**Williamsburg Unitarian Universalist Special Congregational Meeting**

**Minutes**

**Sunday, October 20, 2013**

The meeting was called to order at 12:32 by Lola Warren, WUU Board President.

In her opening remarks she emphasized that we come together to serve: greater Williamsburg, liberal religion, and the world. The WUU Board needs to assure that we are meeting our mission. Last Fall we established the Building Our Future committee, consisting of Les Solomon, Donna Stanford, David Neiman, Roger Guernsey, Linda Lane Hamilton, and Kurt Williamson, all of whom attended the meeting and reported on differing sections of the BOF Visioning Circle Summary Findings.

 Linda Lane Hamilton gave an introduction and noted that over 175 people participated in the Visioning Circles, begun in July and extending into September. All of the comments were transcribed and displayed on the walls in the sanctuary for members of the congregation to review and consider. She noted, as the possibility of expansion of our facilities is considered by the congregation, that our original building was considered a first step, and various ideas for expansion have emerged in several reports over the intervening years. Individual BOF members then gave summaries of 5 major themes in the Summary Findings from the Visioning Circles. I will only offer highlights, as the full report was distributed.

 David Neiman gave a summary regarding comments focused on the **Sanctuary**. Many positive reactions were received regarding the sanctuary. The design was praised, and people reported liking the simplicity, openness, and the large windows with visual access to the natural environment. He noted that members did not want a change of design or character, but some noted that although acoustics were quite good for music and the choir, there were some problems noted with the acoustics for speakers. Specifically, the sanctuary capacity when full is 220. Our average attendance is 154. Full is typically considered 80% of capacity, or 176. Clearly, if the congregation grows more space will soon be required for the sanctuary.

 Roger Guernsey gave a summary focused on the **narthex**. Comments received prominently included that the present narthex is crowded, noisy, can be difficult to make one’s way through, and there is no place for people to sit. The gist of recommendations was that it should be altered and enlarged. There is the possibility that it could become a commons.

 Kurt Williamson summarized points raised about **LFD needs**. Currently Fahs houses elementary school children, and Parker is the site for YRUU. There is no dedicated space for adult LFD. A majority suggest that change is needed. A playground located away from the busy street would be preferred. There were also concerns about isolation of the two houses from the main building, and the inconvenience of the distance from the sanctuary for the children. Additional space is also a concern. The restructuring of Fahs and Parker does not appear to be an adequate response to the expressed concerns.

 Linda Lane Hamilton then summarized concerns expressed regarding **multi-functional space**. Visioning Circles revealed interest in having a Fellowship Hall with a commercial kitchen in which we could cook rather than merely warm prepared food. Types of activities that might use such space include WALT, covenant groups, community meetings. Basically, with additional multi-functional space 2 or more things could occur simultaneously and allow increased flexibility in scheduling. Additional possibilities include a music and instrument storage room, a choir practice facility, a small chapel, and office and media space for the minister and administrators.

 Donna Stanford reported on suggestions and requests for **support spaces**. These included additional outdoor spaces, a commercial kitchen (again), an audio-visual control center that is separate from storage space (where it is now located) and also with visual access to the sanctuary to easily monitor ongoing needs during a service. New storage space and library expansion were also requested. Our programs and outreach have grown, making flexible space quite valuable. Importantly, all expansion plans should include and feature sustainable practices and sound energy conservation practices consistent with our status as a Green Congregation.

 Les Solomon, BOF Chair, concluded the presentation by noting that we are out of space. If we endorse going forward with an exploration phase it will consist of 2 parts: (1) Engage an architect to work with various groups to further identify space needs, and (2) initiate a financial feasibility study with a UU consultant, who would consult with 15 to 20 % of the congregation in assessing our financial potential for monies needed for an expansion. These two steps will require approximately $30,000. The congregation will be voting on whether the exploration phase is to be implemented on November 17th.

 Lola thanked the BOF for their summaries and then opened the floor for comment and discussion.

Al McKenney: Al complimented the BOF for the quality of the report and raised 2 concerns: use of the exterior, and a separate space for a ministerial study. Donna noted that there are concerns about outdoor space in the Summary, and Les confirmed that administrative space is needed, in that currently the minister has no means to conduct private meetings with congregation members.

Lee Hougan raised thye question that the Summary mostly focused on the present. What do we want to become?

Joe Fisler asked whether when we have paid off our mortgages, those currently obligated funds could be transferred to the expansion process? (UUA mortgage will be paid off at the end of next year, and our second mortgage in spring of the following year). Allen noted that there is not enough in the current payments to cover a new expansion project, however it could be of help.

Sue Walkley indicated that she would hope to see multiple designs. Roger noted that we could not afford an architectural competition, but the process would involve seeing a lot of their work to get ideas of possibilities.

Bob Tschannen-Moran.. is a former pastor who has led an expansion campaign and inquired about whether Jennifer is committed to see the expansion through? Les noted that from what he understands she would want to continue through this project, but has not specifically asked her.

David Wilcox: Part of the feasibility study would involve asking, not just us, but Jennifer as well.

David Banks: Fund raising should include not just building costs but maintenance and operation as well. Lola and Roger noted that would be included and that the architectural study would be an iterative process with broad ongoing input.

David Warren asked if any Endowment Funds would be available for expansion. Joe Fisler noted that EF Funds are not to be spent. However, earnings can be spent by the Board with the acceptance of the Endowment Committee.

Lee Hougen thinks tapping the Endowment Fund would be misguided. It is an asset, and appears as an asset if we wish to apply for a mortgage.

Roy Snyder:  Offered his thanks to BOF, and thought we must do next steps without tapping operating funds.  He also asked, “Where does $30,000 number come from?”  Les responded:  Feasibility from Bill Clontz contract, $25,000 for architect from Roger Guernsey.

Susan Fournier:  Charge our consultant to determine if we have dollars to go forward.

Joel Schiff:  Indicated that we should look at the direction of our membership-  will we be getting older, younger, more families, etc. as we plan for the future.

James Gerald:  If there are to be 2 services, would we also have to double up choir, dual LFD? twice as many teachers, support, etc.

Wayne Moyer:  asked, “How many here are  Chalice Lighters?”  3 times a year our commitment to this must be considered.

Linda Foster:  Can we afford this?  Will there be enough of us left to pay for this expansion.  We're getting older - those who contributed in 1995 won't be here forever to pay again.

Bob Tschannen -Moran:  Income could go down because of these presently inadequate facilities.  Not the other way around that we might have empty new facilities.

Paul Luchsinger:  Priorities?  Les- pointed to our report to answer that. Architect's options and costs will help to prioritize. Roger noted the highest number of comments pointed to LFD, Narthex, and meeting rooms as highest priorities.

Kit Fournier:  We raised so much more in '95 than we thought we could.

Dave Banks:  We should model by simulation what we can do with what we have now and also what we could do with expansion.

At this point, Lola thanked those who attended, announced the additional meeting for Monday evening for those who may not have been able to attend this one, and indicated that the Board would take all the comments into consideration. The meeting was adjourned at 1:45.

Minutes of the Special Congregational Meeting submitted by Larry Ventis, Board Secretary

Minutes approved by the Board, October 22, 2013