



## *A Model for Unitarian Universalist Congregational Board Meetings*

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Florida District Unitarian Universalist Association

There are many ways you can do a church board meeting. The **example below** is just one model that I've seen as helpful. Please let me know of your improvements. The Agenda is in this text. My interpretive comments follow in this text.

**Agenda preparation:** I suggest the Executive Committee and the Minister [if you have one] meet 10 days prior to the forth-coming meeting of the whole Board. They craft the *Draft Agenda*. This is distributed via email to the remainder of the Board for comment. The Board President takes into consideration any feedback from other Board members. S/he then distributes the *Working Agenda* along with all supporting documents and reports to the entire Board 7 days prior to the meeting.

The "Consent Agenda" includes receipt and approval of all reports — including the Treasurer's — and any legal matters that routinely require Board approval. Generally, these are received without further comment. Financial matters requiring the Board's attention are taken up as an *Action Item*.

For this illustration, I assume a start time of 7:00pm. and a total time of 1 3/4 hours. 1 1/2 hours is the ideal; 2 hours should be the outside limit. The Board should meet around a squared table arrangement, in a room large enough to easily accommodate all members, ex-officio staff and any potential guests. Guests should not sit at the Board table.

While not listed here, now and then — no less than quarterly — time should be set aside for Board members to go around the table addressing the "What's the buzz?" of the congregation. Think of it as a temperature or anxiety-level checkup. This may alert the Board to concerns unfolding before they become critical.

I recommend Board's operate on 3, 6, and 9-month planning intervals. Thus, every quarter, the Agenda needs to be modified to accommodate a review of progress toward goals with ample time for revising the next quarter's goals. If you're doing this well, the review should be but a few minutes of a meeting.

At it's annual retreat, a Board will typically lay out its near [months] and longer term [one or two years] goals. It is desirable to establish an ad hoc strategic planning team for goals three or more years out. All goals should be assessed against the Congregation's **Mission** statement.

A brief note on *Robert's Rules*, typically the standard used in congregations: If the Board approves the agenda, it may then be assumed any resolution brought up as an Action Item already has been "seconded." If a resolution is put forward and amended, the maker of the motion, if s/he agrees, may simply accept any change as a "friendly" amendment to be incorporated in the original motion. If not, then the amendment must be voted up before the original motion may be acted upon.

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*Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Open Sea*  
34 Swaying Palms Way, By-the-Shore, Florida

Monthly Meeting of the Board of Trustees  
Date; Time; Place

### Our Mission Statement

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Open Sea serves witness to love and justice in keeping with the Unitarian Universalist heritage.

Membership as of 1<sup>st</sup> of Month: \_\_\_\_\_

### Agenda

| Clock Time: |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Time Allocation, Minutes: |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 7:00        | Call to Order/Certification of Quorum                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 1                         |
| 7:01        | Ingathering/Centering Moment/Chalice Lighting                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 2                         |
|             | A brief spoken or sung reminder of our faith commitments.                                                                                                                                                                                               |                           |
| 7:03        | Agenda Review & Update: Approval of Consent Agenda                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 2                         |
|             | The agenda, with supporting documents and reports, should be in members' hands at least one week prior to the meeting.                                                                                                                                  |                           |
| 7:05        | Reminder of the Board's Working Rules                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 1                         |
|             | These are typically simple statements of the Board's shared understanding of how it wants to conduct their business. A posted display helps.                                                                                                            |                           |
| 7:06        | Appointment of the Process Observer                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 1                         |
|             | The Process Observer participates fully in the meeting; at the same time, s/he monitors the tone and spirit of the meeting, how well the leadership team is functioning in terms of its own rules, and notes what helps or hinders the group's efforts. |                           |
| 7:07        | Personal Check-In                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 8                         |
|             | Each member briefly remarks on what is going on in their lives that <u>may affect their demeanor in the course of the Board's meeting</u> . This is <b>not</b> a moment of personal pastoral need.                                                      |                           |
| 7:15        | Open-Forum                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 5                         |
|             | From time to time, congregants appear at a Board meeting with a desire to speak to the whole Board. Such guests are to be welcomed. The Board is <u>not</u> obligated to process anything that is thus presented.                                       |                           |

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |    |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 7:20 | Invited Guests                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 10 |
|      | <p>In this instance, congregants come before the Board for a specific reason, either by their request or the Board’s invitation. The reason for their appearance should be noted on the agenda. It may be a simple sharing of information, offering a board-requested report, or bringing to the Board’s attention concerns the congregants hope the Board might address. Again, the Board <u>does not act</u> on these offerings unless they are part of the Action items of the agenda.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |    |
| 7:30 | Action Items Before the Board:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 30 |
|      | <p>Board meetings are <b><u>decision meetings</u></b>. It should be noted they are legal meetings of the Corporation according to Florida law. Thus, accurate minutes matter.</p> <p>Discussion should be focused on items for which the Board has had sufficient background and preparation to clearly understand what the issues are. The President should summarize the question at hand, ask for discussion, and then seek a formal motion — even if it is only to ask, “Do we have a consensus here?”</p> <p>The secretary should be able to record the motion in clear language. It is sufficient to say, “Moved, [Person A, Person B, 2<sup>nd</sup>], that .....” Motion Carried/Defeated: 6/2/1[yeas/naes/abstentions].</p> <p>While 30 minutes typically proves sufficient for routine business, from time to time, resolving differing perspectives or gaining clarity of intent takes longer. A good rule to follow is this:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The President summarizes the question at hand, noting what a desired outcome looks like and then opens the floor for discussion. After 20 minutes, the Process Observer calls time. The President then asks for a motion. If none is forthcoming, the Board sits in silence for 1 minute. The President again asks for a motion. Often, someone is ready. If not, the item is automatically tabled. The President then appoints 2 or 3 members to study the issue further and return the next month with a motion.</p> |    |
| 8:00 | Consent Agenda: Acceptance of Reports:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 10 |
|      | <p>All Reports should be written and distributed in advance with the Working Agenda. Discussion is limited to clarifying or giving future direction. The “Consent Agenda” accepts all reports in one motion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Officers</li> <li>Professional Staff</li> <li>Board Liaisons</li> <li>Updates to Legal Authorities</li> <li>Acceptance of Minutes &amp; the Financial Report</li> <li>Acceptance of Correspondence</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |    |
| 8:10 | New Business/Emerging Concerns                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 10 |
|      | <p>Here the Board might discuss up-coming issues, work out calendar planning, schedule special meetings, and identify who needs to receive a note of “thanks” from the Board.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |    |
| 8:20 | Board Process                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 10 |
|      | <p>Review of Decisions Made</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The Vice-President provides a summary and leads the Links discussion:</p> <p>Communication Links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who Needs to Know Directly of Board Actions?</li> <li>Summary Items to Report to Congregation</li> <li>Next Steps: Who Will Do What, When?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |    |
| 8:30 | Quarterly Review of Goals [add 10 minutes to agenda time.]                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |    |
| 8:30 | Process Observer Comments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 3  |

This is a good time to ask members: What did we do well at this meeting?  
If you were to add a “*What's the buzz*” moment, this might be a good position in the agenda for that.

|      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |             |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 8:33 | Personal Check-Out                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 9           |
|      | It is essential to healthy Board functioning not to short-cut this item out of a desire to get home sooner. Each member ought to say how they have felt during and about the meeting, lifting up what needs to be praised, confessing what was disappointing, or arranging for an off-board follow up conversation to stay in one another’s good graces. |             |
| 8:42 | Closing Words/Extinguishing the Chalice                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | _____1      |
| 8:45 | Adjournment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 105 minutes |