

**All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church**  
**Special Congregational Meeting Minutes**  
**September 29, 2024**

**Members Present:** Eleanor Allen, Warren Allen, Alabama Dane, Erica Gardner, Karen Hall, Joanne Harter, Sylvia Heap, Janine LaClair, Eric Lance, Mimi Litsche, Harriet McMillan, Frances Mercer, Sarah O'Connell, Netty Palladino, Kelly Sackheim, Robert South, Patricia Sutherland

**Call to Order**

In the presence of a quorum (**16 is the quorum**; 17 active voting members were present at the start of the meeting), President Robert South called the meeting to order at 11:36 a.m. No one objected to the Order of Business.

**Officer's Reports**

**President**

Robert recalled that at the Annual Congregational Meeting in June, the Board of Trustees had been charged with developing at least three objectives for the current fiscal year, which were to be presented at a congregational meeting in September. At the Board's retreat in August, three goals were established. Robert listed them, as follows:

- 1) Stabilize the building by addressing the current issues and what is needed for the future by hiring an inspector who will advise us on the first steps to take,
- 2) Search for a halftime minister with a revised offer of \$36,000 plus social security taxes, plus up to \$ 5,000 for moving expenses,
- 3) Commit to community outreach, including social action at the direction of the congregation.

With regard to the first goal, Robert reported that the board has accepted a contract with Bernier Carr Associates for an engineering study of the church building's exterior, at a cost of \$ 5,500. With the second goal, the revised offer for a halftime minister has already been updated on the UUA website. Regarding the third goal, the congregational discussion during our service last week suggests that our social action plan should address the problem of homelessness.

**Treasurer's Report**

Eleanor reported on the financial feasibility of the Board's goals. She said that for a small congregation such as ours, we are in a good position financially, thanks to the Owens Endowment. It was left to the church many years ago, and is currently worth a little over \$500,000; while the principal amount cannot be touched, the interest has been used each year to supplement members' pledges and meet our budget. Our treasury also includes some flood insurance money that was leftover after renovation costs were covered. However, Eleanor opined that a small congregation of our size cannot support a full-time minister; therefore, we will continue to pursue obtaining a halftime minister by

increasing the salary and offering benefits. For any major work done on the building, Eleanor said, we may need to raise money through a capital campaign.

### **Orders of the Day**

**Kelly moved to accept the Board's report; Eleanor seconded.** A discussion ensued with remarks by Frances, who said she had expected a detailed, written report that included a rationale for why those particular three goals were given the highest priority. Kelly noted that each of the three goals was the focus of three of the four Sunday services in September. Eleanor said that the motion at the annual June meeting charging the Board with the given task did not specify a written report and the three goals grew out of issues heard most often from members of the congregation. Frances expressed concern that the follow-through of these three goals must be vigorous, and that the congregation should be updated regularly, especially regarding the search for a minister. Harriet expressed concern about the possibility of an exorbitant cost to maintain the church building. **The motion to accept the Board's report carried.**

### **New Business**

Robert presented an Amendment to Article 5, Section 2 of our Bylaws, regarding notification of congregational meetings. As read aloud by Karen, the proposed amended text provides for the insertion of an added sentence following the first sentence of Section 2. If approved, the second sentence will read: "Members may choose to opt into email notifications instead of paper mail." As Eleanor explained, New York State now allows notices of such meetings to be done electronically. The amended Article adds a provision that enables members to opt into receiving their notice of congregational meetings electronically. Currently the bylaw calls for this to be done by postal mail only. In response to Joanne's question regarding the means of electronic communication, Robert responded that his intent is to use email, as specified in the amended text. Joanne suggested adding to the Section 2 text to clarify that congregants are responsible for keeping the church secretary informed of any email changes. However, it was noted that to do so would require another congregational meeting, with two weeks' prior notification. After more discussion and clarification, **Kelly moved to approve the bylaw amendment as written. Pat seconded; motion carried.**

### **Conclusion**

**Kelly moved to adjourn the meeting, Joanne seconded. Motion carried.** The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Hall

Drafted 10/12/24

