

Minutes
BUF Board of Trustees Meeting (via Zoom)
November 26, 2024

Attendees: Claire Lending (Secretary), Beth Nyblade, Jim Reimer, Stephanie Sarver (Vice President), Lin Skavdahl (President), John Stewart (Treasurer), Gayle Tilles, Paul Beckel (Ex-Officio)

Non-board members: Lee Seaman,

Minutes by Claire Lending, Secretary.

Chalice lighting 4:00 pm; Lin

Check In

Agenda Review/Changes:

Beth would like to add to the agenda the Emergency Resolution and John would like to discuss Financials for five minutes.

1. Stewardship report presented by Lee Seaman

Lee presented the Stewardship Report and gave ideas for stewardship.

Consent Agenda:

- Approval of minutes of the 10/24/24 Board meeting minutes
- Fundraising report
- Growth and Learning Reports
- Auction report

John moved and Gayle seconded that the items on the Consent Agenda be accepted. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Paddle call Committee formation presented by Stephanie

Discussion about forming Paddle Call committee; we will follow up in January.

3. Minister report presented by Paul

- Board might need a policy on what is considered “disruptive behavior”. UUA has a good policy that can be adapted for BUF.
- Would be helpful to have pre-authorized money allocated from reserves for building improvement. Will come back with a proposal on kitchen sink. (If fits in operating budget could use that money; however, sometimes operations would like to get funds from reserve.) Paul will bring it back in December meeting.

4. Safety and security report presented by Paul

5. Operations team report presented by Paul

Discussion of the term limits of leaders which are specified in BUF Board policies; Deb is past term. Recruitment has been difficult. Next year Jim will not be on board so we will need a new Board liaison. The board may need to rethink structure of committees and operations.

Paul will send written report that will be put in the Minutes.

6. Minister Recruitment Update presented by Lin

Lin, Henry Ohana, and Claire are on the team to recruit an Interim Minister. We are meeting next week. We will discuss ongoing conversation with community in BUF. Team will report each month. (This is a separate committee than that of recruitment of a settled minister; that process will begin in January 2026.)

7. Resolution presented by Beth

Beth moved and Claire seconded the attached resolution. After discussion about whether this was an issue that the Board needed to deal with at the time, John moved to table the discussion and Claire seconded. There were no objections to tabling the discussion.

8. Financial report presented John

We are having ongoing issues with the accounting function, balancing our books and completing financial statements. See attached minutes from the Financial Oversight Committee. The Financial Oversight Committee will propose 4-5 hours a month for an outside CPA. John will be back in December with a proposal.

Next Meeting Date: Tuesday December 17, 2024 at 4pm.

Meeting adjourned at 5:37

Summary of Action Items:

1. Approval of October minutes

Attachments:

- Board 10/24/24 meeting minutes
- Fundraising report
- Growth and Learning reports
- Auction report
- Proposed Resolution
- Minutes from the Financial Oversight Committee.

Stewardship: Report to the BUF Board 2024-11-26 from Lee Seaman

We are already on our way to a strong culture of generosity at BUF. Our next steps to sustaining and expanding that culture require us to more clearly communicate how awesome BUF is, and to visibly appreciate the people who make this awesomeness happen.

At present, Stewardship is planning two ways to improve these communications.

- "Cheers to BUF and BUFsters": Individuals will share briefly about what BUF means to them, or to express appreciation for one of our unsung heroes (volunteers not usually noticed). These will appear as frequently as possible (year round) on Sundays and in the Midweek Update. Paul is putting together a team of three people who will recruit members and friends to speak/write.
- Making Canvassing Even More Fun: We're working on ways to encourage canvassers, starting with leveraging the information we have in the BUF database to save canvassers time and headaches. This will be an ongoing project; we hope to get it started in 2025. Organized by Lee S and Stephanie Raynes, with amazing database support from John Jurceka.

We also plan to collaborate with the BCFC Committee on "Funds and Fun": Two community-building events will be offered on Wednesday December 11 at 4-5 PM and Saturday January 11 at 4-5 PM. We envision a limit of about 10 people each time, for those who are interested in learning about how BUF keeps the lights on. Participants will get to know each other, ask questions, learn more about how we finance our many activities at BUF, and volunteer if they are interested. Wine, cheese, crackers, and soft drinks in the Library. Childcare will be available on request for the Wednesday meeting and will be scheduled for the Saturday meeting. Organized by Drew, Lin, and Lee S. Drew will provide more details in a detailed report to the Board.

Happy fall!



Growth and Learning Report November 2024

Children's RE: Lis Epperson

As of September 15, 2024, we have had 42 different children attend Sunday School at least once. They are between the ages of 3 and 12. Most Sundays we average between 6 and 10 children in the Soul Matters program (our curriculum for children ages 5-10) and ages 1-3 in the Pre-K Playroom. We have an incredible team of reliable staff and volunteers, including two adults besides myself (Cory, and now Lucy who just turned 18) mostly supporting children in Soul Matters, and a rotating team of warm, reliable adults in the Pre-K room. Starting in December, John Jurceka will be joining the team two to three times a month as a volunteer as we are splitting Soul Matters into a younger and older group so we can deliver better age-appropriate programming. The Soul Matters curriculum focuses on different UU values and how they look in practice as children are navigating the world.

Youth Group is watching movies and discussing UU values in the Popcorn Theology curriculum. Our Youth Group is made of teens ages 13-16, almost all of them from last year, with 4-6 attending most sessions. I would like to see this group grow. We have three awesome adult volunteers running the group.

OWL is a go, and could use some help! I have had many inquiries, and I think it is very important that we make this happen in the Spring. I am working on it.

Adult RE : Natalie Johnson

The Adult RE team offered three courses this fall:

1. *Newcomer Pathways to BUF*: one session for new members or visitors who wish to learn more about the UU tradition and BUF.
2. *UU 101 - Understanding UU Beliefs*: four sessions exploring UU values and history, and helping participants answer that difficult question, "So what do Unitarian Universalists believe?"
3. *Revisiting History*: one session exploring the nature of history and how a revisiting of popular concepts is called for.

Upcoming classes for the winter and spring include:

1. *Grief*: one session discussion-format workshop intended for those who have lost a loved one.

2. *Before the Scramble – A Scottish Missionary’s Story*: four sessions that trace a nineteenth-century, orthodox Protestant missionary’s experience, in contrast to Unitarian and Universalist missionary efforts.
3. *Our Encounters with Aging – Hindsight, Insight, Humor and Hope*: four sessions that focus on such issues as tasks of aging, dealing with loss and loneliness, and how to embrace the gifts of aging.
4. *UU Theology, Part 2*: five sessions that examine Unitarian and Universalist theology during the late nineteenth century to the present, demonstrating the evolution of our values and diverse beliefs.

Board Report

BUF Community Fundraising Committee

November 2024

Greetings BUF Board,

Please accept this report from our little committee. I know that Lee Seaman has submitted a report on Stewardship that includes some of our planning. I will try to it to duplicate her report.

Auction: Our fall auction was a success on many levels. The community building created by the event's dinner and ambiance was incredibly satisfying to the committee and to all who attended. The committee has yet to debrief the event - that is planned for early December. Our financial report is also provisional. As of 11/13, our net income with a few more expenses due to be subtracted was \$28,940. In addition the paddle call match was about \$7,700. We hope to finalize those numbers at our December debrief.

Grant Research- Dominique Coulet du Gard has been researching various grant opportunities and can share her findings at a future meeting. Our plan is to have regular check-ins from the committee.

Stewardship- You have a report from Lee who is a great member of the committee and gives and takes feedback exceptionally well.

Other Fundraising Activities - the committee is concerned about leadership for future events and is taking action to engage the wider community in conversations about how we raise funds and what members can do to engage in these activities. We are holding two Funds and Fun Happy Hours, Weds, December 4th and Saturday, January 11th. Both will take place from 4-5 pm. We hope to limit the sign ups to 10 people per session so we can dig into what we do, where we need help and share what others have experienced that have been fun and successful fundraising events. We will start announcing these next week. As Board members you are most welcome to sign up and show your interest and support for fundraising at BUF.

Respectfully submitted,

Drew Betz
BCFC Chair

**Financial Oversight Committee
In person and via Zoom (VZ)**

Minutes

November 25, 2024

Members attending:

John Stewart
Michelle Fox, Administrator
Sky Hedman, Assistant Treasurer
Lew Phinney
Rupert Ayton
Patricia Conover
Sue Sayegh (VZ)

Absent:

Frank McDonald

This meeting was conducted at 4:00 pm.

FOC meeting are on the second or third Monday/Tuesday of each month.

The next meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, December 10, 2024, 4:00pm**

Financial Statement Reviews

- **Review of draft October 2024 financial reports could not be completed due to issues with QuickBooks. Still “thousands of \$” out of balance**
 - a. Several attempts to delete old, uncleared reconciliation items resulted in unintended consequences. Michelle has been working for the last several days to rectify the situation with support from Rupert and Sue.
 - b. Rupert agreed to delve more deeply into the issues to assist in clearing the problems. The rest of the committee has offered support to enable Michelle to work as needed without interruption to complete the task.

Internal/External Financial Statement Reviews

- An internal review of financial statements for the fiscal year ending 6/30/2024, is underway, being coordinated by Sky. The review team consists of Haven Silver, John Jurceka, and Sharon McCarty.
- Limited internal reviews for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 have not been set in motion.
 - Plan that these limited reviews can commence upon completion of the 2023/2024 review.

- Once the internal reviews are completed, we will seek a source for an external review.

Structure of Accounting Function

- Prior to Sue's retirement as bookkeeper, the Bookkeeper was a separate part-time position from that of the Administrator. It was combined with the Administrator upon Sue's retirement.
 - Can this be reasonably continued?
- Discussion:
 - Is there time for the Administrator complete all accounting tasks with other responsibilities?
 - January, June and July are the months that are historically the busiest, not October/November.
 - Can Breeze and other interfaces assist with the issues?
 - Interfaces still need to be implemented.
 - To Michelle: what pushes you "over the cliff" and prevents you from completing the accounting role.
 - Reconcilements, complex transactions.
 - QBO has a lot of "junk" of our own making over the years which will always be out there.
 - Month-end and Year-end procedures QBO cause warnings to be displayed if there are subsequent attempts to change transactions from prior periods.
 - The most effective way to support Michelle's accounting work would be to engage an accountant with QBO experience who could oversee Michelle's work, be a checkpoint for complex processes, perform reconcilements and generate financial reports. This would probably require a very limited number of hours per month.
- Month-end procedures
 - Sue and Michelle revised the month-end checklist to include procedure revisions.
- John will review with Board and request approval to engage an accountant/QBO expert to assist in overseeing accounting for approx. 5 hours/month.

Budget Control

- How should budgets be controlled? Most expenses are presented for reimbursement when the funds have already been spent.
 - Areas responsible for managing budgets are not receiving budget/expenditure information.
 - Those responsible for managing budgets should be aware of what is available prior to authorizing an expenditure.
 - The RE budget was to be focused on Children's RE, with Adult RE bring self-funded by participants.

Resolution for the Board 11/26/2024

Resolution #1:

The Board of Trustees of Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship (BUF) affirms the following principles:

That individuals who are LGBTQIA are created equal to all. They are worthy members of our community and our country.

That individuals who are LGBTQIA deserve, and are entitled to, live their lives in peace and security, without facing violence or threats of violence.

That children who are LGBTQIA deserve, and are entitled to, live their lives in peace without violence or threats of violence. These children should know that people of goodwill will support their prosocial choices. They should know that people of goodwill will advocate for their safety and assist them to change the hearts and minds of individuals and society so these children may find freedom from fear and hate.

Further, BUF supports public advocacy for these principles and public debate about actions to be taken in support of these principles. These are the religious principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association and they are supported in the U.S. Constitution by the guarantee of freedom of speech and freedom to choose and practice our religion.