

The Ethical Culture Society of Essex County

Minutes of Board Meeting 11/10/2021

Meeting Attendance

In Attendance

Tom Cunningham, President; Alice Robinson-Gilman, Vice President; Terri Suess, Treasurer; Peggy Toy, Secretary; Elaine Durbach; Zia Durrani; Jeanine Rosh; Jill Farrer; Andy Weinberger; Esther Barcun

The meeting was called to order by Tom Cunningham, President, at 11:07 am. A quorum was present.

Agenda

- Updated insurance requirements
- Platforms
- Newcomers
- Volunteer Fair
- AEU Presidents Council meeting news
- Air purifying options for building
- Office staff raise

Minutes from the 10/13/21 board meeting were approved

Tom opened the meeting with an announcement that Bart Worden, executive director of the AEU, is retiring in June.

Updated insurance requirements

In the annual review of our insurance policy, we were advised by our insurance company to update our child protective policy, which was established in 2015. Two clauses were unanimously approved by the board and will be included as addenda to our current policy. One clause states that on-premise monitors are present during all activities at Essex ECS involving minors; the other states that it is the policy of the Essex ECS to seek legal advice prior to any actions of termination of employment of an accused person and for any questions on statutory reporting. Jeanine will inform the insurance company that these statements will be added to our policy.

Platforms

Sunday Nov 21st at 11am via Zoom - First Friends of NJ will give a presentation on immigration support. A notice and Zoom link will be sent out.

In recognition of and out of a desire to address the divisiveness we are seeing in our communities and the nation, members discussed creating one or more platforms or colloquies

on the topics of activism without acrimony and tools for democracy, which would include strategies for constructive civic engagement and skills such as active listening. ECS members and members of the community will be invited to lead and/or participate in the programs. A suggestion was made to present regular programs on climate change, possibly once a month. Planning for this will continue.

Other potential platforms, related to human rights and civil rights issues, were discussed. Speakers and details are to be determined.

Alice expressed an interest in interviewing Sue Willis about her 25 years working with the Community Coalition on Race.

Alice presented the idea of leading a colloquy with Sue to give all ECS members an opportunity to discuss and consider having a leader for our society and to explore what they would want in a leader. Dates are to be determined.

Newcomers

Tom will compose a general letter of welcome for newcomers. A meet and greet will be planned to welcome recent newcomers who have expressed an interest in the Ethical Culture Society. A date will be chosen, possibly in January, and an invitation will be sent.

Volunteer Fair

SOMA Two Towns For All Ages is holding its annual Volunteer Fair at the Woodland on Saturday, November 13th from 1 -4, offering volunteer opportunities with local organizations.

AEU Presidents Council

Zia reported on the AEU Presidents Council meeting. She presented two proposals from the meeting:

- The AEU is proposing that instead of having just one annual assembly, we would have regional assemblies. The regional assemblies would be made up of societies who were in closer geographical proximity. Whatever activities or proposals made in the regional assemblies can be brought to the larger national assembly when it holds its annual meeting. The advantage of regional assemblies would be that more of our society would be able to attend.
- The AEU also proposed that we consider becoming an affiliate of the American Humanist Association. Some of the societies reported that they have done that and found it to be useful and a good extension of their values.

Both proposals were discussed. Members decided by consensus that we would be interested in regional assemblies if they were held on Zoom or were hybrid meetings, were collaborative and did not replace the larger annual assembly. The second proposal, to become an affiliate of the American Humanist Association, was tabled at this time as questions came up regarding what it would mean to become an affiliate, what it would require us to do, what purpose it would serve for our society, i.e. for collaboration, communication etc.

Zia will report on our responses to the proposals and get additional information on both at the next Presidents Council meeting.

Air purification options for our building

Members weighed the pros and cons of various methods being used for cleaning the air and improving ventilation in an enclosed space, including by electronic means and by ultraviolet light. More research is needed. No decisions were made. Members will continue to research the options available.

Office staff raise

The board unanimously voted in favor of a salary increase for ECS office staff commencing in the next pay period.

Other Business and announcements

Alice and Sue would like to hold a meeting with any board members interested in participating in the development of further topics and discussions on Living Ethical Culture in Our Time, which was started by Alice and Sue two years ago. Some members expressed interest. Alice will send those members an email to set a time and date for the meeting.

Elaine announced that on November 16th from 12:30-1:30pm, the American Humanist Association is hosting the launch of the 2021 Freedom of Thought Report, which tracks freedom of thought around the world. A notice will be sent out with information on how to register for the event.

Esther announced that on November 15th at 6pm Represent.Us/New Jersey is holding a meeting to help bring Ranked Choice Voting to NJ with persuasive letters to the Editor. Information and a Zoom link will be sent out to anyone interested in attending.

The meeting ended at 12:30pm.

Next Scheduled Board Meeting: Wednesday, December 8, 2021

Minutes submitted by Peggy Toy