

(Approved) UMRA Board Meeting Minutes  
Monday, March 22, 2021 11:00 a.m.  
Zoom call-in

Present: John Anderson, John Bantle, Frank Cerra, Will Craig, Bill Donohue, Vern Cardwell, Gary Engstrand, Cathy Lee Gierke, Cherie Hamilton, Greg Hestness, Eric Hockert, Jean Kinsey, Ron Matross, Jan McCulloch, Jan Morlock, Kris Mortensen, Claudia Parliament, Chip Peterson, Donna Peterson, Barbara Shiels, KaiMay Terry, Cathrine Wambach, Gloria Williams

### **1. Anecdotes**

Frank convened the meeting at 11:00 and began by urging Board members to read the memo from the Campus Club. The Club is losing the University subsidy; UMRA isn't going to lobby for money for the Club but it would be helpful if Board members would send answers to the three questions to Mary Ford at ford045@umn.edu. She, Jerry, and Chip will draft a response for the next UMRA EC meeting.

### **2. Review/approval of February Board Minutes**

After corrections were noted by Gloria (Frank will dissolve the History Committee and replace it with the Organizational Continuity Committee effective July 1), the minutes were approved unanimously.

### **3. EC Draft Minutes**

There were no questions about the draft 3/15 Executive Committee minutes.

### **4. Treasurer's Report**

Greg reported that the February 1 balance was \$24,192. The only expenses were \$1,095 for the newsletter and the only revenue was \$1,000 from the Bakken Sponsorship. In the future he will use only revenues and expenses in the monthly reports; March marks the end of the third quarter, so there will be a quarterly report as well as a monthly report (which he will provide as separate reports in order to avoid confusion).

The Board voted unanimously to accept Greg's report.

## **5. Nominating Committee Report**

Bill reviewed the report that he had provided from the Nominating Committee. They solicited nominations and have prepared a stellar group for the Board and President-elect. There were two open Board positions; Ron Matross has agreed to be nominated to serve as President-elect, Greg for Treasurer, Gary for Secretary, and Laura Koch and Diane Young for the Board for 2021-24 terms. John Bantle has agreed to fill the remainder of Ron's term on the Board and KaiMay has agreed to be nominated for a second three-year term.

One issue arose, Bill reported. There were more good candidates than there were positions, which is the first time in a long time that that has happened. The Nominating Committee discussed whether to have contested elections; it decided that its job is to nominate and the bylaws allow for nominations from the floor (with the consent of the nominee). Bill said he has not seen any such nominations in his three years of involvement. The Executive Committee appeared to favor nominating one person for each position. This is a matter the Board can discuss, Bill said, and he noted that the membership of the Nominating Committee turns over each year, so the Board may wish to provide guidance for the future.

In response to a question from Jan McCulloch, Bill affirmed that this is the first time in memory that there have been more qualified candidates than positions. Usually they have to recruit people to fill positions and are not faced with an excess of candidates. Jan suggested waiting until there is a recurring problem of an excess of candidates before deciding on whether to have contested elections. Jan Morlock added that part of the reason for the surfeit of candidates was that the Nominating Committee members identified a number of good candidates. Bill agreed that it is unlikely to be a common problem—and if it turns out to be one, the practices can be changed.

Barbara, who served on the Nominating Committee, agreed with Jan McCulloch and Bill that there should not be contested elections. One Committee member strongly favored them, arguing that that is what is done in a democracy and in professional societies. Barbara said she had been in a professional society her entire career; that group nominated one person per position. If there is a contested election, the loser might not want to participate in UMRA in the future; single nominees will lead to fewer hard feelings. If there are good candidates, pass their names to the next Nominating Committee.

Board members expressed thanks to the members of the Nominating Committee.

## **6. May Agenda**

Frank had circulated a draft agenda for the May Forum and Annual Meeting. It will be a Zoom meeting with voting and the draft agenda has the Zoom polling questions. If there are nominations from the floor, it will be necessary to vote on each position to decide if a candidate will be accepted.

Kris said that she and Virgil can make this happen. Last year the Board called for nominations before the meeting; Frank could do that again and set a deadline. If there are nominees, they can be added to the polling questions. Frank observed that someone could still nominate from the floor, and he will need to say in the next newsletter that if someone nominates a candidate, that person must agree to be nominated—that is key.

Also key, Kris added, is that everyone should register for the meeting in order that they can vote. If a couple is attending, they need to register separately. Frank recalled that two "yes" votes had been allowed in the past. Kris said that they can "test drive" the polling by trying it out with the Board at its April meeting.

Bill noted that the bylaws provide for nominations from the floor—and that provision should be followed.

Further discussion followed on how voting would take place if there is a contested election. The process will be worked out if that situation comes to pass.

Kris clarified that the Board meeting will take place on May 24 at 11:00 and the Annual Meeting/Forum will be at noon on May 25. It was agreed that 30 minutes of the May 25 meeting should be set aside for the elections and bylaw amendments, although, as Bill pointed out, usually the elections are by acclamation and the bylaw amendments received overwhelming support in electronic voting, so those items of business may take only 10 minutes. Given that sufficient time should be allowed for Regent Powell to give a talk and then have a Q&A session, the Forum/Annual Meeting should be scheduled for 90 minutes.

## **7. Summer Programming**

Jan Morlock began by saying she was not asking for any Board action at this time. First, the Program Committee deliberated about ideas for summer and decided to aim for one program per month, with two of them virtual, "with at least one program to be in the zoom meeting (rather than webinar) format to include a content presentation followed by breakouts for members to discuss and interact." This format has worked well for the new-member events so should work for this as well.

The Committee is also considering the possibility of an outdoor event, probably in August, subject to prevailing public health standards and other considerations. A subgroup of the Committee will consider the options and make a report in April.

Second, the Committee has been thinking about post-COVID events and would like to do a survey of the membership to find out how people are feeling about returning to in-person meetings. "UMRA may wish to keep some of its programs virtual, for engaging members who are out of the region or who may not be inclined or able to attend events on campus. This might include, for example, offering at least January and February programs online, while weather makes attending meetings more difficult, and while members may be traveling out of the region. Or in-person, all-member meetings may be less often than monthly, and mixed on the calendar with virtual programs."

Third, the Program Committee concurs with the recommendation to merge the Program and Workshop Committees. The committee chairs agree and suggest that Frank merge them effective for next year.

Jan McCulloch asked if it would be possible, as part of a summer program, for representatives from each of the interest groups to present highlights of the year. Even if one has been an UMRA member for a long time, they may forget what the various groups do. Jan Morlock said it a great idea; Chip suggested it would be more advantageous to have the reports in the fall when UMRA is recruiting members. People may not be as involved during the summer, especially with the end of the pandemic.

## **8. Committee Reports**

**8a. Program:** Jan already reported.

**8b. Workshops:** Ron reported on discussion with University Archivist Eric Moore and noted it was local to the University and did not cover donations to other organizations. The April program will be fun, about the Minneapolis "mega-murder," with a National Park Ranger, that will explain the large groups of crows that appear each year along the river.

**8c. PDGR:** John reported that he is still trying to constitute the committee. Bill promised to provide contact information for Greg Fox at Duluth.

**8d. Communications and Outreach:** Jean reviewed the report that she had submitted to the Board in advance of this meeting. She began with a comment about nominations from the floor at the Annual Meeting: She does not believe there have ever been any. It is necessary to be prepared but nothing to worry about.

(Some of the following elements of Jean's oral report are cribbed from her written report.) Jean reviewed the accomplishments since October 2020: a Facebook group has been established (Gary Engstrand), there has been Alumni

Association and other outreach (Will Craig), JOIE has been rejuvenated (Kris Bettin), there have been multiple email announcements for events (Kris Mortensen), and UMRA has developed a team with expertise to run Zoom meetings (Virgil Larsen, John Anderson, and Cathy Gierke).

Jean said the transition to Drupal 9 will be the optimum time to make any desired website design changes. There are some UMRA members with Drupal experience who may be willing to help with this transition.

Communications Committee members will review sections of the website in March in order to give Cathy feedback on any discrepancies they find or suggestions for improvement. Cathy observed that the intent is simply to make sure the website is working, not to propose design changes.

Jean said that her Committee recommends that UMRA events be posted on the Facebook group page with a link to the website for registration. A person who might be responsible for these postings (and their removal after the date is passed) will be needed.

The Communications Committee suggests quarterly new-member receptions; there will be another one in April. With respect to the survey of interests among new members, they advise differentiating between interest in attending monthly forums and workshops and planning monthly forums and workshops.

Jean reported that Kris suggested sending a printed copy of the newsletter to all new UMRA members for the first year they are members. The Committee endorsed that plan.

The Committee agreed with Jan's recommendations for summer programs, some virtual, some in person. They also suggested that programs not be live-streamed because that could cannibalize in-person attendance. Zoom remains a good way for committees to meet.

An item not in her report, Jean said, was an email from Frank asking that the Communications Committee discuss the financial support UMRA should plan on for the newsletter, JOIE, and web activities. They will develop recommendations. Frank emphasized he was interested in the policy issues; there is a list of questions that will lead to policy in this area.

Jan Morlock said, apropos of post-COVID events, that there was some sentiment at the Program Committee to continue providing some events virtually (such as in January and February, when many are out of the region or may be unwilling to travel to the Campus Club because of winter travel difficulties). That question need not be resolved now but the Board will want to consider it in the future; the Program Committee will bring recommendations. Jean agreed and added that communications will need to be clear about which format will be used for each event.

Ron suggested these are issues that can be included in the membership survey (such as asking about January and February events).

Jan McCulloch asked if Board members had any sense of the extent to which people want to come to events but face problems in terms of transportation to the site. Understanding that problem could help determine whether or not all events have a Zoom component for those who cannot attend but want to stay active. Ron and Frank agreed this was an excellent question for the survey. Donna recalled that when she was president, it was clear that some members had difficulty getting from the parking ramp to the Campus Club, or with driving in. All of us will be in that position someday, she said, and this is an important issue. She agreed that there should continue to be a Zoom component for those in need.

**8e. Social Activity and Travel:** Cherie reported they have advertised Road Scholar 5-day events; a few UMRA members thought the events were well done but that the \$499 price was excessive. She contacted Road Scholar and mentioned that Rick Steves has good programs that are free. She had the same reaction from AROHE. Road Scholar has agreed to try an experiment: They will offer a special interest tour to Portugal for \$299 for five days. So there will be a lower cost for those who cannot travel and it will provide background for those going on the actual tour later this year. She said she will continue to work with Road Scholar to try to reduce the cost of other virtual tours.

**8f. Membership:** John reported that there was a good turnout at the February new-member event and people enjoyed it. With the University's early-retirement incentive, there were 510 new retirees invited to UMRA membership in January, so there was a surge in new members. In response to the Communications Committee recommendation, there will be another new-member event in April. They also concluded that hour-long breakout rooms were too long, so they plan on two 30-minute breakout rooms in order to let people meet more new members.

Frank asked what the total UMRA membership is now; John said the listserv has nearly 700 names.

Kris reported on a conversation about UMRA with a former colleague who has joined UMRA, who said "not yet" to UMRA participation. Kris suggested reaching out to retirees again, perhaps six months after they have retired. John said they can do that.

**8g. BOR Liaison:** Frank reported that Jerry was unavailable for the meeting; he had submitted a report to the Board.

**8h. URVC:** Eric reported that participation rate continues to increase, 350% in hours and 300% in the number of volunteers over the same period in 2020. The numbers remain below the 5-year average, however, but he expects they will increase over time. He provided highlights from the written report he had provided to the Board.

**9. Other:** Apropos of post-COVID programming, Chip asked (as a small non-representative sample) how many Board members were vaccinated; most had been and the remainder had had the first of two shots.

Bill reported that four new regents had been elected:

- Kodi VerHalen, 6<sup>th</sup> district
- Dr. Ruth Johnson, 1<sup>st</sup> district
- Doug Huebsch, 7<sup>th</sup> district
- James Farnsworth, 4<sup>th</sup> district

Bill said he will work with Jan Morlock to invite the new regents to meet with UMRA members, which was also done with the last group of new regents.

Cathy said she would help people put events on the UMRA Facebook group; there is a new feature on Facebook that provides for posting events and which removes the post once the date is past. Jan Morlock said it needs to be clear that people need to go to the UMRA site to actually register for events; she said she would work with Cathy to make sure the posts are clear.

Frank adjourned the meeting at 12:10.

-- Gary Engstrand