

UMRA Board of Directors Meeting (Zoom)
Monday, January 23, 2023
1:00 p.m.
Approved Minutes

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

Visitors: Kris Mortensen

Ron Matross opened the meeting just after 1:00 p.m., noting that he wanted to add a report on the Nominating Committee and Cathrine Wambach's report on the Regents' meetings to the agenda. He then asked for approval of the November and December board minutes. Frank moved approval of the November minutes and Kate seconded, with a unanimous vote in favor. Barb moved approval of the December minutes and Jerry seconded, with a unanimous vote in favor.

Finances: Kristy presented the financial report which now incorporates URVC. On line 50 there is a note about the event expenses. The deficit is close to the budgeted amount, so expenses appear to be on track. Dues received are slightly higher than reported due to January deposits but still just under \$12,000, compared to the budgeted \$15,000. As an offset, Pillars of Prospect Park purchased two more ads resulting in \$1,000 of unplanned income.

Ron expressed concern about dues falling short of projections, and that based on John's membership report, renewals are down to 72%. It is 50% for first year free memberships, and 80% for continuing members. There will be two more contacts by March, but it is late in the membership year. Ron and the Minnesota delegation raised this topic at the recent virtual Big 10 meeting and UW has a 3% nonrenewal rate. Jerry asked if free membership is working? The concept was to bring in more members. Cathy Lee said we should expect a lower renewal rate for those joined for free. Frank recommended asking those who don't renew why they did not renew. Jan said some other Big 10 associations call each non-renewal and ask that question. Diane observed that there are fewer new members who register for lunches. Eric said he had plans for engaging new members around the March luncheon. Cathrine said we probably have data we could analyze. If new members come to events, do they renew? Frank said we still have to know why new members do not renew. KaiMay said we could also ask why they join. New members may not appreciate the organization if membership is free. Bill noted that despite membership being free people still have to take action to sign up. He wanted to know how we had budgeted for membership dues, and Kristy said John Anderson's projection was based on a 50% rate for new members, and 85% for others.

Ron offered a proposal. He has talked with Virgil about the membership communication cycle and thinks there is room for improvement. UMRA currently sends out renewals in June and July when there is no programming, and it continues through February. It might work better to start

closer to September, make the communications marketing tools with different messages for new members, and end by Thanksgiving. He wants to enlist the Communications and Outreach Committee along with the Membership Committee to create a small group, led by Ron and including John and Virgil, that will develop a plan for consideration by the board in February. Kate asked if he was considering a change to the calendar year, but Ron said he was more focused on adjusting the communication months. Diane liked the proposed approach. Kris advocated clarifying the calendar, program, and membership years, and noted other organizations start reminding members about renewal nine months in advance. Jerry asked if the bylaws define the role of the Membership committee, which has been more focused on recordkeeping but perhaps should include marketing. He mentioned the recent discussion about eliminating the couples' discount. Cathy Lee thought the Membership Committee decided not to bring a dues change to the board. She said renewals could start as early as April so that membership is resolved by the time fall programs begin. Cathrine said renewal messages could include a preview of coming events. Bill supports creating the group for figuring out communications and deadlines, and whether the free membership is effective. Kris reminded us that there is value in the free membership by capturing email and contact information. Ron wrapped the discussion up by saying he would meet with the Communications Committee followed by the small task force to discuss communications and ask Membership to consider dues (both the couples discount and possible lifetime memberships), with a report back to the board. Jerry reminded us to include special interest groups in any definition of active members, since we think active members are more likely to renew. Cherie said she likes the idea of membership committee contacting those who did not renew, and noted that OLLI does that. Kate reminded us that since we are still in moderate COVID members might put more emphasis on small groups for safety, as well as the value of the activity.

Program: Eric had four items to report. First, there is a special forum about the Fairview-Sanford proposed merger on February 14. He recognized Frank, Kris and others for setting this up so quickly, and thought we might want to set up criteria for special forums. Second, there will be enhanced efforts to engage new members for the March Midland Hills lunch Forum. There will be a new member welcome session for 30 minutes before the lunch, and Ron will discuss UMRA opportunities. Jan McCulloch is coordinating hosts for each new member, who will contact the new member in advance and join them at lunch if the new member so desires. Eric will send them personal invites (with John Anderson and Diane Young's signatures as well) to encourage registration, timed to the formal newsletter announcement.

Eric is arranging a site visit for Midland Hills and will invite board members to attend if they wish, and get promotional information describing the menu, program and venue to Kris in time for the newsletter. Finally, he asked for ideas about non-Forum, non-Workshop events for this year. He is thinking zero to four events, not too close together, perhaps including a Holiday event. Jan volunteered to help guide this, and Eric is talking with the Social Activities Committee. Current ideas include a boat ride on the Mississippi or the St. Croix, Como, Arboretum, or campus tours. Kate said she loves the Arboretum idea. Kris asked if there was a written Program Committee report, and Eric said no but he would send his personal notes to

Julie. Kris said she joined UMRA because of a new member event where she identified an activity of interest to her. Diane said she observed fewer no shows at the third luncheon (November 2022), which may mean bringing new members and board hosts together is valuable. She still gets general questions from members who don't know who else to contact.

Big Ten Retirees Association (BTRA): UMRA put attendance on the agenda. All except Nebraska have seen significant drops since COVID for in person attendance, even up to 50%. Some are doing hybrid events, some with dedicated rooms, and one even hired a tech person at \$1300 per month. Jan noted that those doing hybrid meetings are not including a luncheon. Ron said that some of those doing hybrid meetings are less interested in social aspects. Eric agreed with Kate's earlier comment that small groups can provide a welcoming environment. Diane said we should use the language of special interest groups, not clubs, to reaffirm that they are part of UMRA. Ron said there is a process for approval of special interest groups.

Nominating Committee: As immediate past president Jan is serving as chair. She reported the membership is set as noted in her written report. They will come back to the board in March with a slate of officers. Frank moved approval of the Nominating Committee membership, Barb seconded, and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Professional Development Grants for Retirees (PDGR): John Bantle reported there were ten applications, which is good news after two years of single applications. There is \$53,951 in the main account, and \$34,619 in the University account. We are in the second of three years of university funding from the provost under the current agreement, so will receive an additional \$15,000 next year. John presented three issues for discussion. First, it is possible the PDGR committee will want to award around \$40,000 to perhaps 8 of the 10 applicants and asked if that was appropriate. Jan said we should fund those that meet the criteria best and asked if there is a sunset on the university funding. Bill said he was confident the provost would not claw back the funding, and if UMRA could show it is being used effectively, he thinks Provost Croson will renew the funding. Will said he did a report in JOIE and the newsletter showing the impact of the research funded by the grants on students, society, academia and more. John thought four of the applications had the potential for major impacts. Frank thought it was good to fund up to \$40,000, not necessarily all applications, so that there is a message back that the quality of the grant application counts.

The second issue is that the committee is down to 6 and needs 1 or 2 more members. John asked if he should identify a potential member and ask Ron to make the appointment. Bill agrees that is the right process. Kate asked if she could email ideas about members to John, and he agree. The last issue is an email from the associate vice president for research to the provost, indicating the OVPR office could not support the UMRA PDGR program beyond completing current grants. The provost responded that UMRA is a "politically sensitive and important group" and encouraged exploring options to continue to provide the financial administration of the grants. John noted that there is no obvious way to replace that administrative support. Julie agreed to contact Deb Cran and find out more information. This is

money Provost Croson assigned to UMRA, it remains in university accounts, and we all want to assure it is managed well.

Travel: Cherie reported that sending travel info via the UMRA listserv does not appear to be reaching all members so she is interested in submitting an article for the newsletter. It would include a link to the brochure that provides the information, and questions would go to Cherie. Kris said she was open to promoting trips in the newsletter and recommended using multiple communication channels. Cherie said UMRA has no responsibility for the trips and they are simply offered to UMRA members. AROHE is starting to organize its travel planning by regions, and Cherie asked if UMRA was willing to invite members of midwest AROHE retiree associations to join trips if there is space. Jerry recommended a 3-year approval subject to reconsideration after 3 years and made that motion. Will seconded. Jan asked if we are pressed to decide now? She would appreciate refreshing her understanding of UMRA's responsibility. Cherie insisted UMRA has no responsibility, and the vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Regents: Cathrine submitted a written report on the recent Regents' meetings and noted there is more detail online. Enrollment seems positive but Cathrine expressed concern over the report of decreased faculty engagement. Eastcliff funding and ownership is under discussion due to decreased use. Ron said he would include the Regents' reports earlier on the agenda to assure time for discussion. Barb and Jerry discussed the employee survey that is the basis for the report on decreased engagement. Jan noted the upcoming election of new Regents. The Alumni Association is hosting a candidate forum January 31. She wondered whether UMRA should recruit UMRA members to serve on the Regents Candidate Advisory Council. Kris noted the UMRA Forum on Regent selection was the next day (January 24).

Ron **adjourned** the meeting at approximately 2:50 p.m.