

Marlboro College Alumni Council  
April 11, 2021  
Meeting Minutes

In Attendance: Pamela Nye, Melanie Gottlieb, Kate Hollander, Mark Genszler, Gretchen Gerzina, CJ Churchill, Dagmawi Eminetu, Bess Pohelmann, Ellie Roark

Meeting called to order at 1:01 PM EST

### **Approval of agenda**

Agenda approved without amendment

### **Approval of minutes**

Minutes approved without amendment

### **Officer Reports**

Treasurer - Mark

- Filed required annual report with the state of Vermont. This re-establishes our organization as a VT nonprofit corporation for this year. Mark paid \$20 fee out of pocket. More work required to change details about officers so they reflect the current council, rather than the interim council.
- Wider treasurer goals on the horizon: to develop a website donation mechanism and compile standard practices for soliciting and thanking donors.

Clerk - Ellie

- Unsure of availability for the next meeting; Pam volunteers to take minutes if I am not available.

Moderator - Melanie

- No progress on 501(c)(3) status attorney yet. Melanie will look to her own work organization for some resources; may need to pay for legal advice. Will follow up with a few more people and work to make progress on this process this month.

### **Committee Reports:**

Communications

- Email report: we decide that Melanie, Kate and Ellie (who monitor the email address) will just verbally report about emails each month rather than compile a detailed PDF. Recent communication includes alums looking to connect with other alums; we decide we need to actively work on developing policies around access to our alumni information and privacy.
- Upcoming communications: Melanie to draft this month's email newsletter. Discussion about frequency of email updates; for now we decide that monthly is manageable and we do have enough to report to make a monthly email worthwhile.
- Suggestions from the Webmaster (Erik): Erik had good suggestions around volunteer recruitment: sent Melanie some articles about best practices. Some examples: when we recruit for committees we can be more explicit about the commitment required; we

should consider naming a council member to head the committee; we should consider if the letter of intent is too stringent a requirement.

#### Resources

- Group has begun to focus on thinking strategically about fundraising. Projects that need fundraising: *Potash Hill*; events fostering alumni connections; sponsoring lectures; building a member database; we probably will also eventually want to pay someone part time to do some staff level stuff.
- What does fundraising look like? CJ met with Will Wootton, who offered some insights. 501(c)(3) status needs to be a major priority in order to begin.
  - What generates enthusiasm for giving? Regular online publication. Will was not aware of our monthly email. He thinks we need something different than a monthly newsletter to generate real enthusiasm; getting our governance house in order is not going to light people up. Needs to be more spontaneous. News of alums running for office, or publishing books, etc. etc. *Potash Hill* can be an exciting fundraising initiative, as long as we have 501(c)(3) status.
  - To develop donors, we need to show exactly what we're doing and where money is going. From regular donors, maybe a goal of \$10,000 a year makes sense initially, larger donors need cultivating over time.
  - Suggestion that we come up with a one-page business plan that could be the center of a fundraising effort. Maybe around *Potash Hill*.
  - A financial commitment from every member of the council is important, the amount committed is less important.
- Discrete, fundable projects are the excitement generators, but we don't have to be in charge of literally every project. Example ideas: Photo fundraising event, \$5 per photo, can build community and build the archives; fundraising for the archive housed at UVM, etc.
- What are the skills and talents of the community? We need to think creatively about how to draw from the well of the alumni community.
- Priorities are to focus on acquiring tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status, and have a separate conversation about specific fundraising ideas and campaigns.

#### Governance

- Progress on our new committees: Kate had a conversation with Dianna Noyes who has done a lot with *Potash Hill* in the past. She will volunteer to join the committee, and had great thoughts about how the committee might function optimally. She thinks 4-6 people is ideal, and we have 3 volunteers already. We discussed developing a stable of writers, photographers, and other folks to contribute to the magazine (who would not necessarily need to be on the committee; we both had some ideas of folks to reach out to. She has back issues; if someone can digitize them we (the council) could think about how to host those.
- Facebook committee-- currently a small number of volunteers. We decide to eventually rethink the charge to help recruit more folks; maybe broaden the scope to all social media. For now, council members will join to fill out the group as needed.

#### Old Business

Bylaws discussion:

- Some group members have added comments about small changes to the google doc; Governance will incorporate these.
- Should we charge membership dues? Some of us are averse to the notion of charging dues on principle, but also, there is the difficulty of administrative hassle with dues; trying to figure out who has paid and who hasn't may be beyond our current administrative capabilities. Consensus, however, is that we don't want to preclude dues by explicitly mentioning that we do NOT require them.
- Do donors get some kind of additional membership privileges? Tension between needing engagement for members, but also, this is an alumni association, so in a sense, everyone paid a lifetime membership fee when they enrolled in Marlboro College. We want to keep people both financially and intellectually involved.
- Discussion about the tension between a strict "bylaws" document vs. a kind of philosophical constitution document; our current draft incorporates both. We will leave the draft as is (i.e. splitting the difference between strict bylaws and more philosophical flavor).
- Need to put together a very simple, very sparse skeleton with required bylaws for 501(c)(3) incorporation. We can then replace this with our fleshed out version once we've completed the process.
- Gov group will make changes in keeping with this conversation and bring these bylaw articles back for a vote next meeting, along with new articles to discuss.

### **New Business**

No new business

Open meeting session adjourned at 2:15pm EST

Closed meeting session followed.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellie Roark  
Clerk