

UMRA Board of Directors Meeting (Zoom)

Monday, March 27, 2023

1:00 p.m.

Approved Minutes

In attendance (virtual): Board members: John Bantle, Bill Donohue, Frank Cerra, Will Craig, Cathy Lee Gierke, Kristy Frost-Griep, Cherie Hamilton, Eric Hockert, Laurie Koch, Russell Luepker, Kate Maple, Ron Matross, Jan McCulloch, Jan Morlock, Jerry Rinehart, Barb Shiels, Julie Sweitzer, KaiMay Terry, Diane Young

Visitor: Kris Mortensen

Ron Matross opened the meeting at 1:00 p.m. and said he would move the Nomination Report up on the agenda as some members needed to leave early. Jan Morlock moved and Diane seconded approval of the February board minutes, with a unanimous vote in favor.

Finances: Kristy reported that URVC expenses are proceeding as expected. UMRA dues remain about \$2,000 short of budget, while sponsorships are up \$1,000, leaving an anticipated \$1,000 shortfall. Ron reported that he had approved expenses of \$300 for the Age-Friendly University event, and t-shirts for the Silver Gophers, which will be offset by sale of the t-shirts to the volunteers. The initial 40 t-shirts sold out and 45 more are on order. Kate moved to accept the report and Laurie, Barb and Diane all seconded, with a unanimous vote in favor.

Nominating Committee: Jan Morlock reported that the Nominating Committee had completed its work and presented the following slate: Julie Sweitzer for President-Elect, Kristy Frost-Griep for Treasurer, Laurie Koch for Secretary, John Bantle for board (including a retroactive period), Jan McCulloch and Barb Shiels for second board terms, Brad Clary (Law School, helped draft recent UMRA statements), Diane Gihl (staff from Public Engagement, UMRA Host Committee) and Michael Hancher (faculty, English) for first board terms, and Wendy Pradt Lougee (U Librarian, UMRA Program Committee) to complete the last year of Laurie Koch's term. Cathrine Wambach is not running for a second term. All have agreed to serve if elected. Jan noted that the committee had looked at gender balance and faculty/staff roles. Frank moved approval and Kate seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. Jan then asked for a motion thanking the committee members (Dale Blyth, Cathy Godlewski, Eric Hockert, Russell Luepker, Jerry Rinehart, Becky Yust, and Cathrine Wambach) for their work. Eric moved and Bill second the motion, and all voted in favor.

Newsletter Proposal: Kris reflected the UMRA newsletter had existed for nearly 45 years, and that several people are involved in the production. Kris noted that when she joined UMRA events were held once a month but now they are more frequent and in multiple formats, and communications need to be nimbler. She proposes a quarterly print newsletter mailed to all households, with an email newsletter 8 times a year (as it is now), which will provide website content. The print pdf will expand from 8 to 12 pages, allowing an extra half page for sponsors. Bev Moe, who manages sponsorships, thinks doubling the circulation will be attractive to sponsors, and will start promoting workshops as a sponsorship opportunity. While saving

money was not a goal, it appears that the revised model will save approximately \$1,500 annually. She believes the mixed print and digital model is more inclusive and will be helpful as we try to figure out why people do and do not renew memberships.

Bill said the increase in print feels counterintuitive. Kris said studies show people receive 3 print mail and 100 emails per day, resulting in more digital clutter. A study showed people notice, read, retain and value physical (print) items more. Eric noted a UMN dean was familiar with UMRA due to the print newsletter. Kris said approximately 32 VIPs on campus receive the print version, and that list could be reviewed and expanded at minimal cost. KaiMay asked if we know how many people retire each year, and could we send invites to join UMRA? Ron confirmed that HR does send an invite letter (UMRA does not get the data) but he does not know how many retirees there are each year. Will offered a testimonial in favor of print and likes the connection physical news creates. Barb asked if announcements of new programs and events would primarily be in the electronic format, and Kris said yes. The print version would include notices as well. Frank said he supports the plan and thinks print is good for UMRA's age group. Ron likes reading features in print and announcing events electronically. Cathy Lee noted that currently members can elect to receive (or not) print or electronic communications, and asked if we should take that off, replacing it with a statement that members receive print and email communications. Kris agreed, and noted the May 2022 newsletter was sent to all UMRA member households because of the election information, and no one objected. Laurie moved approval of the proposal, Kate and Will seconded, and all voted in favor.

Communications Cycle: Ron began by noting that our membership renewal messages currently begin in the summer when there are no UMRA activities or communications. He recommends that UMRA start memberships effective July 1, beginning with a media blitz in early May including email and the newsletters, announcements at the May meeting and in Special Interest Groups. The renewal notice would include the value proposition for membership in UMRA, and there would be a version tailored for first year members. A mid-June reminder would follow, as well as a last electronic reminder in early September, with a possible mailed message in early October. Cathy suggested we ask SIGs to echo the membership renewal message, with which Ron agreed, and Eric thought the proposal made sense and would simplify the administrative process. Kate asked if we get most new members in May or June, and Ron said they trickle in throughout the year. Cathy Lee moved approval and Bill seconded the motion which he saw as rationalizing the process. Bill then asked if it would be a policy or instructions to Virgil? Bill thinks it should be a policy. Eric wondered where the current perception of September 1 as the membership start date came from and wondered if it is or should be in the operating manual? Ron was not sure how the date was decided or recorded, and thinks it is a practice. Bill thinks it should be a policy, so that it is followed. Ron suggested the membership year dates could be policy, and the rest procedures. Bill said all should be policy and Frank agreed. A short discussion about toolkits on the websites and the multiple sources of guidance followed. Ron then suggested the policy could include the membership year with directions to begin renewal communications in May via multiple media. He called for a vote on the previous motion, and all voted in favor.

Dues Rates: In fall the Membership Committee had recommended eliminating the 'couples' rate of \$40 (single memberships are \$30.) Ron proposed instead raising the couples' rate to \$50 to avoid a perception of a 'takeaway'. He also noted discussion about the free first year membership, with the argument in favor being an increase in memberships, and the argument against being low renewals because there is no financial commitment. Jan Morlock asked for the rationale for the couples' rate and for getting rid of it. Ron said the elimination was proposed primarily because single members pay proportionally more. Will said he pays the couples rate as his spouse only attends a few events. Frank had no idea where the couples rate came from and proposed that it be retained for existing couples, but future members should all pay the individual rate. Cathy thought we have couples where only one person is active, and we might get drops in membership. Diane thought the history might have started when only one person (probably the male) was an employee but now there are many couples where both are UMN retirees. Kate like Frank's idea of ending the couples rate going forward, noting a friend frequently complains about the inequity, and raised the possibility of a 'plus one' membership. Cherie agreed with Frank and thinks the individual rate should apply to all going forward as it is so low. Russ noted that some couples' memberships make it possible for a member with less physical capacity to attend, and we don't want to lose members. KaiMay said she belongs to lots of organizations, and no one has a couples' membership, which is an old fashioned term. There was a discussion of alternative terms including household and 'plus one'. Kate questioned the purpose of 'plus one', as you have to pay for each person at events. Frank moved UMRA create a 'member plus one', drop the couples' rate, but allow current couples members to continue at that rate. Ron suggested the 'member plus one' rate be \$50. Bill liked preserving it for current members and eliminating couples going forward. Kris asked whether a household or plus one membership gets you anything. She asked if you can invite guests to events, noting you are supposed to be a member to be part of a Special Interest Group. Kate asked if couples can both vote (yes) and asked whether she could bring a future retiree to an event. Diane said you need to enroll guests to bring them to luncheons. Ron concluded by saying there was no consensus so he would send it back to the Membership Committee to consider these questions. Kris noted that would allow an assessment of the impact of the revised communication cycle.

Silver Gophers Launch: Ron thanked Jerry, Will and Deanne Magnuson for their work launching the Silver Gophers volunteer corps. The first activity on April 1, supporting Admissions' admitted student day. 30 volunteers will participate and pay \$15 for a t-shirt. Another opportunity is April 20 with Every Meal.

Election Process: Ron reminded the board that for two years elections have been conducted via survey which allows more people to vote. Additional nominations are solicited via the newsletter. He asked if the board was ok with the process, and there were many nods.

Campus Club: Frank reported the club is drafting a letter to President Gabel explain their situation and asking to meet. The real estate office is not communicating. If the efforts fail, the Campus Club is likely to operate until December 2023.

Program: Eric noted that the previously planned May annual meeting speaker had a conflict, so Mark Coyle had agreed to speak in May. Eric thanked Bill Donohue and Barbara Shiels for their work to make this adjustment for the May Forum/Annual meeting. Jan Morlock and a small group are working on possible 'all member' events. The Cabinets of Curiosities tours are popular and the next one is June 21 at the St Paul campus outdoor research areas. Tuesday's (March 28) Forum speaker, Julie Tonneson, was called to testify at the legislature so Mike Volna, assistant vice president for finance, will speak instead.

There was no Regents' update as Cathrine was unable to attend the last meeting in Morris.

Ron **adjourned** the meeting at approximately 2:36 p.m.