

SEWARD NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

Board of Directors

Minutes of meeting held January 26, 2022

The Seward Neighborhood Group board of directors met in a regularly scheduled meeting electronically, using Zoom, on Wednesday, January 26, 2022. The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:38 p.m. by president Lisa Boehlke.

Nine board members were present when the meeting began: Terry Barnes; Lisa Boehlke; Doug Hicks; Paul Landskroener; Mary Pumphrey; Ron Schlatter; Donna Ray; Jim Scheidt; and Cheryl Robertson.

Board members Crystal Quinn, Sara Rothholz-Weiner, and Tami Traeger notified the board prior to the meeting that they could not attend and were excused. Marcel Thompson and Lisa Williams-Rolle were absent without excuse.

The secretary noted that vice-president Marcel Thompson has not attended more than three board meetings in the last year without excuse. The board noted that, under SNG's bylaws, he is no longer a member of the board.

Also attending was Michael Jon Olson (interim executive director), guests Michelle Braley and Chivon Lashley; community members Dan Pederson.

1. **Approval of agenda and minutes.** The board approved the proposed agenda of tonight's meeting with one addition. The board also approved minutes of the December meeting.
2. **Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice.** At the board's invitation, Michele Braley (executive director) and Chivon Lashley (referral coordinator) from Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice (SLRJ) made a presentation on SLRJ's history and current work.

SLRJ was created in 2004 by residents of the Seward and Longfellow neighborhoods who wanted to practice restorative justice. SNG was SLRJ's fiscal sponsor until 2019 when SLRJ became its own independent nonprofit. SLRJ maintains a close relationship with both SNG and LCC, however, with each neighborhood organization having a seat on the SLRJ board. Mary Pumphrey is SNG's representative on the SLRJ board. SLRJ lost its office space when the Coliseum building was damaged in 2020 but will soon move into the Ivy Building.

Michelle described the philosophy of restorative justice as an alternative to retributive justice. Restorative justice focuses on what harm was caused, what needs to be done to restore the harm, and involves the community in the resolution of the harm. While there are several methods of restorative justice, SLRJ primarily uses the restorative conference approach, where those affected by a harm—including the offender—meet to discuss what happened, what harm resulted, and what needs to be done to make things right.

SLRJ also uses the talking circles method on occasion. During the COVID pandemic, most conferences have taken place on Zoom.

In the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, SLRJ has seen a dramatic change in its pattern of referrals, with offenses being referred by police or the county attorney falling off. Similarly, the removal of school resource police officers has reduced referrals from schools. Nevertheless, the community's interest in restorative justice is strong with a continuing demand for restorative practices.

SLRJ is responding to the loss of its traditional referral sources by looking for other ways to practice restorative justice in the neighborhood. SLRJ recently helped create a video with City of Nations Storytelling collecting stories of Somali neighbors and business owners hurt in the 2020 civil unrest. SLRJ is also working with Minneapolis department of civil rights to develop alternative, restorative pathways for complainants and will sign contract to get referrals. SLRJ is in discernment about further focus and emphasis and is working on a strategic plan for the future.

Michelle invited SNG members to call if they're interested in participating in a restorative activity, to learn about restorative justice, or to be trained as a SLJR volunteer.

A question was asked whether SLJR gets involved with environmental disputes. (e.g., installation of a telephone pole treated with hazardous material). Michelle responded that restorative conferences are best when an identifiable person is harmed, but that mediation can be used to resolve conflicts, perhaps using a talking circle. Another board member suggests SLRJ use the SNG website to give a higher profile.

Michelle and Chivon expressed appreciation to SNG for its ongoing financial and moral support of SLRJ's work and looks forward to deepening and strengthening the relationship between our organizations.

3. **East Lake Library communication.** Anna Zillinger from the East Lake Library, who has regularly attending our board meetings and was scheduled to make a presentation to the board was unable to attend the board meeting and sent the following report to the board prior to the meeting:

My work in the library and collaborating with community groups is being affected by county staffing shortages. We are focusing on sustaining our in-person services, which requires shifting commitments outside of in-direct service including my attending neighborhood board meetings. Any presentations I had planned will need to be delayed until we are back to some relative normalcy.

I value our work together and can make sure to reconnect soon. I plan to be in touch around the time of larger neighborhood events to see how library staff can participate and support. I likely will reach out for smaller meetings and email exchanges when possible to communicate information and stay up to date on happenings in the neighborhood. I love seeing how all your websites are updating and coming together, so naturally will check there for relevant details!

Thank you for your understanding and partnership - reach out any time!

In deep appreciation – Anna

4. **Treasurer's report.** Ron Schlatter referred to four documents in the board packet that constitute the treasurer's report. Ron explained that he reviews formal financial reports from our bookkeeper and culls most important issues and facts and puts them into a narrative report (labeled "SNG Financial Report") which he summarized.

Among other things, the report noted the transfer of funds from our checking account at Associated Bank to Trustone Credit in order to keep our account balance under the \$250,000 FDIC insurance limit and to earn interest. The report also noted that SNG has terminated its contract ADP payroll services and is looking for a more affordable vendor. Robert Thompson, new bookkeeper, is getting familiar with our accounts and organization and is providing regular reports to the treasurer. Ron will work with him to simplify our chart of accounts.

The report also discussed the Seward Towers community facilitator position. The facilitator is a SNG employee who works with residents of Seward Towers East and West. We pay the employee's salary and benefits, and get reimbursed for our costs from Seward Towers Renovation LLC in the following year. The vacancy in the position since the end of September has affected both our anticipated outlay and reimbursement, and Michael Jon and Robert have adjusted the budgeted and actual figures accordingly.

The 2021 budget and actual experience comparisons are of little use because of the unusual circumstances of 2021. On balance, however, our income was reduced but so were expenses in approximately equal amounts. Ron believes that 2022 will be a more normal financial year and will track and report anticipated and actual income and expenses for 2022 regularly. Finally, the report noted that the Seward history book produced \$105 in income for 2021 and this has been deposited. Some copies of the book are still available and can be purchased from Dick Westby.

Board members expressed appreciation to Ron for his work in managing our financial resources and for his clear, helpful reports.

5. **Approval of the 2022 Work Plan.** Michael Jon Olson presented the work plan that was introduced at the November board meeting and discussed at length at the December meeting. Changes were incorporated in the revised plan provided in the meeting packet and are ready for approval.

It was moved and seconded to approve the work plan as revised. During discussion, a question was asked whether fundraising should be included in the work plan. The response was that fundraising is a regular function of the finance committee and need not be listed as a specific task in the annual work plan. Nevertheless, we agreed to add an item to the work plan to develop a fundraising plan.

Another member suggested that we add a reference to the Dandelion Project that is documenting neighborhood members' experiences during the civil unrest in 2020 to the history section as a specific item in the work plan. This suggestion was approved.

The 2022 work plan, as amended, was unanimously approved.

6. **2022 budget.** Michael Jon presented the SNG 2022 Operating Budget, refined and revised since being proposed at the November meeting. (A copy of the proposed budget is in the board packet.)

A motion was made and seconded to approve the budget as presented. A member noted that the budget proposes a deficit of \$18,000 and wanted to know how that would be covered? The answer is that we will cover it from our financial reserves. The proposed 2022 budget was approved unanimously.

7. **Committee charters.** Michael Jon reported that the executive committee recommends that the board establish three standing committees with charters as presented in the board packet. The board discussed each committee charter.

- a. **Finance committee.** Currently, the executive director and treasurer have been functioning as a two-member finance committee. The executive committee recommends a charter for the committee that would have up to five members with the duties functions as described in the proposed charter.

A motion was made and seconded to establish a finance committee with the charter as proposed. The motion passed unanimously.

During discussion, the board asked Michael Jon to revise the charter to add preparation and recommendation of annual operating budget to the committee's responsibilities. He will do so and bring a revised charter to the board for approval in the future.

- b. **Personnel committee.** A motion was made and seconded to approve the charter of the personnel committee as proposed. The motion passed unanimously.

During discussion, a question was raised about what "taking action" regarding personnel means and whether it isn't the executive director's job to "take action" regarding employees? Michael Jon responded that the reference to "taking action" refers to other policies such as the SNG employee grievance policy that require certain matters to be reviewed by a personnel committee. The board asked Michael Jon to propose an amendment to the charter at a future meeting that clarifies the ambiguity in the "taking action" provision.
 - c. **Board development.** A motion was made and seconded to approve the charter of the board development committee as proposed. The motion was approved unanimously.
 - d. **Other committees.** It was noted that the board needs to approve charters for other committees, and this will be an ongoing effort. The Community Development Committee has a charter that was proposed last year, but it was never adopted by the board. That charter will be brought to the board for approval in the future. Similarly, the environment committee needs to have a charter developed and approved. Michael Jon noted that he's in discussion with the Longfellow Community Council to explore establishing a joint environment committee for both organizations.
8. **Election of vice president.** Given Marcel's departure from the board, the office of vice-president of SNG is vacant. Doug Hicks, currently the at-large member of the executive committee, was nominated to be SNG vice president. No other nominations were made. Doug was elected unanimously.
 9. **Seward arts update.** Terry Barnes asked whether the Seward Arts web page can serve as an information hub for Seward artists on an ongoing, year-round basis, with Winter Frolic and other arts events as sub-activities publicized through that page. Michael Jon said that SNG owns the "sewardarts.org" domain name and the intention is to keep the Seward arts site alive and current. Michael Jon also noted that the executive committee

is discussing contracting with LCC to share the services of a communications staff person who will be able to keep our web site up-to-date more regularly.

10. **Bylaws revision update.** Paul Landskroener for the bylaws revision committee. He said that we have draft bylaws, already reviewed and revised by the board, ready to be proposed to the neighborhood. The committee has also developed two documents summarizing the new bylaws and their rationale. One of the summaries has been translated into Somali and Oromo. We are in the process of posting all these documents (i.e. the current SNG bylaws; proposed new bylaws; a summary of bylaw changes in English, Somali, and Oromo; and the rationale for bylaw changes) on the SNG web site. The web site will also announce that two community meetings will be held to hear questions, comments, and concerns with the proposed new bylaws. Information gathered at these meetings will be considered before presenting the proposed new bylaws to the board for approval at its February meeting. (After the board meeting, the community meetings were scheduled for Wednesday, February 9 at noon and 6:30 pm.)
11. **Adjourn.** A motion to adjourn was made and seconded and approved. The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:20 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Paul M Landskroener, secretary

The board packet is available to. Board members here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1jzs_6dzfVTfNpgPAeHJ6xLHTif9LwOv