

## **UUCL BoT Minutes – Special Meeting on November 10, 2022**

Location: online Zoom, 7:00 p.m.

Trustees Present: Fred Foster-Clark, Alan Jacobs, Kim Chappell, Carole Campbell, Steve Jones, Leslie Laird, Darcy Pollock; Rev. Patricia Guthmann Haresch

Others present: Kay Welty (COM)

President Fred convened the meeting at 7:06, lit a chalice, and gave a reading. Fred expressed concerns about the circumstances and processes of two previous meetings which led to an announcement at the Town Hall regarding a Board decision on hiring a professional security company for surveillance during Sunday services.

The Safety Team met on October 2, 2022, and its four congregant members forwarded a recommendation to the Board that a security proposal by INA of Harrisburg be accepted. No UUCL staff members were present at this meeting, and Fred, Rev. Pat, and others feel in retrospect that staff presence at that meeting was critical.

The Board met on October 18, and Steve reported on the team's discussion and answered questions from the Board about contract details. Fred noted that the anticipated cost of the security would be approximately \$8,860, and added that a congregant had offered to pay for a year's trial cost. The Board voted 6-1 to accept the security proposal.

The security proposal was announced at the October 30, 2022, Town Hall. There were few questions from the attendees, and general discussion of the issue was brief.

The purpose of this special meeting was 1) to examine the decision-making process that led to the Board vote, and 2) how best to move forward with this issue so that wider congregant awareness and response can be elicited. Fred added that the congregant who had offered to underwrite a year's trial expense had withdrawn that offer.

Kay Welty spoke at length to present the Committee on Ministry's own discussion of the issue (see attached). After presenting a series of points raised by one or more CoM members, Kay noted that there were two points of unanimous agreement:

1. There is a major concern among CoM members that the BoT and Safety Team did not involve the congregation in a discussion of this topic prior to making a final decision.
2. Congregation should have had a chance to discuss this first and then the issue, ideally, would have come to a congregational meeting for a congregational vote with a certain % (announced before the meeting) of number of votes needed to pass a motion on this topic.

All Board members offered comments. Darcy emphasized the importance of contacting our insurer, Church Mutual, for their policy on the implications of hiring a security

contractor. Rev. Pat spoke of polar congregant reactions to whatever the Board's decision about hiring security personnel may be. In the absence of specific threats, she is not recommending that a security agency be used. Instead, UUCL should immediately implement practical safety measures. She also recommends that any church-wide discussion or vote should be facilitated by an outside party, e.g., a regional staff member. (See attached for Rev. Pat's email sent to the Board prior to the meeting.)

After 90 minutes of discussion, three immediate goals were decided: 1) contact Church Mutual for policy information and to provide the INA contract proposal; 2) have the Safety Team complete the security assessment sent by Church Mutual; and 3) encourage Board members, staff, greeters, ushers, and Worship Associates to attend a prospective visit/Q and A by INA personnel on November 13<sup>th</sup> after the worship service.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Chappell, Secretary

Approved

**Attachment A**  
**CoM Input/Report to BoT for Special Nov 10, 2022 BoT meeting**

CoM spent some time at its Nov 1<sup>st</sup> meeting discussing the BoT's recent decision to establish an armed security guard outside the church on Sunday mornings. We have also exchanged a few committee emails since the November 1st CoM meeting on this topic. What follows is a summary of our discussions that we felt important to share with the BoT.

**A. Specific Questions/Comments that Arose (not always unanimous feelings about these within the CoM, but found the questions/comments to be ones we felt BoT should be aware of.**

1. How do we define what it is to be safe? Do people from different demographic communities have differing feelings about this definition?
2. How is having an armed security guard making us safer? In some cases, maybe it would make the church less safer - as in an accidental or unintended shooting.
3. Given the unsafe incidents that some from the LGBTQ, BIPOC and other communities have experienced or (heard about) with law enforcement, will those from these communities feel "safer" knowing a retired, armed police officer, will be standing in front of the church. How does having an armed guard affect the community perception of UUCL as a "welcoming" community? How will our neighbors feel about knowing there is an armed guard there on Sunday mornings?
4. We are in need of a more comprehensive congregational plan for Sunday morning safety as well as additional plans for preschool safety and staff safety during the week. The congregation should be informed about these various plans.
5. What is the entire congregational/church safety plan for Sunday mornings, of which the armed guard would be one part? What specifics have we given to the security company about how we, UCCL, describe what we consider an "unsafe" situation. Who in the congregation, does the guard alert to a likely unsafe situation and how? What real time mechanisms are in place for communication with leadership if an unsafe situation is occurring?
6. What are our expectations of that armed guard? Is there an understood, step-by-step kind of protocol? Has the guard been trained in de-escalation techniques? What are the church's expectations re: when to use de-escalation methods and when not to?
7. We need to undergo internal work as a congregation with all of us receiving de-escalation training so that we are not leaving our communal safety to just one "stranger."

8. Have we talked with UUCL's insurer to know that in the event of any kind of shooting or injury to a person of concern, that UUCL would not be liable?

9. With a guard in place, some members may choose not to attend Sunday services. Without a guard in place, other members may similarly choose not to attend Sunday services.

10. Was this decision within the BoT's purview according to the UUCL By-laws?

11. We desire to hear and understand the safety committee and the BoT's perspectives and hope they desire to hear and understand the concerns from everyone else in the congregation.

**B. Comments regarding the Process the BoT took to Arrive at the Decision (Both 1 and 2 below were agreed upon unanimously by the team)**

1. There is a major concern among CoM members that the BoT and Safety Team did not involve the congregation in a discussion of this topic prior to making a final decision.

2. Congregation should have had a chance to discuss this first and then the issue, ideally, would have come to a congregational meeting for a congregational vote with a certain % (announced before the meeting) of number of votes needed to pass a motion on this topic.

## **Attachment B**

### **Email to Board from Rev. Pat on Security Concerns**

My email to the Exec with concerns I was hearing from congregants and my own concerns is what initiated the Exec's decision to hold a special meeting of the BoT.

I wanted to share both some of the information I passed along to the Board, additional information that I've gathered, highlight some of the information I had shared with Steve and Brad from my own professional and life experience and trainings as a paralegal (especially at Mayo Clinic) and UU minister as part of our Security decisions.

I had already decided before the Town Hall meeting, that after the Board presented their decision about the Security Guard, I wanted to meet with the Exec, to talk about my concerns about the process, about how it rolled out from when I first heard that a small group had informally deputized Ray Bradley to bring a concealed weapon into UUCL through to whatever happened at the Town Hall Meeting.

Throughout the process, I was trying to remain as neutral as possible, trying not as someone new to UUCL to play the heavy minister's card. I didn't want to stand against the Board at a Town Hall meeting. But now I am regretting that I didn't intervene before the Town Hall meeting and keep wondering when I might have intervened more strongly.

However, I was not neutral in discussions with Brad and Steve before the Board made your decision. I provided them with multiple resources from the Anti-Defamation League to the UUA, and our insurer, suggested who to meet with and speakers from the denomination to help with discernment, and actually advised that UUCL's situation doesn't rise to the level of needing a security guard, giving them specific examples, and discussed options in relation to specific threats vs. a general sense of concern. They were not convinced. And as I shared with the Board, I was not present when the Security Team met with the Security Firm and decided on the recommendation to give to the Board.

Another general observation I want to share is that I have been quite shocked and surprised that except for concerns raised by Alan, from those who seem to be aware that Ray wears a concealed weapon, to the Board meeting to the Town Hall, I hadn't heard any resistance within this UU congregation about hiring an armed security guard (surprised especially in a community with the influence of Mennonites and other pacifist groups). Usually UUs are activists against gun culture, so I have been really thrown for a loop. I suspect this is more to do with people's desire within UUCL to avoid conflict and dissension in the congregation, than their personal views on guns.

You may also recall that I had said to the Board that even if no one objected at the Town Hall meeting to the Security Guard, that might not mean folks were comfortable with an armed guard. If it seemed that everyone else was for it, those who objected probably wouldn't raise their voice against it.

Well, I was correct. I received my first concern about the Board's decision from a congregant who felt they didn't want to make waves at the Town Hall meeting and felt it was already a done deal, so if they did raise concerns it wouldn't matter. And frankly, the Town Hall was set up in that way. This individual was quite shocked that there wouldn't have been a forum for congregational discussion about bringing a deadly weapon on campus before the Board made a decision.

Randy Newswanger said that I could let you know that the concern came from him. Since the Town Hall meeting, he has started to seriously consider whether or not he should remain at UUCL. That perhaps it isn't the place he thought it was, with the justice values he thought it had. "How do we say we're trying to reduce guns on the street and pay for a gun to be on our campus?"

Knowing a gun will be present on campus will make him feel less safe. He also raised the point that some congregants noted they felt more secure knowing that such a Security Guard would be a retired or former police officer. However, for many people of color this would not be reassuring. He has a companion who would not feel comfortable coming to a congregation with such an armed presence. Also, you have had several congregants who have attended a webinar on avoiding the use of law enforcement and considering alternatives because of this racial component.

I had the concern from the beginning, that the Board was reacting to a few voices who didn't feel comfortable without the presence of a gun without taking more time to take the temperature of the whole congregation and consulting with those experienced and expert in security matters. Take more time to talk about how the presence of an armed Security Guard meshes with UU principles and UUCL values and UUCL's attempts to be welcoming and drawing a wider circle.

We do know we have at least one congregant (Randy) who may leave over this issue and that Brad may not be returning in his post as Greeter and come live on Sundays until an armed guard is hired. At the COM, and I believe Kay will report that not all were unified in their views of having an armed guard, all were unified in their concern that the Board did not provide a congregational forum to let opinions and views be discussed before the Board made their decision.

I do hope everyone has a chance to look at the materials from our insurer.

Also, the Board has not discussed or voted upon Ray being asked to provide "security" with a concealed weapon. If you are bringing forward and considering a hired armed security guard, you need to also discuss this and bring this to our insurer and the congregation's attention. From a risk management perspective, having a congregant armed gives the congregation the highest liability and exposure.

I wanted to share some of my basis for why I did not recommend an armed guard at this time and some additional information I've learned.

- At the current annual rate of church shootings (NOT including mosques or synagogues), the likelihood of a shooting at a particular church doesn't even register as a decimal.
- Active shootings are more likely to occur in a place of commerce (45% or more). Of shootings that occur within congregations, they are more likely to occur within a mosque or synagogue. In Christian settings, the highest frequency are in Baptist settings. Threats more frequently target mosques and Islamic centers, synagogues, and Black churches. We are not aware of any trends of specifically targeting Protestant or Catholic congregations who have a high profile justice component such as a congregation like ours. (Rabbi Paskoff noted not only does his congregation receive specific threats, but they frequently are put on notice regionally and nationally of threats. Rev. Forbes of the Ebenezer Baptist Church (a black church) in town noted a particularly threatening letter his congregation received from a white hate group at the Get Out the Vote event. When I told him how sorry I was that he received that, he said they get those kinds of threats come in all the time.)
- About half of active shootings within congregations are hate crimes by strangers, about half are known perpetrators (due to mental illness, a family dispute, anger against the minister or congregation, love triangles).
- Rabbi Paskoff's congregation has chosen to have an armed guard during public worship, special events and during their day school hours because of the specific frequent threats against Jews at this time. UUCL on the other hand at this time has received no specific direct threats, no hate mail, no trolling on our Facebook page, no vandalism.
- I know of only one shooting with multiple victims occurring at a UU church. In 2008, Knoxville, TN. The shooter was the troubled ex-husband of a congregant who had been radicalized by hate radio (like Rush Limbaugh) into believing liberals were the source of his and society's problems.
- I am aware that some UU congregations have requested law enforcement presence or drive bys for a short duration when they have a particular threat (for instance, I remember when my home church's minister was threatened by a congregant suffering from a mental health episode or when there's been a wave of break-ins).
- If you search the LNP, there has been vandalism of churches by anti-Christian groups and a Black Lives Matter flag was taken from a church. Those articles shared that those churches responded with such things as security cameras and better measures around securing doors.
- I have been doing a straw poll of UU ministers regarding whether anyone has

ongoing or occasional armed security at their buildings. So far, the number is 1 and 90% have a no gun policy. It was noted some State laws make “no gun” policy unenforceable. Lenore was at a UU religious educator chapter of 7 congregations in NJ & PA none had armed security and several had 渡o gun policies.

- Gold standards recommended for church security:
  - Having greeters at the front door
  - Limiting access to one or two entry points that are supervised
  - Having security cameras
  - Having secure doors and measures around access to the building
  - Having training and drills in active shooter evacuations
  - Having trainings at least for a core group of people on de-escalation
  - Methods for quick contact for emergency help (i.e. panic buttons and quick cell phone contact)
  - Having a good sense of the mental health of congregants, whose vulnerable, where there might be domestic trouble
- If you review studies and research regarding whether or not having an armed guard on the premises 杜akes you safer, you will find there aren't conclusive results. As a matter of fact, some studies suggest adding armed security in schools has not made a difference in saving lives. (Some situations we've learned what happens when enforcement takes a break or doesn't go into the premises when there is active shooting or when a shooter goes through an unlocked, unattended door. Also having hand guns when the shooter has a military style weapon.)
- Christian congregations who are hiring armed security tend to be in geographical areas where there is higher support for conceal and carry laws.

Some articles and resources:

<https://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/building-security/planning-active-shooter-emergencies>

<https://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2019/oct/04/do-guns-churches-really-make-people-safe-some/>

<https://projects.voanews.com/mass-shootings/english/locations/worship.html>

<https://www.dolanconsultinggroup.com/news/serious-violence-at-places-of-worship-in-the-u-s-looking-at-the-numbers/>

<https://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/2022/0303/Religious-leaders-preach-radical-hospitality-even-after-church-shootings>