

SEJC MEETING MINUTES - January 21, 2024

Minutes approved from October 1, 2023. Attendance quorum met.

In attendance: Rupert Ayton, Kara Black, Murray Bennett, Mike Betz, Vickie Brodene, Beth Brownfield, Deb Cruz, David Curley, Natalie Johnson, Todd Jones, Judy Kasper, Claire Lending, Carl Nyblade, Grace Nyblade, Connie Ohana, Betty Scott, Stephanie Sarver, Ann Stevenson, Susan Thurn (Quorum for SEJC meetings is 8 members) Guest speaker: Christene DeLee

Next SEJC meeting dates: **April 7, 2024; October 6, 2024; January 27, 2025**

Program Meeting dates yet to be determined at next meeting if we will continue.

Guest Speaker from NW Youth Services: Christine DeLee (she/they) Care Coordinator at NW Youth Services shared the new housing program "Whatcom Host Homes". Local families are being asked to host 18-24 year old LGBTQ youth in their homes providing transition living in a more natural environment, a place to heal and recover while awaiting permanent housing. They currently have no funding, but expect to be able to provide host homes with a small stipend.

Todd reviewed the committee structure:

- Voting members are BUF members who have attended two of the last three meetings.
- The quorum is 8 voting members.
- SEJC meets three times a year, meeting dates are set one year in advance.
- Action teams meet as needed throughout the year
- Committee funding sources are Fair Trade coffee sales, Invested Domini funds, donations and fund raising.
- The SEJC executive committee may spend up to \$200 on requests that happen between meetings.
- Executive committee: Chair Todd (acting), Vice Chair-open (see below), Finance-Kara, Secretary-Ann (acting), Nominating Chair-Open, Communications Chair-Mike

Business Items:

*Grace Nyblade was elected to the Vice-Chair position. The Nominating Chair position is still open. SEJC is looking for a permanent Chair and Secretary.

*The SEJC discussed at length whether to continue to have program meetings. A motion was made by Ann: SEJC meets three times a year for our regular meeting with a portion allocated for program reports. The motion was not seconded so the decision/discussion is tabled for the next meeting. Many suggestions were given. Several people like the additional time for teams to share their work with the community. There was sharing that the SEJC functioning is confusing and has too many parts. Todd provided some history about the SEJC. More discussion included "Find Your Place" or tabling at social hour in the future and a look at the SEJC communication with the congregation. Kara suggested a strategy team to get the word out about SEJC. Judy Kasper with BUF Hospitality suggested informing new members about the SEJC and team opportunities.

*Ann Stevenson informed SEJC that the Family Promise Team is no longer a BUF team, since the national affiliation and program at Interfaith Coalition has been terminated. SEJC voted to send the remaining Family Promise funds of \$155.25 in SEJC accounts to the Interfaith Coalition.

***Finance Report** from Kara Black: Kara was able to generate a finance report rough draft with help from our BUF Treasurer, John Steward. (see Finance report)
Kara asked teams to check for any discrepancies and get back to her by January 28, 2024. Susan Thurn is looking into one discrepancy for Fair Trade of \$105. The Domini Funds: a) We have agreed to use a minimum of 5% of the Domini Fund each year (5% is not an allowed maximum). B) in the 22-23 fiscal year, we used far more than the 5% amount. The Executive Team has decided to let the discrepancies go from the fiscal year 22-23 in multiple funds.

ACTION TEAM/COMMUNITY BEYOND BUF/CHARTER REVIEW

***Black Lives Matter** – David Curley shared “Racial Justice in UU Congregations”, a chart to help groups evaluate their progress towards an Anti-Racist Congregation. The chart has 3 levels of awareness: Status Quo, Multiculturally aware and Anti-Racist Congregations. BLM feels that we are in the middle group of multiculturally aware and moving towards the anti-racist category. BLM is working to expand the level of involvement at BUF. They presently have 10-12 people attending the business meetings. BLM was pleased to host the “Bellingham Black History Month Celebration 2024” event where over 147 people attended, mostly community members. They would like to invite BUF members to join the efforts by 1) coordinating a Beloved Community Minute, 2) Oppression is always intersectional. Gender/race; race/class., etc. We must continue to build understandings that show how these issues are connected.

***Interweave** – Grace shared that the team has begun the process of Recertification to be a Welcoming Congregation for LGBTQ. (Grace and Natalie Johnson are cochairing the team) It was last certified 5 years ago and nothing has been accomplished to maintain the designation. Grace shared the information on the five steps for recertification, along with a proposed calendar for Welcoming Church Days of Observance. She also shared 3 specific steps for BUF: 1. The pronoun project, 2. Supporting people who are targeted, 3. Making our BUF community a safe space. Grace would like BUF to have a louder voice in the community. There are now 20 people involved with Interweave. Some barriers at BUF were experienced including pushback on the pronouns. They meet the 1st Monday every month. Interweave is promoting adding Welcoming Holidays to the BUF calendar, to be implemented by September of 2024.

Refugee Action Team – Ann shared that the new revised charter. The team continues to support the two Syrian family with a steady group of volunteers. And the team plans future educational events and possible other refugee support activities. (see charter)

***Native American Connections** – Beth B. reminded people to do electronic transfers for special collections every month. (likely tripling our collections). Beth shared these positive activities:

- 2007 Canoe journey, the Lummi Nation was overwhelmed with Community Support.
- BUF member support for the new sheriff will promote change in Whatcom County.

- Regional Peace Team
- Global Pow Wow on June 24th in New York City
- Peace on Earth Study group with the Restorative Justice (Mel & Rose Hoover)
- Landing of eagles facilitated by Deb Cruz
- The canoes will be coming in during Ski to Sea this year.
- NAC continues to work with many groups *East Shore, Whidbey Island, Eastern WA
- Treaty Days: 6 hours of film, 1600 children in the Mt. Baker Theatre
- Lummi drummers were at the schools to open up Treaty Day
- Free Spencer Miller effort - Judicial Discretion bill was drafted by 2 Native American members.

***Humanitas** - Connie Ohana shared that their guest participation has fallen off in the last couple of weeks. They continue to give gas cards and support people with their electric bills. (generally a limit of \$50) They tried to help an Arabic guest get a flight to New York City, arranging for a plane ticket, but then were unable to locate the guest. Connie expressed her love for Humanitas and its work. Their accounts are separate from SEJC, reporting a balance of \$5,000.

***Immigrant Rights** - Mike shared that the city council is trying to suspend the Immigration Advisory Board. He asked SEJC members to go to the city council to find out what is happening and encourage councilors to follow through with their commitment to support the Immigration Advisory Board.

Last item finalized was an effort to create a Strategies Team for marketing SEJC. This will be planned at the next April SEJC meeting.

Meeting adjourned.