Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting for UREC – July 21, 2027

Attendance: MaryLiz Stewart, Paul Stewart, Eli Burhan, Leon Walker, Cecelia Tucker, Ren Lee, Joan Rogers, Celeste Knight

In Ron's Gardner's and David Hochfelder's absence Paul Stewart convened the meeting at 5:35pm. Maryliz explained how the present meeting met the requirements for a quorum due to the fact that two of the board members had taken a leave of absence and so should not be counted in the calculation for a quorum.

It was requested that the agenda be modified to allow an earlier vote on the admission of Eli as a sitting board member. Joan moved and Cecelia seconded to make the adjustment and vote on Eli to be a sitting member of the board. All voted in favor.

The minutes were reviewed. Joan moved to approve them. Leon seconded. The motion carried.

Paul presented the financial report. He reviewed the balance sheet and profit and loss statement that had been distributed. Joan raised a question on the negative $25,742 operating loss on the profit and loss statement. Paul explained that the loss in relation to revenue was made up from savings. He also projected that future revenue would show us operating with either break even or positive cash flow. Ren asked about the line with "consultants". Paul explained that part of that line contained payments to Sarah Stewart for program development work. Paul was not clear what all of the category contained. It was asked that a breakdown be brought to a future meeting.

Maryliz provided the Executive Director's Report – The issue of Sarah Stewart's work was introduced. Ren indicated she was concerned about nepotism. Maryliz explained about Nancy Delaine's letter (the attorney's letter provided prior to the last meeting in May) where it indicated that she principally identified process as the important consideration and that hiring a relative was a permitted action. In Nancy's letter she had said that hiring the daughter of the director was permitted but to avoid challenges related to the attorney general's office, if they arose, there should be a competitive process in the selection of staff. She also identified multiple other conditions that would help, chief among them being having a resolution recorded in the minutes that recognized the hiring. Eli recounted her experience as being the child that was the daughter of a board president in another non-profit. Joan expressed concern about being careful. Paul noted that in today's environment, being "DEI" and suing the NEH to reinstate a past grant was not "keeping one's head down". Ren commented on the hiring process with a concern that the request for postal mailed resume's was not ordinary for today's job market, indicate the time frame seemed too short and was interested in along term plan for the filling of the position. Joan asked that Nancy be involved in future discussions.

Maryliz talked about the CAP program ("Downtown Initiative funds) and the New York council for the Arts and the need for state funding not to exceed 50% of the total project cost for the Interpretive Center. She reported on other efforts to raise funds, grants that has been turned down, were pending and the slow pace of reimbursements for grants already won.

Under committee reports Eli reported on Fund Development. Eli outlined recent efforts to revitalize the Fund Development efforts with Peter Gabak's board departure it needed to be restructured. Eli outlined the process for the Capital Campaign sending 40 letters out for the inquiry phase of the campaign expecting a return 3, 4, 5 and 6 years out. She explained the Capital Campaign process. Eli noted that Historic Albany Foundation had announced a call for artists for the annual BUILT fundraiser. Eli and Dave (her husband) will sponsor a $100 award to be presented at the fundraiser. This will raise UREC's visibility with that audience. Joan stressed the need for board members to be active as ambassadors for the organization.

Paul recapped what the Collections Committee was doing and noted that the Governance Committee had not met but was working virtually on the by laws revision. The Strategic Planning Committee was scheduled to meet on July 30 at 6pm and Brian Buff is to meet with them to discuss shaping the work of strategic planning.

The law suit for recovering the funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities is still in process. We have just heard that the lawyers for NEH have asked for a delay of three weeks and our side objected and so the judge granted a two week extension. We should her again around August 5th.

It is probably old news but we have between the May meeting and now been awarded $2.08 million from the New York council for the Arts toward the Interpretive Center project.

Two additional candidates for our board were presented through their resumes. Alexandra Sautin, a past board member and past board president of UREC and a bank manager for Pioneer Bank in their Rotterdam Office is presented as a candidate. Sarah Kirby, who currently works for the New York State Parks as a grant manager. She was warmly introduced by Eli. Eli moved to elect the two candidates, Joan seconded the nomination. All voted in favor.

Paul raised the issue of board participation. Paul outlined that often the meetings struggled to reach a quorum and sometimes could not because of absences. Joan suggests reviewing the time of the meetings. She suggested 6:30 or 7:00pm. Paul polled the members who were present and the 5:30pm time was fine for them. It was recommended to have a conversation with board members about board participation. It was also suggested to offer a software poll to all board members.

Maryliz talked about the intern we have from new Castle University in the UK. She is Phoebe Gandon, a recent graduate of New Castle University. The internship is only for five weeks and the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience arranged it, UREC is a member of the International Coalition. The Coalition provided a $500 stipend to UREC for working with the intern. Phoebe is uncovering lots of exciting information related to the anti-slavery movement in the UK that related to the US. Some of it ties directly to our community.

Reporting was done on June 6th (Activation Day) and July 4th (the July 4th Oration). An unknown number of people attended the open house and programming on June 6th, the Activation Day for the Freedom Walk from Maryland to Canada. UREC hosted the walkers in the Capital Region. About 100 people attended the July 4th program including a number of public officials.

Leon moved and Joan seconded to adjourn. All voted in favor.