18. The Trustees focused this past year on socially responsible investment and portfolio management strategies. The Trustees are also involved in the development of the Planned Giving effort. Tim also noted that the Concord Museum's collaboration with FP on the Wright Tavern is going well. A full Trustee's report was included in the handouts.

Mel Bernstein encouraged the Trustees to work proactively with the congregation in the coming year on continued development of the long-term sustainability plan for the Wright Tavern. At the end of the three-year lease with the Concord Museum in 2019, the Congregation will be called upon to approve a long-term sustainable plan for the Wright Tavern's future. The precedent for this approach was established by Judge Ebenezer Hoar: in 1885 he deeded his one-half interest in the Wright Tavern to First Parish and requested in a separate letter to First Parish that it approve the gift at the next annual meeting by vote of the Congregation. The Congregation then voted to approve acceptance of the gift at its' 1886 annual meeting.

**Article II:** To choose all Parish officers for the ensuing year. A motion was made by Eric Moore who moved that we nominate the following candidates for the terms noted:

SC member at large

Dave Ellwood, Standing Committee Member-at-Large, for a 3-year term

Tom Wilson, Standing Committee Member-at-Large, for a 3-year term

Lora Venesy, Standing Committee Member-at-Large, for a second 3-year term

Toby Smith Ropeik, Standing Committee Member-at-Large, for a second 3-year term

### Officers

Michelle Fortier, Treasurer, for a one-year term

John Stevens, Moderator, for a one-year term

Peter Nobile, Clerk, for a one-year term

The motion was seconded, and was approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Tim Jacoby, Trustees, to nominate Laura Bernstein to the Trustees of Parish Donations for a second 5-yr term. The motion was seconded and was approved unanimously.

The motion was seconded, and was approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Kate Svercek who moved that we nominate the following candidates for the Nominating Committee for the terms noted:

Mark Russell Prior, Nominating Committee, for a 3-year term

Marilyn Lowitt, Nominating Committee, for a second 3-year term

Ms. Svercek briefed the meeting regarding changes to the size and structure of the Nominating Committee. The motion was seconded, and was approved unanimously.

Mr. Moore expressed gratitude to Suzanne Foley and Don Leopold for their exemplary service on the Nominating Committee. Ms. Haddad then thanked Tom Wilson, outgoing Treasurer, and Mark Russell Prior, outgoing member-at-large, for their dedication and long service to the SC.

**Article III:** To ratify the 2017 UU General Assembly (GA) delegate slate. A motion was made by Darien Smith, of the Denominational Affairs Committee, to nominate a slate of delegates.

### The list of delegates travelling to this year's GA is as follows:

Lillian Anderson

Kristin Haddad

Beth Norton

Jim Sherblom

Darien Smith

Alice Van Deusen

Fred Van Deusen

### Off-site delegates include:

John Lowe

Peter Nobile

Lora Venesy

### Voting off-site in the Presidential Election only:

Sara Ballard

Susan See

Lois Suarez  
Margaret Stewart

Rev. Dana and Rev. Freeman will be ex officio delegates to GA. Jan Hutslar and Peter Bowden will also attend, as will Sydney Haddad, daughter of Kristin Haddad.

The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

**Article IV:** To raise money for all parochial purposes, including the Budget for Fiscal Year 2017-2018: A motion to this effect was made by Treasurer Tom Wilson. The motion was seconded.

Tom set the context for our budget discussion, and then reviewed budget drivers this coming year, the results of the 2017-18 pledge campaign, and priorities for our budget. This year's budget provides modest salary increases to staff, increases our "fair share" contribution to the UUA, and increases savings toward long-term facilities maintenance. The budget uses both actual and anticipated income, as well as "available cash" from our prior year surplus, where income exceeded expenses. Tom noted a 3.7% increase in this year's income, and the importance of the Auction contribution. Tom also noted a small deficit (\$15,000) in the proposed budget, which will be covered easily.

There were no questions or discussion, and Tom's motion to approve the proposed FY2017-18 budget of \$1,248,566 was approved.

**Article V:** To act upon any other business that may come before the meeting.

Mr. Brainerd moved that Congregation encourage the SC to continue the hanging of the "Black Lives Matter" (BLM) banners. The motion was seconded.

Mr. Brainerd gave a brief history of the past year's activities around the BLM banners, including work by the Race Conversations Group, and described the SC process around the banners. Jeff reported that feedback on the banners has been overwhelmingly positive. The Concord Historic District Commission requested an application for approval of the banners, which has not been submitted because the position of First Parish is that the display of the banners is clearly an expression of freedom of religion. First Parish has agreed to continue a dialogue with the Town on our banner process.

C.C. King reported on past and continuing activism and outreach work done by the Race Conversations Group. Several activities and workshops on racial justice, and ways to better address systemic racism, were initiated this past year and will continue this coming year. A full report of the Group's activities was included in the meeting handouts.

A short discussion ensued. A congregant asked whether there was some way to make the banner more permanent. Another congregant spoke in favor of retiring the banner, and others spoke in support of keeping the banners up. A congregant asked what had happened to the "Join the Conversation" banner? Mr. Brainerd reported that that banner has been damaged by wind and will be put back up as soon as possible.

Other comments included observations on the positive effect of the banners on youth at First Parish, who are carefully watching what we do, and other possible ways to explain the meaning behind the BLM slogan, as that specific message may not always be understood clearly. Others asked for more incorporation of racial justice issues into our religious services. There were several touching stories about positive reactions to the banner and feelings of encouragement and support felt by volunteers, guests and even strangers.

Discussion ended, and Mr. Brainerd's motion was approved. Please note that this vote is advisory in nature.

Ms. Haddad moved that, as part of the Standing Committee's fiduciary responsibility, First Parish initiate a discussion about our policy of allotting 7.5% of pledge receipts for social action. The motion was seconded.

Kristin noted that this is the beginning of a year-long conversation about a 20-year-old policy around social action, describing that existing policy (which is not entirely clear) and the general history of social action at First Parish, especially around funding of grants and paying social action staff. Kristin gave a comprehensive presentation on First Parish budget and social action drivers, and described in detail the numerous staff and program efforts around social action. Beyond supporting Howard in his leadership role around social action, the SC's role includes support for the Social Action Council (SAC) and its current and pilot programs, as well as what the committee believes is a responsibility to initiate this examination of the 7.5% policy. It was noted by both Kristin and the Moderator that there will be numerous opportunities to discuss this policy in the coming year, and the congregation respectfully held back comments.

The motion to initiate a discussion about the 7.5% policy was approved.

A motion was made to dissolve the Annual Meeting; that motion was seconded and approved, and the meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Nobile, clerk