

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

BOARD MEETING AGENDA

Thursday, April 18, 2024 – 4pm

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5627250899>

Inspiring, Challenging, and Empowering Faith and Justice Communities Across the West

Present: Sarah Linn, moderator; MaryEllen Beltracchi, vice-moderator; Brent Gundlah, IMA; Laura Gurney, LLL; Marta Fiorti, PVA; Kari Collins, Treasurer; Peter Sawtell, MDA; Erin Gilmore, ACM; Teresa Campbell, Assistant Treasurer; Eleanor Downey, NMM; Karen Caton, WA
Absent: Allyson Stauffer, CJL; Ian Wrisley, RJ; Adam McCoy, PC; Mallory Everhart, SEA

4:02: Welcome / Centering Moment – Sarah

4:10: **Approval of March 21, 2024, Minutes (Eleanor/Kari) – Approved.**

4:13: Documentation of 4 email votes, as follows:

1. Adoption of RMC Conflict of Interest policy and disclosure forms:

Yes: 11

No: 0

Other: 1

Comments: N/A

2. Approve the office space agreement between the RMC and 6th Ave. UCC :

Yes: 11

No: 0

Other: 1

Comments:

"My vote is 'Yes,' but I think we need to: 1) be super-careful about the perception of this situation (the CM making the decision to lease space from the church at which a family member serves as pastor) as we encounter similar situations in light of the RMC's history, and 2) not making such decisions under time pressure to the extent possible."

3. Ratify the execution of the contract with Embassy Suites in Loveland, CO for the June 19-21, 2025, RMC Annual Celebration:

Yes: 10

No: 0

Other: 2

Comments:

"My vote is "Yes," but I think we need to: 1) begin the process earlier so that we are not in a position of having to make decisions under pressure, and 2) involve the Board in such decisions."

"I am not yet comfortable voting on the Embassy Suites contract until we have additional information regarding the A/V restrictions and what it may or may not look like. I have seen A/V run reasonably (\$1k-\$2,500) to upwards of \$8-10k (ridiculous) for weekend events and I'm just nervous about signing the contract and then finding it cost-prohibitive to offer the hybrid option. I believe the hybrid option is vital to the Conference."

4. Ratify the execution of the office building sale amend/extend agreement with one signature:

Yes: 12

No: 0

Other: 0

Comments: N/A

4:15: ACM Report – Erin

- Stories of faith across the conference; the call we have: to support local churches;
- *Gone For Good* – re: church buildings (100K predicted to close in the next 5 years);
- we have a window to invest in our local congregations – they're worth our investment. Loneliness, mental health crisis, etc.: this is our lane! Belonging, inclusion, hope, generosity! We have so much to offer the world!
- Help local churches live out their local mandates in their own communities and contexts.
- I have the gifts from the Spirit to lead the conference in this time – because I'm not afraid to ask questions.
- We have lots of work to do about sustainability and accountability and process.
- Taking strategic and bold and thoughtful risks as we make decisions, moving forward.
- **A proposal has come to me that is going to require some risk:**
 - Pension Boards of the UCC has approached Erin with a desire for us to receive a grant from the Lilly Fund re: enhancing the faith life of children – the PBUC will receive the money and want to work with a conference to get programs into local churches.

- Conference create requests for proposals process – to fund faith formation/spiritual practices for kids – potentially with La Foret – funding can go to staffing, programming, operational expenses.
 - Deadline to apply/respond: May 6. 1.25M – some portion of which would go to us; in the next 2 ½ weeks, we need to gather stats and anecdotes on children/family ministries.
 - First order issue: great idea, but thinking ahead – who makes decisions about how money is allocated? form a review team; PBUCC will be a resource for us.
 - <https://lillyendowment.org/nurturing-children-through-worship-and-prayer-initiative/>
 - Matching fund requirements...?
 - Need to put out the communication re: this super quick so churches aren't putting in the work to write up grant requests for other sources when they can get funding through this.
 - **Approved by consensus to continue pursuing this.**
- Proposal in report re: **supporting new clergy** in the conference: 6 months of coaching for new clergy/first time, isolated rural spaces, etc. Most clergy that leave – do so in the first 3 years. Wants to talk about it (see her report) – how to fund it: strengthen the church? COM funding/SOS?

4:35: **Annual Meeting Update** – Erin

- Grand agenda – providing practical resources for churches to think about how to use their spaces – Friday morning panel – Rev. Dr. Courtney Stange-Treager (sp?) of Cornerstone Fund to give an overview of the win-win-win of God math.
- How do we need to do reports? **Need written reports from elected committees, officers, AND from affiliated organizations**, etc. (**Laura will track down – touch base with her**)
- Budget Q&A session? Need both something in advance and onsite. During Breakfast or Lunch...? Budget builds off of work done for the November meeting; there probably won't be that many questions.
- Hybrid capability in each of the spaces? need online hosts – e.g. not using chapel for worship, etc.
- **Approved by consensus – the grand agenda, with the addition of a Budget Q&A during breakfast on Friday**

- Current nominating slate: lots of details – terms are not yet clear on some slots (who finished/didn't finish a term, etc.)

5:05: Treasurer / Finance Committee – Kari, Teresa

- financial review – Teresa
 - under on income, significantly under on expenses – we haven't done what we set out to do by the end of the year. AJ - \$15K under; COM under; Church vitality/renewal will probably not be spent.
 - Hiring a registrar is still on the table, gaining clarity on the role/need and whether Melissa might be able to take on some or all of that when the building sells.
 - Some funds were listed as designated when they were actually donor restricted (!) – Teresa is running those to ground.
 - **MEB:** property listed somewhere? Yes, under 'fixed assets' – we've forgotten a lot of things over the years – so she's going to add that information into our balance sheets. (e.g. 2 parcels in UT, which have already been sold; and one little one)
 - Overall decline in net assets: we expect to have 2.1M in net assets when all is said and done – and what we really will have.
 - We expect around \$775K when the building sells.
- two draft budgets – Teresa
 - combined some line items under Church Vitality/Renewal, and under the building section – adding \$6K for office space rental,
 - deficit – 109,568, spending 43,653 from designated funds, **\$177,469 deficit** if the building *doesn't* close;
 - if the building does sell, we expect to up some of the proceeds into an interest bearing account, earning... something. Same other adjustments as above, plus adjustments to building costs, obviously. lowers deficit from operating expenses: 71,430 – plus the 43,653 = **\$115,153 if we do sell the building.**
 - Very little in the operating section we can do; we can cut a few things – projected expenses for COM, etc. or cut staff salaries; so not much space to reduce any other expenses. We can hold on with the \$2M but it wouldn't involve doing anything more; with adding staff, tributary funds, etc. we probably have 6 or 7 years to function.
 - Could interest bearing on the cash from selling the building go into our operating? Yes; that's in there.
 - recommend diversifying investments next year.
 - **FC moves to approve both budgets to present both to the conference in case the building doesn't sell within the 30-day reporting period – with the adjustment to end of April figures, instead of March figures. Motion was approved.**

- Noting: budgets don't include Tributary grants or transitional expenses
- designated funds? – will cover in May.

5:30: Ministry Season Discernment – Sarah, et al

- report – process, proposed outcomes, proposed timeframe, Erin's eligibility;
- preliminary proposal. Feedback?
 - Existing minister then made CM set a pattern; that's the presenting problem; what's the actual/underlying issue? We're parenting 70 churches; what's our blind spot? I don't use the curriculum the same way it was authored; I adapt it to the particular students/situation. We've said that in 4 or 5 years, we'll start a search committee – but we don't know what the operating budget will look like in 5 years. We're here to be creative/envision, etc. How can we allow fluidity for structuring search and call, etc.
 - open and flexible, ongoing evaluation...
 - Exec of MDA – no grants out of undesignated funds
 - Budget – “sustainable” v. balanced; what do we mean? Time period for budget – how do we build confidence? unspoken message of 5 years: “We don't have what it takes to complete the work within 3 years.” And we'll have a new Board altogether by that time. Budget timeframe – math is math; materially better shape by '26-27.
 - Important to remember that we're all working with our own perceptions of what the process should have been, should be, and actually is. We need to be clear. We can want the very same result in mind but have different ideas of how to get there. There is more than one way to get to a settled CM or settled/sustainable budget. Part of how our really big feelings get wrapped up. We've got to use 'a' process, instead of 'the' process.
 - funding stated priorities...?
 - critical evaluation point – 2 to 3 years; need discussion; set aside particular points (not just 'on-going') for specific evaluation and clarifying allocation of resources.
 - We need to be relational, even in our critical evaluations. Everything isn't set in stone. We don't have a checklist (for COM/FAS/SOS, for instance). Can we live with this and move with this? relational v. procedural ways of doing things will be the tension.
 - A couple situations where we went sideways over the last couple years – the Tributary Funds and Racial Justice – good intentions need to be balanced with an iterative process that finds its way to execution and getting things paid for.
 - Articulate a requirement to revisit from work/goal/funding perspective.

- No room to cut anything else in the budget; concerned about adding staff – support the idea of doing new ministry in new ways – not to think so much about dollars and cents that come out of what line item.
- What kinds of funding will we use for certain types of staff, programs, etc. It would be appropriate to designate a level of unrestricted net assets – but the basic work of the conference **shouldn't** be covered this way. Staff should be paid by operating budget. What's sustainable funding to support this regular work – think about it before we hire people from outside (or inside) to do the work.
- Well planned things can fail. In the spirit of anti-racism, we're speaking into a situation that's been steeped in white supremacy and should draw from womanist and feminist approaches. I don't think we're going anywhere; we're going to be OK.
- Tension – polarities exist because of each other – masculine/feminine, relational/
- approved things in the past without an accountability plan; we can't fund staff positions through selling church buildings, etc. We begin to build trust by our actions. We need freedom to have possibility and be accountable and be willing to pivot. I can't do what I've been doing (trying to experiment without funding) and get anywhere. We have big resource challenges (human and material) AND we have a hope that we have to fund this transition period somehow to try something new.
- **Team to draft next iteration:** MEB, Eleanor, Laura, Karen, and SBL.

6:45: Informational Items (Lightning Round)

- Conflict of Interest Policy and 2023 Disclosures will be distributed by email
- Photos from your churches to Allison for a montage for Annual meeting.

6:45: Final announcements

7:00: Adjournment