

Unity in the Community
General Membership Meeting
6:30 P.M., Sunday, June 19, 2011

Bull Run Unitarian Universalists
9350 Main Street
Manassas, VA 20110

Members Present: Jim Amaral, Hank Azais, Cindy Brookshire, Dexter Fox, Bob Gaskill, Illana Naylor.

Chair Dexter Fox called the meeting to order at 6:36 P.M. A quorum was not present.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

1. Treasurer's Report. Gregg Reynolds was not present for this meeting; however, a report he submitted in advance was shared by the Chair, Dexter Fox. Unity in the Community (UITC) has a balance of \$1,345.34, \$528.53 of which is in the general fund, \$150.00 in the humanitarian fund, and \$666.81 in the study circles fund. The report was accepted as presented.

2. Secretary's Report. Electronic copies of the minutes of last month's General Membership Meeting were distributed to all members via email in advance of this meeting. Paper copies were also available at this meeting for review by those in attendance. The minutes were accepted as presented.

3. Vice Chair's Report. Lydia Gonzalez was not present to give a report.

4. Chair's Report.

4a. Chair Dexter Fox reported that The Working Group (TWG) / Not in Our Town (NIOT) has been invited to have a display table at the American Federation of Teachers Professional Issues Conference that will take place July 11-13, 2011, in Washington, D.C. The theme of this year's AFT conference is "Together Educating America's Children." Rhian Miller of TWG has asked if UITC could staff a booth for TWG/NIOT on Monday, July 11, from 1 to 8 PM, and on Tuesday, July 12, from 8 AM to 6 PM. TWG/NIOT will ship NIOT brochures along with inserts about NIOT resources, buttons, and information about the upcoming September 21, 2011, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) premiere of Not in Our Town: Light in the Darkness documentary. (The one-hour documentary tells the story of Patchogue, New York, residents who responded to a hate crime murder of an Ecuadorean immigrant by seven local high school students.) If possible, TWG would also like UITC to have a laptop at the table so that conference participants can view the NIOT website. Dexter asked if anyone was interested and able in helping setup, staffing, and taking down the booth. He also stated that TWG/NIOT will reimburse travel and meal expenses for UITC members who help with the booth. Jim Amaral and Dexter Fox stated they could help on Monday. Illana Naylor called Kathy Clark and stated that Kathy could help on Tuesday. Dexter stated that he will contact Rhian to obtain additional information that may be necessary. Dexter also stated that he has a DVD copy of the Not in Our Town: Light in the Darkness documentary and would like to use it for a Unity function before the September 21 PBS premiere. Dexter further stated that he has secured a DVD copy of Bullied from the Southern Poverty Law Center and that we may loan the DVD for private viewing. (Unity used Bullied as a feature in its Spring 2011 Immigration & Human Rights Cinema.)

4b. Dexter received a notice regarding the Manassas African-American Heritage Festival that will take place on Saturday, Aug 6, 2011, at Metz Middle School in Manassas. If desired, Unity may place a full-page ad in the festival's program at a cost of \$50 (\$25 for a half-page ad and \$10 for business-card ad). Unity may also register to host a display booth from noon to 6:00 P.M. (setup

at 11:00). Applications for program ads and booth reservations are due by June 25. Since no quorum was present, a motion related to this topic could not be made or voted upon. As a result, Illana Naylor volunteered to write a personal check in the amount of \$50 so that Dexter could submit, before the deadline, a full-page ad in the program for UITC. (At the end of this discussion, Illana noted that the Dumfries Multicultural Festival happens to be scheduled for the same date as the Manassas African-American Heritage Festival.)

4c. Dexter reported that the \$42.50 check Unity sent to the Prince William County-Greater Manassas Chamber of Commerce to renew its membership actually covered an interim membership period from March through the end of June 2011. When the two Chambers of Commerce united, Unity's membership was out of sync with the combined group's membership year. If Unity would like to continue its membership beginning July 1, 2011, it will need to pay an additional \$175, the amount of dues necessary for membership through June 30, 2012. Dexter asked if this was something that Unity would like to continue. When asked about benefits of membership, Dexter stated that Unity benefits from networking with owners and managers of local business as long as someone from Unity attends meetings and functions. Since March, Dexter has distributed notices about Chamber events to Unity members; however, a representative of Unity has not participated in any event on behalf of Unity. Dexter stated that, in his opinion, unless someone is willing to represent Unity in Chamber events on a regular basis, then it is probably not worthwhile to continue membership. The consensus of the group was to not continue membership in the Chamber of Commerce.

4d. Dexter reported that the Police Executive Research Forum recently made available online a PDF copy of its 2010 report entitled, "Police and Immigration: How Chiefs Are Leading their Communities through the Challenges." Dexter read excerpts from the report that related to Prince William County (Executive Summary pages 4 & 5) and Summit Recommendations (Executive Summary pages 6-8). Dexter also mentioned that Chapters 2 & 6 of the report were significant to Prince William County and stated that the document was in support of our local police departments and the way they respond to concerns regarding local immigration issues. When asked if anyone knew whether or not local police departments had copies of the report, Dexter stated that, though not sure if they have copies, he believed our best use of this document would be to share it with members of the Board of County Supervisors and City Councils. A suggestion was made that it may be better for the chiefs of local police departments to share copies of the report with local civic leaders and that Unity show its support of such action by being in attendance when copies of the report are presented. Bob Gaskill stated that he would contact Prince William County Police Chief Deane to see if he has received a copy of the report and discuss ideas and concerns raised this evening. A copy of the report may be found at the following web address:

<http://www.policeforum.org/library/immigration/PERFImmigrationReportMarch2011.pdf>.

4e. Dexter shared information about Welcoming America's websites: www.welcomingamerica.org/ and www.friendsofwelcoming.org. Welcoming America is a national organization working to make our country welcoming to all, including immigrants. While many organizations exist to do the important work of helping immigrants adjust to life in the United States, Welcoming America focuses on helping people who were born in this country understand and appreciate their new immigrant neighbors. Welcoming America helps neighbors build relationships based on trust and understanding through local leadership development, community events that bring people together, and media such as billboards, radio advertisements, and TV public service announcements.

4f. Dexter stated that a Nominations Committee is needed to make candidate recommendations for the offices of Chair and Treasurer for this coming September elections. Both offices are two-year terms. The Committee should be ready to make its recommendations at the August UITC meeting. Bob Gaskill volunteered to serve on the Nomination Committee. Anyone else interested in serving on this committee should notify Dexter as soon as possible.

4g. Dexter announced that he will be out of town on July 17th, the scheduled date for the next Unity meeting. If Vice Chair Lydia Gonzalez is unable to convene the meeting on that day, the date of the meeting will be moved to July 10th. Dexter will send an email announcement once the date and the location of the meeting are known. Meanwhile, members should try to keep both meeting dates open.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

5. Everyday Democracy-Study Circles – Status Update.

5a. Cindy Brookshire reported that she has been asked by the City of Manassas to apply for a President's Award that is presented by a magazine distributed to municipalities throughout the U.S. The award application will summarize the combined work of 1-by-Youth, Community Study Circles, and Unity in the Community in helping the City of Manassas revitalize the Georgetown South and Point of Woods communities. If won, an article highlighting our combined efforts will reach the leaders of communities nationwide.

5b. Cindy continuing her work in moving study circles from community-based groups to school-based ones since schools are microcosms of the larger community. She reported that this change has begun with the establishment of a school/faith community relationship this past year between Baldwin Elementary School and Trinity Episcopal Church. As part of this relationship, members of Trinity provided 21 students with food on days when school was not in session over a period of 12 weeks. In all, Trinity provided over 1100 meals this past spring and would like to continue and expand the program this coming fall. She hopes that, as this school/community partnership grows, parents and staff will become interested in discussing topics of concern within their community. Cindy also announced that she has been in touch with Dr. John Werner, the new principal of Osborn High School in Manassas. She stated that he seems to be open to the possibility of sponsoring a pilot school-based study circle.

5c. Cindy is making a proposal to speak at a Virginia neighborhood conference in Williamsburg this fall. Her topic will be about the how negative publicity in the news media that comes when "bad" things happen in neighborhoods can be minimized by publicizing "good" news on a regular basis.

5d. Cindy announced that the City of Manassas will be providing housing for AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) in the Georgetown South community. Volunteers will help identify and work with community leaders over the next two years to further energize the community in its revitalization of the neighborhood

6. Immigration & Human Rights Cinema (I&HRC). Dexter Fox reported UIC and George Mason University (GMU) have sponsored the I&HRC for three years now and has shown about thirty (30) films in that time. This past month, Dexter met with Charvis Campbell and another person from GMU to discuss ideas to increase local community and GMU staff and student attendance at the I&HRC, especially since GMU will be opening a 150-bed dorm for its graduate students on the Prince William Campus next year. Dexter reported that he currently maintains an email distribution list of 70 names for the film series. GMU representatives also stated that they would like Dexter to have a designated backup person to handle the work he does for this project in case one is needed for any reason. Members present at tonight's meeting suggested several people whom Dexter might ask to take on such a role. Dexter stated that he would be making contact with those who were named. Dexter further reported that he and the representatives from GMU discussed the possibility of re-involving GMU's Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) in the series. Charvis Campbell will contact ICAR to see if there is an interest by the department and its students. Dexter also stated next year's topics for films will include issues such as the Dream Act, birthright citizenship, privacy, foreclosures. Finally, Dexter reported having provided input into a report about the series that Charvis Campbell submitted to GMU this year. In his input, Dexter identified the films Bullied

and Welcome to Shelbyville as being the highlights of this past year's series. Finally, Dexter reported that GMU has asked if Unity would be interested in helping establish a similar film series on the Fairfax Campus of GMU.

7. International Day of Prayer for Peace (IDPP). Illana Naylor reported that she is still working on identifying a specific date and venue for the IDPP and expects final decisions to be made within the next week. So far, inquiries have been made with Covenant Presbyterian, Holy Family, and St. Paul's United Methodist Churches. Illana also noted that the Manassas Church of Brethren, First African Methodist Episcopal Church of Manassas, and All Saints Catholic Churches are being considered as alternative possible locations. Dexter Fox stated that as soon as a date and location have been designated, Unity needs to distribute notices about the event to local congregations. Advertisement by word-of-mouth will be very important if we would like community members and congregations who have not been represented in the past to attend. Several ideas for increasing participation were discussed. It was agreed that members of Unity, in addition to inviting members of their faith communities to attend this event, should make contact with friends and acquaintances who are members of other faith communities and ask them to advertise the IDPP within those faith communities. This could be done by asking them to place announcements of the event in their service bulletins, for example. It was suggested that community leaders be invited to participate, as well. This year, the main part of the IDPP will be composed of presentations made by religious community leaders; however, a litany for the assembled body may be used to foster a feeling of inclusiveness for all in attendance. [In a June 22, 2011, email message, Illana reported that St. Paul's UMC in Woodbridge has agreed to host the IDPP.]

NEW BUSINESS

8. There was no new business conducted at this month's meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

9. Dexter reminded that UITC will be walking in the Dale City 4th of July Parade. Anyone interested in walking with the group should notify Dexter as soon as possible. Dexter reported that UITC's application for the parade was submitted before Wali Hassan offered the use one of his busses. Since our application registered Unity as a walking unit, we will not be able to use the bus this year. Dexter did suggest that Unity keep the idea of using of a bus in mind for use in future years if one becomes available and offered again.

10. A meeting of Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement (VOICE) will be held at 7:30 P.M. on Monday, June 20, at Holy Family Catholic Church (14160 Ferndale Rd., Dale City). There will be an update on their progress in dealing with foreclosures issues in the community.

11. Hank Azais announced that Carlos Labiosa is working to establish a group of service providers to put together information for members of the local Hispanic Community. Information may include things such as how to access medical services in the area, what to do when foreclosure threatens, etc. The first meeting of the service providers will be hosted by Todos Market.

12. Hank Azais announced that this year's Hispanic Festival will take place from noon to 5 P.M. on Sunday, September 18, at the Harris Pavilion in Manassas. The first planning meeting of this yearly event was held this past week. The planning committee is in the process of soliciting sponsors, vendors, and entertainers. Hank stated that many repeat participants are expected.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Amaral, Secretary