

February 7, 2021

## UUCS Special Congregational Meeting on Habitat and Hope Village

### **Chalice Lighting**

Reverend Richard Davis lit the chalice and provided opening remarks.

### **Quorum**

The Treasurer certified the quorum. The bylaws provide that a quorum is 25% of eligible members of the congregation. Eligibility is also established in the bylaws. There are 92 connections which includes two or more person households, so there are over 100 connections and a quorum is 52 members.

### **Opening Statement**

The Board Chair provided opening statements, welcomed attendees and called the meeting to order.

### **Practice Voting**

A practice vote was held to enable the congregation to practice online voting.

### **Summary of the Resolution**

The Chair provided a summary of the resolution. This resolution will authorize the Unitarian Universalist Church of Salem (UUCS) Board of Directors to enter into a land use agreement with Habitat and Hope Village (HHV) to construct a temporary housing facility for women at risk of homelessness on UUCS land.

The Chair described the resolution and the addendum and how UUCS and HHV arrived at the process. The Board has worked with HHV over the past three years on the proposal to build a facility on UUCS property. The Board has worked with a land use attorney to identify the issues related to this proposal. The resolution and addendum are the result of the meetings between the Board and HHV and the land use attorney.

### **Reading of the Resolution**

The Treasurer read the Resolution and the Addendum to the Resolution.

### **Motion to Adopt the Resolution**

Robin LaMonte moved and Lynn Cardiff seconded that “the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Salem adopt the resolution to authorize the Board of Directors to negotiate a land use agreement with the trustees of Habitat and Hope Village to construct a transitional housing facility on Unitarian Universalist land.”

## **Discussion Process**

The Chair provided information on how the discussion process will work. The congregation will use the raised hand feature of the webinar to indicate the desire to speak. The moderator will call on those with a raised hand. Speaking will be limited to two minutes and the Treasurer will monitor the speakers' time. Lynn Cardiff will be the parliamentarian for the discussion and will identify when the discussion or a proposed amendment is not relevant to the motion.

## **Discussion**

The maker of the motion, Robin LaMonte, deferred to HHV to make a presentation on the program. Paul Wilson discussed how program will operate. It will focus on women who are at risk, to keep those who otherwise might become homeless from this risk. This will free up community resources for people who are already homeless. This will benefit UUCS by enabling it to work with other faith based organizations to address the chronic homeless problem. HHV also believes that the house will be an asset to UUCS and could be used for other community issues.

John Davenport reported on the proposed design and construction of the facility.

There was discussion about the resolution.

- The Resolution proposes land use negotiations which are expected to resolve a number of concerns.
- This project reflects the values of UUCS and might also bring in new members.
- HHV has worthy goals and deserves consideration.
- There is concern that there have been no other explorations of the best use of the property and what social justice issues that UUCS should focus on.
- A list of other potential social justice issues was provided. Due diligence is needed to make an informed decision on the best way to proceed.

Susan Farris-Gosser moved to refer the resolution to a task force. This motion was seconded by Janet Stevens. "I move to refer the Resolution Regarding Habitat and Hope Village to the UUCS Board of Directors who will appoint a task force to study the 2.7 acre property's use options, particularly HHV's building site, evaluate the HHV Project including not limited to its construction, operation and management plan, architecture, funding, maintenance, cost to remodel if the project reverts, congruence with UUCS strategic Plan, etc., review the Resolution, particularly as it relates to the UUCS Strategic Plan and provide a progress report on its findings to the congregation at our 2021 annual meeting."

Janet Stevens seconded the motion. There was discussion in opposition to the motion:

- Phil Carver noted that over 10 years ago there was an investigation of alternative use of this property. There aren't other uses for this property, due to the cost of improvements.
- There is no reason to delay action on the Resolution.
- This appears to be a reasonable proposal for use of the property.

- Paul Manka discussed his involvement with the North Parking Lot in his role as chair of the Landscape Committee. It has been a nuisance in the past, with homeless camping and there should be effective use and development of the land.
- Sara Pickett identified shared concerns about the project, but the Resolution provides a mechanism to identify and resolve them. There was a person who was at risk of homelessness because of a therapy dog who would not be admitted in the apartment. There are people who are at risk and need help.
- Larry Nasset noted that other UUCS projects have been approved without the type of discernment suggested in the amendment.
- Joe Dabek, an HHV board member, spoke in opposition to the motion. HHV has worked in partnership with many social service organizations to identify a project that is do-able. This is a specialized and needed niche. It is an element of the homeless problem that other organizations are not addressing. It is within the capabilities of HHV to accomplish. There is a need to act on this immediately, because it will have long term impact on the women and families.
- Jessie Wilson spoke in opposition. The Board and HHV have discussed this for 3 years. The Resolution allows continued negotiations and there is no reason to delay.
- Paul Wilson, an HHV board member, spoke in opposition. There is no reason why the interaction with UUCS teams and homeless programs could not occur simultaneously with the negotiations.
- Patty Davenport, an HHV board member, spoke in opposition. There is no time limit on this motion. HHV needs time certainty to move ahead.
- Steve Rosen spoke in opposition. There is excitement about the prospect of doing something about homelessness that will help them and the congregation.
- Cathy Ponsioen. Spoke in opposition. The original motion does not prevent UUCS from involvement in other projects.
- Beth Anne Huffine spoke in opposition. The Social Justice Committee is not very active and would not be for other projects. If there were other projects UUCS members would have come forward with them.
- Bob Francis spoke in opposition. He has been involved in the HHV project since the beginning, and notes that this issue has been in front of UUCS many times. There is no need to “kick the can down the road” and create further delay.
- Ben Cavaletto spoke in opposition. Strategic plans are important and the congregation should review the UUCS Plan. There is a lot of grass roots energy in this project. It will die if not supported.

The Chair asked the Parliamentarian if the motion has a time limit to present a progress report at the 2021 Annual Congregational Meeting.

- Steve Rosen spoke in opposition, and is enthusiastic about being able to do something about homelessness and delay would be unfortunate.
- Cathy Ponsioen agreed with Steve Rosen. There is nothing about the Resolution that would prevent UUCS from entering into other projects to help the homeless.

There was discussion in support of the motion:

- Janet Stevens discussed the number of questions and concerns about this proposal and that further investigation is a good idea. It never hurts to continue to evaluation. This is a complex issue and deserves a thorough review.
- Joan Stembridge spoke in support. There are many options to deal with homelessness, and there is a need for time to explore this. The City of Salem should look into the proposal and particularly the original plan for tiny homes for 20 people. If that is not an option UUCS should look into partnering with other churches and agencies to improve services.
- Gary Klein spoke in support because the Resolution does not address how UUCS teams and committees would be involved in the negotiations and long term plans. There is a need to create a task force to study this issue, because there no identification of how it fits in with UUCS goals and budget and that sufficient safeguards are in place.
- Jon Walton spoke in support. This is potentially a big commitment and there is a need for long term look at the project. The Resolution restricts the UUCS Board to only focus on this project. There is a need to look into all of the options and how they fit into the Strategic Plan.
- Phil Carver. Wants to change his mind to be in support of the motion. The discussion by Bob Muir was convincing. This Resolution does not represent an encumbrance. The timeline would let the congregation act at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

Other Comments:

- Robert Muir spoke about concerns with language in the original Resolution. There is concern about the HHV Trust and would like to see the trust agreement to know the nature of the trust. There is concern about funding both to build and for ongoing operations. There is concern that this negotiation does not represent an encumbrance. The Board needs to present a negotiated lease agreement for the congregation to vote on.
- Tom Logan finds support on both motions. Paul Manka's concerns about the homeless using the parking lot could be resolved with a chain link fence at \$10,000 that could restrict access to the property.

Susan Farris-Gosser summarized the proposed Motion to Commit. The intent is not to delay the project. There are some positive options with the project, but acting on it now could affect future uses. There is a housing project down the street. UUCS could work with the County to expand the options. Once UUCS decides to go with the farmhouse construction, no other options on the use of the land could be made. Also, the Social Justice team is becoming more active and could investigate other options. UUCS has not created a foundation to determine that this is the project it should support.

The Chair called the question. There was discussion about the process for voting.

The Chair read the Motion to Commit.

### **Vote on Motion to Commit**

The Moderator displayed the poll for on-line voting; it had wording that could not be changed and the Chair clarified the wording on this poll was the motion to commit. The vote on the motion to commit was 33 in support and 70 in opposition. The motion was not approved.

### **Discussion Resumed on the Resolution**

Cindy Francis. Spoke in strong support of the Resolution. The Francis' interact with homeless at Wallace Marine Park. She described the progress into a downhill slide into homelessness, and the need to intervene to stop this slide.

Janet Stevens. Stated support for helping the homeless but it would be a huge mistake to build the shelter at this site. It is an inappropriate place to put the shelter in terms of access to services and police response.

Bob Muir. Proposed an amendment to the original Resolution. The amendment is "In the second paragraph, delete the words "to enter into" and substitute "negotiate. Delete the word "negotiations" both changes in the second paragraph. Add this sentence after the first sentence in the second paragraph: The Agreement shall be presented to the membership for a vote of approval no later than the 2021 Annual meeting." Janet Stevens seconded the motion.

### **Discussion on the Amendment Proposed by Bob Muir**

Jon Walton asked to clarify that the wording of the Resolution as amended would not constrain the UUCS Board from working with Social Justice or other teams and Strategic Plan process. Are there other things that UUCS should be considering? Is this the highest and best use of the property? The Chair noted that there is no constraint on what the Board can consider.

Phil Carver noted that the Board has the authority to work with anyone and anything. He would encourage other members who have an idea on projects and the use of the property to bring them forward. He strongly supports this amendment. This ensures that the congregation approve any encumbrance. It will not delay the project.

Susan Farris-Gosser questioned whether this is a workable or reasonable timeline. The Chair noted that this information is not available, but many issues have been resolved with HHV. The Board will work with the land use attorney and can bring it back for a continuance at the Annual Meeting if needed. The Annual Meeting can also be delayed.

Julie Warneke asked a procedural question. Is there a vote on the amendment and then the motion as amended? The Chair stated that this is the process.

Gary Klein stated a concern about the term negotiation as being inflexible.

Sarah Rohrs questioned the purpose of the amendment and what it would accomplish. Bob Muir responded that the bylaws require the congregation to approve any encumbrance so this amendment ensures this.

Bob Muir stated the intention of the amendment is to prevent the negotiation from dragging on, so a timeline will prevent delay.

Paul Manka stated that it was unclear what the congregation is being asked to vote on. The Chair clarified that the main purpose is for the congregation to have a vote on the proposed encumbrance of the property once the land use agreement is finalized. The Chair stated that the addition to the motion was to set a timeline for the congregation to vote.

### **Vote on the Amendment**

The Chair called for a vote on the amendment. The Moderator displayed the poll for on-line voting; it had wording that could not be changed and the Chair clarified the wording on this poll was on the amendment. The vote was 73 yes and 31 no. The amendment passed.

### **Discussion on the Amended Resolution.**

Lorna Youngs called the question, to end debate on the issue. Bob Muir seconded the call. There was a vote on whether to call the question. The vote requires a 2/3 majority. The Moderator displayed the poll for on-line voting; it had wording that could not be changed and the Chair clarified the wording on this poll was to call the question and end debate. The vote was 96 yes and 5 no. The motion carried.

### **Vote on the Motion to Approve the Resolution as Amended**

The Moderator displayed the poll for on-line voting; it had wording that could not be changed and the Chair clarified the wording on this poll was the motion to approve the motion as amended. The vote was 84 yes and 20 no. The motion as amended passed.

### **Closing Statements**

The Chair thanked the congregation for the polite and thorough conversation. The Board will resume work on the land use agreement.

Reverend Davis stated his gratitude to the congregation for the great meeting and extinguished the chalice.

The meeting was adjourned.

