

**Approved Minutes
UU Rowe Center
Board of Trustees Meeting
Sunday, November 17, 2013**

Board Members Present: Albert Mussad, President; Clay Connor, Vice President; Kerri Florian, Treasurer; Cynthia Bolling, Clerk; Katha Kerr, Gail Epstein, and Cathy Perkins, Members-at-Large

Also Present: Felicity Pickett, Executive Director, Arthur Samuelson, Director of Programming, Paulette Roccio, Director of Operations, and Denice Sakakenny Smith, friend of Rowe

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. Albert conducted check-in.

After check-in, Albert requested that the board hold a brief executive session following the regular meeting.

Approval of October 20, 2013 minutes

Cathy made a **motion** to approve the minutes as amended. Clay seconded. With 7 ayes and none opposed, the motion was carried unanimously.

Directors' Reports

Executive Director (*Felicity Pickett*)

It hasn't been that long since we last met and during that time I had a two-week, stay-at-home working vacation. It was a working vacation because there was much to be done about the purchase of the Hoffman House.

I negotiated with the Hoffmans to buy the house for \$385,000. I hired Kevin Parsons to be our lawyer and signed a purchase and sales agreement. Our request for a mortgage of \$150,000 from Greenfield Cooperative Bank was approved. We had a house inspection done by Paul Viens of Greenfield. The house inspection went well. There were a couple minor things like a board in the attic that needs to be nailed down and one outlet in the kitchen that needs replacing. The house inspector pointed out that the gutter system is industrial quality and way more than the house needs. Everything in the house is top of the line and that speaks to how well the owner has taken care of the house.

Zoning for the town of Rowe is residential and light industrial. The house is in a residential zone. The town by-laws allow for usage of religious, educational, and nonprofit

recreational in a residential zone without any special permits. We will, however, need to do some work because of the public use of the house.

What will need to be done depends on how the building inspector classifies our usage. The largest possible expense would be a fire safety sprinkler system. Kevin recommended we work with Jon Wyman, a building code specialist, to advocate for us. The worst-case scenario would be that we would have to put in a metal fire sprinkler system that could cost us \$30,000. The best-case scenario would be that we wouldn't need a sprinkler system or we could use a system with plastic piping made for residential systems. Jon will advocate for us based on the building codes since there are none specifically for a conference center usage. I have talked with Eclipse about putting the Iris fund Women's Library at Hoffman House in the hearth room. The donation would pay for the sprinkler system or other improvements. She is in agreement.

So we are well on our way to having a new guest house at Rowe and I am very excited about this.

—Felicity Pickett, Executive Director

Discussion

Felicity said getting the Hoffman House guest-ready will cost from \$500 to \$30,000, depending on which fire safety system we're asked to install. She will soon meet with a friend of Rowe, who is downsizing and is willing to donate furniture to us, or at least sell it to us at a very low price. The owner of the Hoffman House won't leave any furniture behind. The down payment for the Hoffman House will include donations that were originally for the Green Guest House and the Farmhouse Addition. Felicity remarked that grant makers don't want to give money when they see an organization with money that's just sitting in the bank. Also, asking donors for money when we haven't used what they have already given us makes them less likely to give us more. We're scheduled to close on the house on December 13 and may be able to start using it for guests sometime in January.

Director of Programming (*Arthur Samuelson*)

As I mentioned in my last report, we usually see a drop in attendance in November. We are halfway through the month, so we do not know yet how much, but it looks like there is a bigger drop than expected. This is despite the fact that there are five weekends this November, versus four last year. And also despite the fact that we got *The Center Post* out a month early to give more support to November, which, like April, usually suffers for having the shortest lead time after the catalog is published. Nonetheless, there is also some good news buried here.

Here is a week-by-week comparison.

Week 1. We had 26 versus 58 people last year. But if you look closer, 41 of those last year came from one program, Osacar Mira Quessada, who is coming back next spring. Of the two programs this year, one was an experiment—the one on canning, which drew only seven people, all of whom are new to Rowe. The other was Tom Wessels, who has been coming here

for 15 years. He did better this year than ever before. He had 22 in his program, which we had capped at 20. We had such a demand that we immediately scheduled his return for spring and already have 11 reservations.

Week 2. We did significantly better than last year, 49 versus 27 people. We would have done much better had Brant Secunda drawn the number of people that he has in the past. But his numbers (27) were significantly lower, which may mean that his time is coming to an end here. He told me that he is mostly doing workshops in Europe. Nancy Aronie, on the other hand, had 22. Given that she was here last March, it is encouraging that she did draw just as many. She usually comes every other year and the risk was that she would not do as well.

Week 3. This current weekend we also have done better than last year, with 26 versus 20. Interestingly, both Stanley Krippner and Kevin have been here many times before and while their enrollment was not large, it was larger than it has ever been before.

Week 4. Next week we have a serious problem because two long-standing program leaders, Molly Scott and Martha and Don Rosenthal, have not delivered anywhere near what they have in the past. Frankly, I am not sure why. Perhaps it's because it is the weekend before Thanksgiving. But last year, Doug had three programs that week that brought in 20 people. One of those programs was cancelled for lack of registration and 20 is also a low number for us, so it is not good that we did worse. Perhaps stronger programs would have done better, or these two would have done better at another time.

Week 5 is Thanksgiving. We did a substantial push to do better than the 20 we did last year. We opened up the program to non-singles. At this moment, it is possible we will not do as well as last year but it is too soon to know for sure, or to know by just how much.

Marketing

We have been doing some analysis of our e-mail list and discovered that when names were imported into our mail program, folks who had cancelled were not imported.

We have already added 300 names to the database and we have only gone back as far as 2010. We are going to go back to 2007. More names in the database could bring better results.

Staff

Kerry Read took over from Barbara and is working out well as office and registration manager. We have two excellent volunteers: Ruby, who is from London, and Root, who is from Northampton. It takes a lot of effort on the part of others on staff to get all three up to speed on our systems, which is why we want volunteers here for at least 3 months. Root is leaving at the end of the month, and we hope to have Ruby for another couple of months. Terry Anya, who had planned to be in here to replace Root, cannot come because of health reasons so we are looking for another volunteer. Fortunately, we now have a system to train them to ease the transition.

—Arthur Samuelson, Director of Programming

Discussion

Arthur will cap attendance for the Tom Wessels spring workshop at a higher number. Arthur agreed to include the regular 10-year enrollment sheet with his next report.

Report from the Director of Operations (*Paulette Roccio*)

In my search for a new Head of Maintenance I have received letters of interest from four candidates in response to the ad in *The Center Post*. Unfortunately, due to the salary and the requirement to live on campus, the candidates that were qualified were not interested in the position. I have one remaining candidate who is incredibly qualified although not interested in a full-time position given the amount of dedication required. He may, however, be interested in doing project-based work or covering on weekends. I will be getting in touch with him in order to have a more in-depth conversation for at least a part-time solution.

The past weekend was consumed with heating system failures. The heating system in the Orchard Guest house—which also includes hot water—failed on Friday morning. We were able to have it serviced Friday afternoon, but unfortunately it failed again over the course of the weekend. Another plumbing contractor was called and the problem was resolved. Strangely enough, while the heating in the OGH wouldn't come on, the heat in the Rec Hall wouldn't shut off. This problem has been resolved as well. In addition to those two heating problems, perhaps two weeks ago the heat in the Art Room would not go on. This had been an ongoing problem last year. The plumber and electrician were brought together on this occasion, and although it took a couple of days to resolve the problem, I believe it has been brought to a final resolution.

We have once again tested positive for coliform bacteria in the well that services the Brooke House and Fromson House. Because this is the second detection in a period of six months, we are now operating under an Administrative Consent Order. What that means is that if we have one more detection within the year we will have to install some type of sanitizing system.

The majority of our volunteers will be leaving after Thanksgiving. It's been great to have a full house of volunteers again. While we have received many applications for volunteers, we do not have any due to come in. I have a few that are considering January but nothing solid as of yet. I am beginning to build a relationship with a nonprofit that works with international volunteers interested in coming to the United States. The program will work really well for us as the volunteers they provide come to the states in September and January, which coordinates well with our needs. The agency is currently working on setting up Skype interviews with candidates.
—Paulette Roccio, Director of Operations

Discussion

Paulette said Rowe is doing the foundations for Henry and another cabin. She is trying to get a start date with a contractor for the road repaving project (from Searles up to the Rec Hall).

Treasurer's Report (*Kerri Florian*)

Since we just met last month, there's nothing much to report now. I will go in the office and give a better report the next time we meet. I do intend to see if we can smooth out large expenses using accruals, for example for catalog costs, so they're spread out for the rest of the year instead of hitting all in one month. When I go in the office I'll see what's feasible. Please note the P&L and Balance Sheet reports through October 31 don't include budget vs. actual numbers.

—Kerri Florian, Treasurer

(See the October 31, 2013 financials at the end of this document)

Discussion

In response to a question about the dip in net income versus last year's, Felicity noted that many factors might be involved, from more bartering this year versus last year, to marketing expenses, to the choices people make about where they stay and how much they want to pay.

Development Committee Report (*Cathy Perkins*)

The Development Committee met by telephone conference call in October, following the Kim Klein fundraising workshop. We discussed the annual end-of-the year capital campaign. Sue Baldauf expressed her discomfort about asking again for money to do a major repair on some building or other, which is neither exciting nor final: a roof now, foundations next year . . . In light of that, we decided to ask for donations to raise \$50,000 to make the Hoffman House guest ready, which is sexy and a once and final campaign. This means that the intended roof replacement for the Orchard Guest House will be put off until next year.

Felicity will work on the donor lists and diagram and take pictures of the house. Cathy volunteered to draft some materials to use when we ask, and also to go with the mail campaign we always do. Felicity will edit and send them to Fia for design and production. We will also probably do some phoning with an effort to ask for amounts.

We will do some asks in person, in teams. Sue would like to do hers with a staff person, probably Arthur. Cathy said she would do several, either with staff or other trustees. The plan will be to start with people who are old friends of Rowe, asking them to help us out by letting us practice on them. Then we'll ask for feedback from them when we are done with our pitch. This will keep the expectations low, and perhaps the sympathy high, which may yield good results.

Felicity came up with a bold and long-term idea for capital campaigns going forward. It involves a ten-year plan to totally refurbish one building each year, starting with the Orchard Guest House next year. Another idea would be to raise enough to complete all of the projects identified by the Stewardship Committee, past and present, not yet addressed, and get them out of the way. To do this would put off OGH for another year.

Possible next steps for the Stewardship Committee would be a plan for keeping all of the buildings in good repair. We focused on the Chapel a number of years ago and had it completely

restored in time for the building's centennial. Then we focused on staff housing and found a solution which gave each staff what they asked for: an apartment with a bedroom, a sitting room, private bath and private entrance. This past year we focused on the cabin area. We could put this proposal out there as a grand vision, over 10 years, which could get repeated so that each of the buildings gets a major facelift every 10 years.

If we were to start with **Orchard Guest House**, here is what we might strive to do:

- Replace OGH roof and extend overhang
- Shore up, stabilize, insulate piers
- Repair/Replace rotted trim board and siding
- Replace carpet with bamboo flooring
- Create decking and fence hot tub area in order to get approval to use hot tub
- Bring septic system into compliance
- Build a foundation
- Put a wraparound porch in front
- Improve front landscaping
- Buy a defibrillator for infirmary
- New furniture

Here are the **general stewardship projects**, some of which have been on the list year after year and one new suggestion:

- Replace the OGH roof with extended overhang
- Shore up, stabilize, insulate piers under OGH
- Improve drainage and repair road to the rec hall
- New Hobart for the rec hall
- Rec hall ventilation
- Rec hall hood vent
- Clay room/blue room doors, sills and deck
- Replace joists in barn floor
- Farmhouse roof
- Farmhouse windows
- Remove shed/back room from Brook House
- Make Brook House wheelchair accessible
- New well
- Bring all septic systems into compliance
- Buy a yurt for morning yoga/childcare * [a new suggestion]

Here is Felicity's suggested order for the plan:

1. Orchard Guest House

2. Rec Hall
3. Brook House
4. Farmhouse/Barn
5. Infrastructure (water/septic/roads)
6. Chapel
7. Fromson House
8. Cabins/Bathhouse
9. Hoffman House
10. Another house

Felicity's idea for doing one building a year is ambitious, but imagine the satisfaction of sharing such visible results each year with our donors. We have accomplished such things before and we can do it again. It just takes determination and staying power.

Discussion

Felicity noted that the committee has been thinking about the next step we need to take in development. For example, when we began soliciting funds, we were better at direct mail than personal contact. Now we're offering trustees a choice: call people on the phone, or go out with two people and visit a prospective major donor. A major donor is someone who gives \$2,500 or more. This year everyone has been assigned a personal goal for fundraising: \$7,000. This can be raised using a mix of methods that include personal donations, phone calls, grant proposal writing, hosting events, and paying person-to-person visits.

Break

Camp Refresh Subcommittee Report (*Katha Kerr, Chair*)

Katha have nothing new to report, noting that Paulette has already talked about the work on the cabin foundations.

Nominating Committee Report (*Clay Connor*)

While Clay had nothing new to report, he did note that the fundraising requirements attached to board membership have always been an impediment to recruiting new people for the board. He was encouraged to see the existence of more fundraising options for trustees.

OLD BUSINESS

Mission Committee Report (*Gail Epstein*)

At Members and Friends weekend, some members wanted to see a vision statement as well as an amended mission statement. Albert previously provided Gail with a list of the two members who submitted their own versions of a statement. Gail said she was fine with the

mission statement her committee came up with, but would call those two people, to at least clarify whether they were critiquing the mission statement or pointing out the lack of a vision statement. She will set a date for a report to the board in the spring.

NEW BUSINESS

Women's Library (*Felicity Pickett*)

Eclipse has agreed to allow Rowe to use \$25,000 from the Iris Fund in return for renaming the Hearth Room in the Hoffman House (the dining room, which has a massive beehive brick oven) as the Women's Library. It will be used for whatever Rowe needs to make the Hoffman House guest ready.

Cathy made a **motion** to accept the \$25,000 donation from the Iris Fund in return for renaming the Hearth Room as the Women's Library. Katha seconded. The motion was passed unanimously, with six votes, no abstentions, and no nays.

Discussion

There is an additional \$7,000 in the Iris Fund, which will be used to build bookcases. Books for the future library are already on hand, in various places.

New Trustee Mentorship (*Albert Mussad*)

The new trustee's mentor will take care to fill in the trustee on anything that person might not know. Cathy Perkins will be Katha's mentor.

Conference Center 40th Anniversary (*Albert Mussad*)

The conference center will be 40 next year, and the camps will be 90 next year. The following suggestions were made about what we might want to do for next year.

- Felicity: Kick off a 10-year facilities campaign next year, in anticipation of the 50th (golden) anniversary of the center and centennial anniversary of Rowe at the end of the 10th year.
- Arthur: just thinking of a grand program that would bring people back to Rowe. It would touch Rowe's three programming strands.
- Denice: Find a way to build mini communities outside of Rowe in honor of the 50th and 100th, and encourage those communities to become donors. This would serve to reengage them with Rowe.
- Cathy: Perhaps hold house parties, where former conferees could interact with former campers.
- Albert: The 90th could be a focal point for boosting camp enrollment, perhaps by bringing back camp alumni. It could be a way to activate our own communities (the adult camps), which have been on the cutting edge of so many issues.

Strategic Planning *(Albert)*

How do we identify specific actions? First I will have a conversation with the leadership team, who will decide whether we need to work inside committees or not, then go from there. Let's think of people beyond the board who might be interested in implementing actions when we come up with them.

Schedule of next meetings

Feb. 28-March 2

May 2-May 4

A **motion** was made to adjourn the meeting at 12:50 p.m. The motion was carried, with 6 in favor, 0 abstentions and 0 nays.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Break – Executive Session

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Bolling, Clerk
Rowe Board of Trustees