

First Parish Church in Concord

Minutes of the Annual Meeting
June 20, 2021, at 11:00AM

The virtual meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Moderator Kristin Moore who reviewed the format and protocol for a Zoom meeting. There were roughly 96 in attendance. Special acknowledgement of gratitude was given to Sarah Richie for providing Zoom technical support. The Reverend Howard Dana opened the meeting with a prayer.

Ms. Kristin Moore introduced the articles for the meeting.

Article I: To hear and receive the reports of the Senior Minister, the Standing Committee, the Trustees of Parish Donations, and the Wright Tavern Futures Task Force. Motion by Kristin Moore, Moderator.

Upon motion duly made and seconded it was by 97% (63) in favor and 3% (2) abstained
VOTED: To hear and receive the reports of the Senior Minister, the Standing Committee, the Trustees of Parish Donations, and the Wright Tavern Futures Task Force.

Senior Minister's Report: Howard Dana

Howard's report was made available electronically. He acknowledged that the pandemic and requirement to conduct services virtually made it a very challenging year. He expressed sincere gratitude to the staff, lay leaders, and the congregation for their willingness to go online for Sunday worship services, spiritual connection, and other church-related events.

He acknowledged that the virtual church experience has not worked for everyone. Some members have drifted away from First Parish, and others felt that the Church did not do enough outreach. As we begin to reconvene in the fall, Howard emphasized the importance of reaching out to those who have disengaged with First Parish over the last 18 months.

Howard noted four large, ambitious projects that the Church has embarked on during the pandemic —Greening the Campus, the Wright Tavern Futures Task Force, a Congregational Life Committee, and Laying the Groundwork for a Commission on Institutional Change. All of these projects will take years to complete, but they got their start during a pandemic.

Finally, Howard acknowledged the success of the annual campaign, especially since some had lost their jobs. Despite a tough year, there was a willingness and commitment to supporting First Parish and its ministry.

Standing Committee (SC) Report: Peter Nobile

Peter Nobile briefly shared an overview of the Standing Committee's report, which was made available electronically. Like everything else, all SC meetings were held online this past year. While doable, there was some loss in forming deeper connections that in-person meetings offer.

The last 16 months have reminded us that the heart of our faith community is more than a physical building. Our congregation is built on friendships, connections, and mutual support when we are stretched to the limit. The SC continues to be incredibly proud of the congregation's activities and efforts to stay connected during the pandemic through numerous social action, musical, religious education, and pastoral care activities. We expect a robust list of activities to continue this coming year and after the staff has some reprieve over the summer.

Trustees of Parish Donations Report: John Boynton

John Boynton presented an overview of all activities related to the Trustees of First Parish Donations, including managing the Church's investments and all the properties except the Meeting House. The Trustees pursue a low-cost investment strategy which yielded a 19.37% return this past year, bring the balance of the Legacy Investment Fund to \$3.274 million at the end of May. The Trustees will contribute \$143,000 to the First Parish budget, which is slightly less than last year. The contribution is based on a complex calculation over a specific time period.

The Trustees successfully migrated the financial portfolio onto a new investment platform. They hired a new investment management firm to provide financial advice on implementing a socially responsible investment portfolio articulated in the 2015 Annual Meeting. John indicated that the Trustees had done their best to divest investments in fossil fuel and pursue a portfolio that reflects the values of First Parish. The portfolio is a collection of low-cost index funds and not individual stocks.

This year, the Trustees made their first real estate investment as part of a diversification strategy and to round out the retirement package for Doug and Diana Baker. Trustee Roselyn Romberg and Bruce Davidson, Facilities Manager, have been reviewing all the properties to determine deferred maintenance problems and are working steadily on addressing these needs. The Ball House (#25 Church Green), formally occupied by Doug and Diana Baker, is now fully renovated and leased.

Looking ahead, the Trustees will work with the Concord Free Public Library on an archival management process so that the minutes and reports of First Parish are available to the public. The Trustees will also work with the SC and others on various building projects, including the Wright Tavern.

Wright Tavern Futures Task Force Report: Tom Wilson

Tom Wilson shared a slide presentation, made available electronically, on the background and future intent on the Wright Tavern, a historic landmark, and birthplace of independent representative government.

With extensive input from the community, the Task Force determined that the appropriate vision and mission of the Wright Tavern would be to serve as a center for the exploration and renewal of democracy in America, reflecting the critical role the building played in founding our government. With the support of the Trustees of Parish Donations and the SC, the Wright Tavern Futures Task Force formed a separate 501(c)(3), the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust. The Trust has already received a grant of \$260,000 from the Town of Concord toward building renovations which includes hiring two historic architects. An additional \$500,000+ will be needed for structural and interior upgrades to meet future public use.

The next step is for the Trust to establish a Board of Trustees and a five-year strategic plan to include fundraising, building renovations, and partnerships with organizations to fulfill the mission set forth. Tom noted that he is seeking a diverse representation on the Board of Trustees and welcomes suggestions of people of color and those who may have new skills to support the mission. Other goals include eventually hiring staff and celebrating in October of 2024 the convening of the First Provincial Congress of Massachusetts.

Article II: To recognize outgoing members of the Standing Committee and Nominating Committee and choose all Parish officers for the ensuing year. Motion by Eric Moore.

Upon motion duly made by Eric Moore, of the Nominating Committee, and seconded, it was unanimously 97% (69) in favor and 3% abstained (2)

VOTED: To choose all Parish officers for the ensuing year. Mr. Moore moved that we nominate the following candidates for the terms noted:

SC Members-at-Large

Michael Beer (for a one-year term)

Gib Metcalf (for a three-year term)

Caroline Washburn Minkin (for a three-year term)

Officers

Jennifer Izzo, Clerk (for a one-year term)

Heather Packard, Treasurer (for a one-year term)

Kristine Moore, Moderator (for a 4th one-year term)

Liz Rust recognized outgoing members of the Standing Committee: Peter Nobile, Jeff Brainard, Kate Svrcek, Jane Barnes, and Laurel Doggett.

Darien Smith recognized outgoing members of the Nominating Committee: Eric Moore and Jan Goddard-Taylor

Upon motion duly made by Kate Svrcek, Standing Committee member, which was seconded, it was 99% (69) in favor and 1% (1) abstained

VOTED: To nominate the following candidates for the Nominating Committee for the terms noted:

Jeff Brainard, (for a three-year term)
Suzie Weaver (for a three-year term)
Darien Smith (for a second three-year term)

Article III. To ratify the UU General Assembly delegate slate: Motion by Liz Rust of the Standing Committee

Upon motion duly made, which was seconded, it was unanimously 99% (70) in favor and 1% (1) abstained

VOTED to ratify the 2021 UU General Assembly (GA) delegate slate. The motion listed 11 delegates:

Liz Rust
Jan Power
Lillian Anderson
Darien Smith
Hank Sorrett
Margie Saphier
Chuck MacDonald
Lois Suarez
Holli Jones White
Meg Hargreaves
Beth Norton

Article IV. To raise money for all parochial purposes, including the Budget for Fiscal Year 2021- 2022 (FY22): Motion by Treasurer Jane Barnes.

Jane provided an overview of this year's Pledge Campaign results, which were commendable given the tough times many faced. She acknowledged the hard work of Tim Whitney, who took on the role of Project Manager. She appreciated the commitment and talent of all who worked on the Pledge Campaign and all who made a financial commitment to First Parish.

The July 2021-June 2022 budget is based on \$1,080,000 in pledges, the same as this year's. Pledges for 2021-2022 received to date are slightly under this amount. However, there is an expectation that the budgeted pledge total will be reached over the summer. Jane showed the number of pledging households for 2021-2022 to date is 355, representing an 8% drop from the total of 388 pledging households for 2020-2021. It currently costs \$3,000

per active household to run First Parish. The median pledge donation last year was \$1,200. The top 1% of First Parish pledgers provide 26% of the annual pledge income.

In reviewing income streams for this year, Jane noted the Church received a Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan of \$118K, which was forgiven. This will result in a surplus at the end of this fiscal year (June 30), some of which will be used to fund First Parish next year. These will not be available in the future.

The FY 22 budget reflects some cuts and streamlined activities. The most significant reductions include not funding a ministerial intern position, reducing sexton support for events, keeping the Contemporary Music Director position unfilled, and eliminating \$10,000 to be donated to UU-affiliated organizations such as UU Mass Action, UU Urban Ministry, and UU the Vote. It was noted there are other ways First Parish can support these organizations, such as through our Share-the-Plate program or using some of the Social Action Reserve. And half the donations made on Christmas Eve are sent to UU Urban Ministry's Renewal House.

Even with these cuts, there is still a \$74,000 budget overrun. This overrun will be paid for from "available cash," which is projected to have a balance of at least \$140,000 by June 30, 2021. This available cash is in addition to the ten percent of annual operating expenses emergency cash reserves set aside according to First Parish policy. To sustain the current cost of operations, First Parish will need to engage in discussions regarding the pursuit of additional long-term income sources, increasing the dollar amount of the average contributions, and increasing the number of households pledging. More to come in the upcoming year.

Upon motion duly made Jane Barnes and seconded, it was unanimously 94% (65) in favor, 1% (1) opposed, and 4% (3) abstained

VOTED: To raise money for all parochial purposes, including the proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2022 as noted above.

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

There was no other business before the meeting, a motion was made to adjourn and to dissolve the Annual Meeting The motion was seconded and approved with a unanimous vote, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurel Doggett, Clerk