

First Parish in Concord Standing Committee

Meeting June 8, 2021

Fifi Ball	Manager of Operations	Y
Jane Barnes	Treasurer	Y
Jeff Brainard	Standing Committee Member	Y
Howard Dana	Senior Minister	Y
Laurel Doggett	Clerk	Y
Jim Hawks	Standing Committee Member	Y
C.C. King	Standing Committee Member	Y
Peter Nobile	Chair	Y
Jim Reynolds	Standing Committee Member	N
Liz Rust	Vice Chair	Y
Susan See	Standing Committee Member	Y
Kate Svrcek	Standing Committee Member	Y
Jade Sylvan	Ministerial Intern	Y
Virginia Taylor	Standing Committee Member	Y
Tom Wilson	Wright Tavern Futures Task Force	Y
Liz Weber	Minister of Pastoral Care	Y
Jan Power	Laying the Groundwork, a COIC Task Force	Y

THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM

Peter lit the chalice, and Howard opened the meeting with a poem, *Mighty Ponds*, by Major Jackson.

Approval of Minutes

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to accept the April and May 2021 Standing Committee (SC) meeting minutes, and to incorporate them into the permanent record.

Minister's Report

Howard noted that the Worship Sharing Circle would continue over the summer. Staffing the virtual zoom coffee hour during the summer would be at the discretion of the Standing Committee. CC King volunteered to assign SC members to host the virtual zoom coffee hours through the summer.

There was some discussion around Beloved Conversations, and many of the Standing Committee members have taken the course.

The pledge campaign is going well with \$1,068,000 in current pledges. Howard feels fairly confident that we will meet the campaign goal of \$1,100,000. The challenge remains that the Church asks fewer households for more money due to attrition of pledge units.

C.C. relayed that some long-term members of the congregation felt uninspired and unsupported by the services and if there was a way to follow up with them. Howard invited C.C. to share names and content issues directly with him for further discussion. It was suggested that the Worship Sharing Circle is another vehicle where members can share feedback and thoughts about the sermon and service.

Director of Operations' Report

Monthly Budget

Fifi noted that the 6150 Fuel Oil line is over budget by \$3,200 due to rising fuel costs and challenges in estimating expenses. It is unlikely that there will be another oil delivery in the month of June. Howard and the Standing Committee are required to approve this additional expense since it exceeds the \$2,000 limit.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, Howard and the Standing Committee unanimously

VOTED: to approve a \$3,200 oil overrun

The recent high winds and rain created a leak in the parlor requiring urgent repair of the roof. Unfortunately, the water damaged the portrait of Reverend Dana Greeley, which has since been repaired and cleaned by an expert art conservator.

The estimate to repair the roof with copper sheeting and flashing is about \$10,000, creating an additional overrun to the 6235 Facilities Repair budget line. (Note that there is already an overrun of \$27,000 for the initial roof project.)

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve \$10,000 toward the repair of the church roof.

FY22 Budget V3

Fifi reviewed the FY22 Budget Version 3, which is \$55,500 in the negative to be covered by available cash. The proposed budget does not include any cost of living increases for staff. A 1% increase in staff raises would cost \$10,000, and a 2% raise would add roughly \$20,000 to the budget. With the pledge campaign on track, the SC decided to restore staff raises into the budget.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to increase staff wages by 2%.

Subcommittee and Task Force Updates

- **Ministerial Support Subcommittee** – MSC is finalizing the evaluation and feedback from the SC with the goal of having a conversation with Howard prior to the Annual Meeting on 6/20.
- **SC Leadership Succession for SC Chair** – A report was submitted to recommend Liz Rust as SC Chair.

Jeff Brainard reviewed this year's process and mentioned that it diverged from prior years. Specifically, the Working Group (consisting of the five outgoing SC members- Jeff, Peter, Kate,

Jane, and Laurel) lacked the opportunity to speak individually with SC members. The timeline was very tight, and it all had to be completed virtually. It was suggested to begin the SC Chair selection process in January and make a recommendation in March. It was also advised to have the discussion of the SC Chair nominees in an Executive Session to allow for deliberation, especially if there are multiple candidates.

While Liz Rust filled the Vice-Chair position this past year, the Working Group decided not to make a recommendation on continuing or eliminating the Vice Chair role. This would be up to the Chair and future SC members to evaluate the merits and value of this role.

Following typical protocol, Liz was escorted to a virtual waiting room while the SC had a discussion and voted.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to nominate Liz Rust as the incoming Standing Committee Chair.

- **SC Goal Updates** – Governance task force will begin work over the summer, and it is expected that this will be a multi-year process.
- **Laying the Groundwork** (LtG)– Jan Power shared a comprehensive report documenting the discovery phase of First Parish’s attitude toward, and possibly laying the groundwork in, accepting a First Parish Commission on Institutional Change (FPCOIC).

The LtG met with 14 committees and groups representing at least 75 members of the congregation. There is some perception among members of our congregation that we cannot do inclusion work because we have a relatively small number of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) people in our midst.

Jan strongly encouraged SC members to attend June 13 worship service to glean attitudes and reactions from the congregation about becoming a welcoming community.

The report also mentioned that further education around reasons for having an FPCOIC might be needed. The primary recommendation is that the Standing Committee form the COIC and have the commission seated by the end of September 2020, if possible.

Other Business

- **Wright Tavern Legacy Trust 501(c)(3)**. Tom Wilson presented background and a status update on the future of the Wright Tavern, which has been closed to the public for 20+ years. A task force convened in early January 2019 to study and recommend the future use of the Wright Tavern building. Currently, it operates as commercial real estate and generates \$30,000 as part of the contributions toward the funding of the Church.

The task force conducted conversations with numerous stakeholders and 22 local members of the community. There was enormous enthusiasm to turn the Wright Tavern, a major historical landmark, into a center for the exploration and the renewal of democracy in America. This mission underscores the historical role the building played in seeding early discussions of independent representative government (aka democracy).

The Trustees of Parish Donations currently oversee Wright Tavern. This arrangement presents

fundraising challenges due to the affiliation with First Parish, a religious entity. Consequently, to effectively execute on the future vision and mission of Wright Tavern, Tom is requesting support from the Standing Committee to create a separate entity, 501(c)(3), in order to establish a permanent and separate operating structure. First Parish would continue own the Wright Tavern. The establishment of the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust 501(c)(3) would allow for independent fundraising and a future governance structure.

Additionally, Tom noted that the founding document calls for the Standing Committee to approve the membership of the Board of Trustees, affirming clear oversight of the Trust by First Parish. The founding document names First Parish, but does not specifically name the Standing Committee for Trustee oversight. Do our bylaws resolve this query or is further clarification required?

There was strong concern expressed that the current founding members selected to be on the Board of Trustees were all white, and it would be a missed opportunity to not include a Black, Indigenous or Person of Color. Tom agreed and was open to receiving recommendations as soon as possible.

Another question was raised regarding the continuation of ongoing revenue contributions to First Parish. Tom noted that the expectation is for Wright Tavern to continue to provide First Parish with rental income. It was mentioned that Trust is in start-up phase, once fundraising and expenses begin, that Fifi will initially oversee the bookkeeping for the Trust.

With possible modifications to the founding document and a fast-approaching Town of Concord meeting, it seems reasonable at this time for the SC to endorse the concept of the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, it was unanimously

VOTED: to endorse the principle intent of the Wright Tavern Legacy Trust knowing that there are pending items to be addressed in the founding document.

- **Re-Opening First Parish** - Rev. Liz Weber presented an extensive list of guidelines and benchmarks used to guide the FP leadership team with a framework to use to reopen the Church. The decision-making process is grounded in science, and based on our values, and staff and technological capacity. An e-mail outlining all of these guidelines and considerations will be sent on June 10.
- **CGA Update** - Liz Rust noted that there were 11 delegates and that there was space for 2 more.
- **Letter in Support League of Women Voters' to the Town of Concord.** Peter wrote a draft in support of the proposal and will send a final version to the Town of Concord Board of Selectman.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

There was a brief Executive Session which ended 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Laurel Doggett, Clerk