

# Church Council Minutes - Approved

August 15, 2023

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Present: Pastor Sal Sapienza, Mark Johnston, Stacy Honson, Jim Kern, Kelly Wright, Stan Greene, Mike VerMerris.

Excused: Mike Mok

Guests: Kathleen Mueller, Rev. Marchiene (Marty) Rienstra, Peter Mueller

1. *Welcome and Introduction* – Mark welcomed Kathleen Mueller and Rev. Marchiene (Marty) Rienstra, who have information to share about the Retreat House. Also welcomed was Pete Mueller, who is Co-Chair of the Campus Stewardship Drive.
2. *Opening Prayer*- Pastor Sal opened the meeting with prayer at 6:01 pm.
3. *July 2023 Meeting Minutes* – Mike V. distributed the final draft prior to the meeting.  
**Motion:** from Jim to approve. Stan second. Motion approved.  
**Action:** The minutes will be in the E-pistle and posted on the Friendship Hall bulletin board.
4. *Pastor's Report* – Pastor Sal distributed the August report prior to the meeting.  
Highlights:
  - a) Our church's Creation Justice Team is putting their focus on "Native Plants" and on August 1, invited John Cleese of Lake Effect Garden & Design to tour our church campus and suggest ideas for native plant landscaping for our grounds.
  - b) On July 31, Pastor Sal met with members of our new Retreat House Ministry Team, who will be submitting a proposal to the Church Council with their vision for our Retreat House Ministry moving forward.
  - c) The Afghan family we sponsored in the Spring Street house last year will be joining us on Sunday, August 27 in the Friendship Hall to give us an update on their lives and to give thanks to our church members who continue to walk with them.**Action:** The detailed report will be in the E-pistle and posted on the Friendship Hall bulletin board.
5. *Financial Report* – Stacy distributed August's financial reports prior to the meeting:  
Profit and Loss Comparison – July 2023; Balance Sheet as of July 31, 2023; Budgets vs. Actuals FY23 P&L.  
August Highlights:
  - a) July is pretty much on target compared to the budget. Income is a bit lower due to a budget of \$6644 income for campus improvements campaign which has not yet started.
  - b) Expenses are under budget and include a \$6000 grant to Christian Neighbors.
  - c) Net income actual is \$6270 compared to the budget of \$5742.

**Motion:** from Jim to approve the financial reports as presented. Pastor Sal second.  
Motion approved.

6. *Trustee Report* – Kelly distributed the report prior to the meeting.

Completed:

- a) Friendship Hall:
  - Installed a new sign on right side of entry door.
  - Entry vestibule
    - ✓ Repaired water damaged floor.
    - ✓ Replaced storm door with new exterior entry door and latch.
    - ✓ Replaced several pieces of damaged or improper fitting trim molding.
    - ✓ Installed new vinyl flooring.
    - ✓ Repaired exterior aluminum siding to lower left of door.
    - ✓ Repainting of interior walls.
- b) Spring Street:
  - Repaired west side soffit where birds had ingress to the eave.
  - The dishwasher stopped working due to a failed main circuit board. The unit is 16 years old and not worth repairing; it was decided to not replace at this time.
  - Lowered west side grade.
    - ✓ Removed 4-6” of soil.
    - ✓ Added landscape timbers along property line.
    - ✓ Installed rain gutter along roof fascia, including downspout and drain tile.
    - ✓ Seeded entire excavated area.
- c) Retreat House:
  - Covered the exposed wood fascia with aluminum, on the garage where the basketball backboard was mounted.
- d) Miscellaneous:
  - Numerous small items were addressed: hung art pieces, repaired light fixtures, etc.

Pending:

- a) Church:
  - Cleaning of basement space will be scheduled for later this season.
- b) Spring Street:
  - Trim tree limb overhanging and touching roof on back side of garage.
- c) Retreat House:
  - Water line lead inspection date will be determined by the city.
- d) All Properties:
  - Furnace and water heater preventive maintenance is scheduled for October 23.
  - Preventive maintenance for the air conditioners will be scheduled in Spring.

7. *Committee/Group Updates* – In an email prior to the meeting, Pastor Sal shared an “Agreement for a Landscape Plan” originating from the Creation Justice Team. Stan reported on his meetings with the Sound System Team:

Creation Justice Team – ‘Agreement for a Landscape Plan’:

- a) The Creation Justice Team entered into an agreement on August 4, 2023, with Lake Effect Garden & Design to initiate a campus wide landscape plan using native plants. The first step is to sign a contract with Lake Effect Garden & Design at a cost of \$2,000 (minimum). The Contract includes:
  - Initial Consultation and Site Immersion
  - Discovery Phase
  - Design Phase
  - Plan Acceptance and Estimation Phase (any revisions/estimates requiring above the allocated hours will be billed at the hourly rate of \$100/hour).
- b) Council thinks using native plants in the landscape is an interesting concept. Before signing a contract, they believe it is important to get other committees involved (ex: capital campaign and retreat house) to share their visions and to consult with the congregation to get their ideas. Education on the advantages of native plants would also be helpful, as they are commonly thought to resemble weeds.
- c) Currently the council is not able to move on this proposal, as Policy 2.6 - Policy on Project Expenditures requires ‘at least three bids for capital projects when the cost is expected to exceed \$1000’.

**Action:** Pastor Sal will relay council’s discussion to the Creation Justice Team. The council will discuss revising Policy 2.6 at the September 12, meeting.

Sound System – Sunday Worship:

- a) Stan met with the volunteer sound technicians to review issues they are having. He believes they have a good handle on the problems and are making progress to correct them.
  - They have compiled notes on the setting used during the service and will meet with the sound engineer before standardizing these settings.
  - They have asked the Sunday Readers and Singers to come in early for voice level and mic position sound checks.
  - The team would like to be responsible for turning the microphones on and off, to eliminate confusion.
  - Additional sound speakers in the sanctuary may be needed to aid with high/low limits of the sound board.
- b) After evaluating the sound board equipment, Stan believes it suits our needs and agrees additional speakers may be needed.
- c) Noticeable improvements have been made over the past weeks.

8. *Ongoing Business* – Prior to the meeting, Jim and Pete distributed stewardship drive information for review, which included: a timeline, and educational information for the congregation.

(Note: Jim and Pete asked to move the ‘ongoing business’ stewardship drive discussion to follow the ‘new business’ discussion of the Retreat House. In the meeting, section-8 was moved to follow section-9)

Campus Stewardship Drive:

- a) The timeline completely tracks the project and includes eighteen milestone dates that extend out to Mid-May of 2024.
- b) “Stewardship at Douglas UCC, 1882 to the Present and Beyond...” – this document includes Church history and project budget, which is planned to be mailed to the congregation prior to the September 24, membership meeting. The meeting will follow the content of this document.
- c) The four-page mailing was reviewed, and suggestions were made for streamlining the information.
- d) During next Sunday’s service, Pete will announce the kickoff of the drive and share how the Church has been important in his life. The information he plans to share was reviewed, and suggestions were made.
- d) There will be similar brief announcements made by other members of the congregation each Sunday leading up to the membership meeting on September 24.

**Action:** Jim and Pete will fine tune the presentation/ mailing and finalize hard numbers in the budget section for approval at the September 12, council meeting.

9. *New Business* – Prior to the meeting, Kathleen and Rev. Marty distributed “Douglas UCC Retreat House & Spiritual Center Re-Dedication Plans & Requests to Council”. During the meeting they handed out “Retreat House & Spiritual Center: September 2023 Spiritual ‘Small Group’ Offerings”.

Retreat House Requests:

- a) “Retreat House will be dedicated to prayer and meditation through two primary means: pastoral retreats and regular spiritual programming by our ministry team for DUCC congregation and community members.”
  - Spiritual programming will be offered during the first week of the month, with pastoral retreats scheduled during the remaining weeks.
  - Requesting the name be: “Retreat House & Spiritual Center, A Ministry of Douglas UCC” (RHSC).
    - ✓ *The council agrees with the requests.*
- b) “To recognize that RHSC is fully a house of prayer, we request that no regular congregational or community meetings be scheduled at RHSC”.
  - ✓ *The council agrees with the request and notes that this should not be a problem as the new administration building is now available for use.*
- c) “All funds noted as donations for ‘Retreat House’ or DUCC ‘Spiritual Center’ be kept for RHSC usage. The hope being that – at some point – RH&SH would request minimal church financial support for any improvements.”
  - ✓ *The council does not agree with this request due to the additional bookkeeping burden, and since this is a Ministry of DUCC, believes it should not be necessary.*
- d) “To clarify RHSC usage for all parties, we request the development of a separate website for RHSC to include a calendar. If this is not feasible, we would like to have a calendar included on the RHSC page, so that prospective guests can see availability.”

- ✓ *The council agrees including a calendar on the current RH webpage for showing availability is a good idea.*
- e) “The RHSC ministry team would like to expand spiritual programming to include the yard and grounds as space for prayer and meditation for all who come to the RHSC. Spiritual practices such as Qi Gong, outdoor yoga, meditation in nature, labyrinth walking, medicine wheel prayers, outside prayer group meetings, etc., are among the options we are considering. Therefore, we ask that DUCC Council include the input of the RHSC leadership team regarding any proposed plans for the exterior or grounds.”
  - ✓ *The council agrees it is important to get input from all committees and the congregation before moving forward with a campus landscape plan (also reference Section-7b, ‘Landscape Plan’, above.)*
- f) “To cover these updated plans, we submit a revised RHSC Policy (attached).”
  - ✓ *Due to Section-9c discussion above, please review the “Suggested Donation” section of the submitted policy for possible revision.*

**Action:** The RHSC team will review the RHSC Policy to determine if the “Suggested Donation” section requires revision before submitting for approval.

10. *Next Meeting Dates* – Council Meeting, September 12, at 6 pm

11. *Adjournment* - 8:20 pm.

**Motion:** from Pastor Sal to adjourn. Kelly second. Motion approved.