



Our mission: To be a compassionate, welcoming community that nurtures spiritual growth and practices justice.

Board of Directors Emergency Meeting

Minutes (Zoom) Dec. 5 2023 7:00 PM

Board Present: Kim Reid, President; Paul Trewartha-Weiner, Vice President; John Helmers, Treasurer. Jodi Edmonson, Rod Mildbrandt & John Tacinelli, Members at Large. Rev. Luke Stevens-Royer, ex officio

Guests: Shelly Rohe, Social Justice Coordinator; Phil Wheeler

Absent: Kimberly Edson, Secretary (Kim Reid served as secretary); Brianna Berg, Aleta Borrud, Members at Large

1. Kim R called the meeting to order.
2. Phil Wheeler was invited to provide background on the topic of this meeting, which involves a request to have the church sign a year-long lease for an apartment to provide housing for a family from Ecuador that recently arrived in Rochester, and are seeking asylum. Phil notes that the family arrived in Rochester on November 4th, 2023, thinking that they had a contact who would provide them with housing and a job. That contact apparently does not exist, so the family is homeless and without support. The family are likely to be good candidates for asylum as their situation in Ecuador had become extremely dangerous. Congregants from First UU have provided hotel rooms and other temporary housing, assisted in enrolling the 9th grade daughter in school, assisted the parents in registering for English classes and accessing medical and dental care.

Conversations have taken place with Salvation Army in an effort to find longer term housing solutions for the family, but the only option available was a homeless shelter in St. Cloud. Phil Wheeler was able to find a 1-bedroom apartment at 1143 1st St. NW for \$750 a month. The apartment requires a 1-year lease and Phil has requested that the board give approval for a representative for the church to co-sign the lease.

Salvation Army has agreed to provide clothing, furniture and a social worker who will meet with the family once a week. Family Promise will provide the security deposit and the first month's rent. Peace UCC is sending a \$500 donation and other churches may also be willing to contribute. In all, there are financial contributions and promises of contributions to cover approximately 7 months of rent payments.

3. Discussion of the church's role in signing a lease and collecting donations took place. The Board agreed that having our congregation serve as a conduit for collecting donations made by both members and community organizations/members would be beneficial to supporting the family. There was some concern about the church's financial responsibility if we co-sign a lease and the family chose to move on before the one-year lease was up. The board requested more information from the landlord regarding any penalties that might be incurred if the lease was terminated early. In addition, concerns about liability were shared, so the board suggested considering renter's insurance as an option to address this concern.

4. The following motion was made by John Tacinelli and seconded by Rod Milbrandt: “The Board authorizes First Unitarian Universalist Church to sign a year-long lease for a one-bedroom apartment in order to provide housing support for the family from Ecuador seeking asylum in Rochester.” Once Phil Wheeler is able to get more information from the landlord about the financial responsibilities that the church might incur if the lease is terminated early, that information will be emailed to the Board and a vote on the motion will be conducted by email.
5. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50.

Addendum: A email vote was held on Dec. 6, 2023 and the board approved the motion 7-2. (Should this go here or in the Dec. board meeting minutes??)