

First Congregational Church of Woodstock
MINUTES of GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
Wednesday Sept. 13, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. (via Google Meets)

In Attendance: Rev. Dr. Kevin Downer, Jim Nowak, Charles Bottieri, Suzanne Cimochoowski, Jennifer Duggan, Ginny Moylan, Bruce Staehle, Laura Boies (as clerk) and Bruce Lyman (guest)

Welcome and Opening Devotion

- Moderator, Jim Nowak, opened the meeting at 7:09 pm.
- Rev. Kevin shared Mark Nepo's reflection "The Thing in the Way"
 - *"How many thresholds that seem blocked.... only seem so from their initial viewing...?"*

Current Action Items –

Parsonage Sale

- The Moderator received a letter from Sam & Bruce Lyman proposing an approach for the sale of the parsonage. The Governing Board appreciated their concerns and incorporated the important principles articulated in their proposal into the principles we will use to guide the process and evaluate offers. Primarily these principles include being respectful and considerate of the Moylans, and remembering this is an opportunity for us as a church to live out our values to honor one another, act in love, practice justice and display fairness.
- The GB still needs to present a proposal to the congregation and answer the questions from our Second Hour meeting on Sept. 10th.
- Governing Board Objectives in the process of selling the parsonage:
 - The decision we make has to be best for our church and our ministry.
 - Be fair, just and legal (including fiduciary responsibilities).
 - Honor one another, act in love, practice justice and display fairness.
 - Use a process that is transparent to all, while respecting confidentiality.
 - Be respectful of all voices, remembering the parsonage is more than just a building.
- Summary of Report on the Home Inspection last week has been received (Charles B).
 - Septic system was pumped and inspected. Some adjustments need to be made to the septic system. We will get a quote for the improvements.
 - No termites or other destructive insects.
 - Knob & tube wiring in attic and some other wiring issues need to be addressed.
 - Firestop protection needs to be added in the garage area.
 - Meter box outside needs to be secured.
 - Need ground fault circuit interrupters.
 - Larry Salo can do the electrical.
 - We have \$9,000 set aside to assist with the sale of the parsonage, which will cover most of the repairs and updates except the new well. An amount of \$1,300 has already been spent for the home inspection and pumping the septic. The GB would need to approve funds for the well, which could then be repaid after the sale of the property.
 - [Suzanne and Charles](#) will get an estimate for digging a new well. GB will take a vote, via email, for approval of releasing funds.
- Recommendations from the realtor, Stephanie Gosselin
 - The realtor recommends that we take care of health and safety issues, in order to increase the asking price.

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- She recommends an asking price in the range of \$375,000.
- Typically a 45 to 60 day grace period is allowed for the tenants to vacate.
- Stephanie has said she will reduce her commission from 5% to 2.5% for any member of our congregation.
- GB's response to Sam and Bruce: We appreciate their thoughts and thank them for presenting them to the Governing Board.
- GB's response to the Second Hour questions:
 - *What is our overall objective?* 5 Objectives were defined by the GB tonight.
 - *Grants available?* No.
 - *Tenant consideration regarding time to find housing?* 45-60 days per the realtor.
 - *Realtor obligation/private sale?* Needs more discussion. Realtor offered a discounted fee to church members. There is a benefit to using a realtor in that they act somewhat as a mediator.
 - *Septic easement?* We will hire a lawyer for this.
 - *Do we need to drill the well before we sell?* Yes, we think it would be best.
 - *Water treatment system, if needed, where would it go?* Possibly in the boiler room.
 - *Are we doing radon testing?* The water gets tested quarterly.
 - *Tenant has indicated an interest in purchasing and has questions.* Ginny stated that her questions have been answered so far and the GB intends to keep communications open going forward.
 - *Budget impact?* Approximately a \$7,300 loss to the annual budget. This could be less if we don't need a water treatment system.
 - *Proceeds plan?* Invest the money and use the interest for the short term budget imbalance.
 - *Timetable?* Still needs to be established.
- Additional Considerations and Concerns:
 - Who will evaluate/accept offers on the property? What are the criteria for evaluating?
 - The best offer may not necessarily be the highest dollar amount.
 - Who else in the congregation wants to make an offer on the property? Who should they notify? How do we disseminate information to them?
 - Create an information packet?
 - Define "Duty of Care" and our "Fiduciary Obligation".
 - We need the congregation to approve the sale of the parsonage before we contract with a realtor.
 - Tentative date for Congregational meeting: Oct 22nd
 - Question (Vote) for the Congregation: Does the congregation approve of the Governing Board handling the sale of the parsonage.
 - A Parsonage Sale Communication Team (to prep for the Congregational meeting) will meet on Thur. Sept 21st. All GB members except Ginny and Rev. Kevin will be involved in evaluating offers on the property.

Plans for GB Dinner with Carol Steinbrecher

- Potluck on Wed. Oct. 18th @ 6pm at Cimochowski's (9 people)

Membership Status Review

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- Stewardship (Bob K, Ruth T, Kathy P, Kristen K and Rev. Kevin) identified a list of people who need to be contacted regarding whether they want to retain their membership. GB members were asked to review this list and contact Rev. Kevin with any feedback.

Bylaws Revisions (Bruce S)

- [All GB members](#) should review the current bylaws and send recommendations for changes to Bruce S. Areas that have already been identified are the parts referring to transitional changes, membership, and the deacons.
- Rev. Kevin will upload an editable copy of the bylaws to this month's meeting folder, which GB members may add comments to.

Getting Feedback From Congregation on the New Governing Model

- At Sunday services, a GB member will invite feedback during coffee hour.
 - Sept. 17th - Bruce S
 - Sept. 24th - Jim N
 - Oct. 1st - Brunch Church
 - Oct. 8th - GB 2nd Hour

Minister's Report

- See full Pastor's Report [2023.09.13 Ministry Update.pdf](#)

Property & Facilities Update (Charles)

- See Facilities Report [September 2023 Facilities Report \(1\).pdf](#)
- Paving is scheduled for the week of Sept. 18th. The catch basin is already in.
- Bruce S. is working on an issue with the router.
- The palladian window has come in. Charles is coordinating the installation.
- The solar panel company, Sun Power, has promised to send a replacement inverter, but so far has been fairly unresponsive. The installer, Mark Waldo, is trying to help resolve this issue.
- M&M did an energy audit on Aug. 17th. The engineering group is working on scope (energy emissions) and energy commitment.
- The kitchen dishwasher is broken. Tri State Kitchen Equipment will come to evaluate it for repairs. A new dishwasher could cost \$12,000. Community Kitchen has offered to help with costs.
- The Labyrinth is still a safety issue and a liability.
 - The Boy Scouts have not responded to our proposal for an Eagle Scout project.
 - Charles proposed that we remove the stones before winter and make plans in the future for a replacement. The Governing Board agrees.
 - Find out if the Boy Scouts or Woodstock Academy students would like to help with the removal. [Ginny](#) will contact the social worker at the Academy.
 - Additional safety issue: the Boy Scouts repeatedly move a table in front of the fire extinguisher because the table is in front of their closet. As a result, Community Kitchen removed that table.
 - Meeting re: the grease trap went well.

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Financial Business update (Suzanne)

- See Financial Statement [FCCW Financial REports August 2023.pdf](#)
 - \$10k better than budget. \$2k is due to income being better than budget; \$8k is due to expenses being lower than budget. Some of this may even out in time.
 - Preservation CT grant writing is on hold for the windows.
 - As some of our CDs mature we are investing in Schwab Money Market accounts, at 5% where the funds are available immediately when needed. Currently we have 13% of our Operating accounts and 7% of our Restricted accounts in money market accounts.
- The Treasurer's team has now become our new Finance Team consisting of the Treasurer (Tom D), Assistant Treasurer (Bill M), Bookkeeper (Toby B), Financial Business Leader (Suzanne C), and the Property and Facilities Leader (Charles B).
 - The team requests help from the GB with planning for the future.
 - Rev. Kevin suggests planning an in-depth meeting to look more deeply into financial planning.

Looking Ahead

- Budget preparations: the individual ministries are working on their budgets and Toby is working on the church's overall budget draft.
- Deacons will join us at a future meeting to discuss their role going forward.
- Continue work on the Parsonage process.

New Action Items

- [Suzanne and Charles](#) will get an estimate for digging a new well
- The [Parsonage Sale Communication Team](#) will meet on Thur. Sept 21st. to prep for the Congregational meeting.
- [All GB members](#) should review the current bylaws.

Closing Prayer offered by Rev. Kevin.

Meeting adjourned at 9:18 pm