

Meeting of the board of directors for UREC August 18, 2026

Attendance: Ron Gardner, Alexandra Sautin, Sarah Kirby, Cecelia Tucker, Leon Walker, Paul Stewart, Maryliz Stewart, Brenda Twiggs, Jennifer Burns, Lisbeth Calendrino, Ren Lee

Ron Gardner convened the meeting at 5:39pm Paul asked that the vote to affirm the new board members be re-taken since there seemed to be a question as to if there was a quorum at the last meeting. Ren moved and Lisbeth seconded that Sarah Kirkby, Ellie Burhans and Alexandra Sautin moved be seated as board members. All voted in favor.

Maryliz explained the absences of several of the board members. David was out of town for a family emergency; Nancy was experiencing health problems and Joan had a conflicting meeting. All had sent notice in advance of the meeting.

Review of the Minutes of the last meeting: Some revisions were offered on the July 21st minutes. Ellie's name was corrected in three places. The revised minutes were accepted.

Paul quickly reviewed the financial statements presented to the board members. The Balance sheet showed a comparison of this year with last year at this time and it showed growth. Paul noted that the investment fund amounts connected to "Fidelity Funds" would be merged after an outstanding loan was paid off and it was expected to be paid off shortly. The profit and loss statement also showed a profit which compared against last month's profit and loss was an improvement.

Maryliz presented the Executive Director's Report – She provided a written report and asked if there were questions. She proceeded to highlight the report. She noted that the grant applied for through the Black Legislative Caucus appears to have been awarded but there has been no word on it as yet. This was applied for in August of last year. We hope that by the next board meeting we can report on the Cannabis grant which we applied for in collaboration with 518 Elevated. A reimbursement is expected on a \$150,000 grant previously secured by Assemblywoman Pat Fahy in 2024. The summer youth teen group, The Cosmographers, which created table top games with a social justice theme. Jordan Johnson, the focus group facilitator was so encouraged by the group that he decided to finish his PhD. The group is continuing to meet. The monthly Immersion Tours collaboration with Albany County Historical Association. A bus trip is being planned for September 26 to Kingston, NY. The bus trip highlights Sojourner Truth. Pricing is \$40 for members and \$50.

Committee Reports – Sarah K. reported on the Fund Development Committee meeting on the Capital campaign and planning study. Letters are going out shortly with follow ups in September. Sarah K. asked to share the 40-50 names to see if others know any of them or can add names. The Over the Edge Report - MaryLiz reported that Sarah Stewart was working to get sponsors for the event. Lisbeth asked why we were working with the YWCA

on this project and MaryLiz explained the genesis of the effort. Governance Committee was reported on by Ren. Not much action had taken place since the past report, Dave, Ren and Matt had been on that committee, Matt had drawn back to focus on his business. Ron indicated he would be added to the committee. Collections Committee was reported on by Paul noting a recent meeting and discussion that were part of it. MaryLiz noted the African American Heritage Grant from NY State had been submitted and noted Matt had helped put the grant together for a collections person. Strategic Planning was reported on by Paul – a recent meeting was held and Brian Buff was selected to facilitate the planning. He has years of experience working with other groups and offered to do the facilitation for free. The next meeting of the strategic planning committee is September 24th at 6pm and all are invited. Cecelia also spoke of her experience of the strategic planning meeting.

Interpretive Center Discussion – Paul explained where we were at with the overall project. Paul will send out a “sources and uses” chart to all. Maryliz talked about the 15 items we need to get through to be able to get a signed contract with NYSCA. Maryliz talked about the time limits on permits. Paul asked for a resolution of the board to allow UREC to approach Pioneer Bank about a loan against the 1st draw down proceeds on the NYSCA grant to allow us to get underway with some of the work for the IC. Leon moved and Lizbeth Seconded to authorize staff to approach Pioneer Bank regarding the described loan. All voted in favor. Maryliz talked about the law suit against NEH.

Regarding UREC hiring Sarah Stewart or Sarah Stewart’s “company”, dba called Fundalopes to do out reach. This was discussed at the prior meeting and an executive session discussion took place with Paul and Maryliz out of the room. The issue was that some felt it was not a best practice to hire a family member and to have that family member supervised by another family member. Initially Sarah was hired in January but with objections regarding the hiring and the process UREC discontinued paying her in February. Steps were outlined by the board regarding the hiring process. Between February and May the position was advertised on Craig’s List Jobs and the Museum Association Job Board and several people (four altogether) applied. After interviewing those people, it was still felt that Sarah was the best choice. Her history with the organization and her familiarity with the work needed indicated she was the preferred choice. She was selected and in June payments to her and her company resumed. Nancy Delain, our board member who is an attorney, was asked her opinion at the time of the February meeting. She put in writing, which was distributed at the April meeting, that it was permitted to hire a relative but if the Department of State had an issue, she identified specific steps that should be adhered to. Those steps should be in the minutes and included identifying the relationship, identifying that the hire appeared to be in the best interests of the organization, and the vote on the approval to do this by the board. Paul offered a resolution regarding this.

The resolution was as follows: Resolved: UREC is affirming the decision of the Executive Director to hire Sarah Stewart, her daughter and her dba company, to do outreach organizing, program development, on behalf of the organization. The work contract presented under which she will work includes a two year term and required her to document her activities. The compensation for this position is set to allow her to address needs for supplies and items not provided her as regular employee, including standard deductions and health insurance, which she will address on her own. Sarah was selected through a process that included interviewing other candidates, with a board member involved in the process, and Sarah was the best candidate of those being interviewed.

After an additional executive session with Maryliz and Paul out of the room ad a vote was taken while they were out of the room, there was a decision to approve the resolution 6-0 with 2 abstentions. Sarah's company, Fundalopes, has a written contractual agreement with UREC.

There being no further business for the board, Alex moved and Liz seconded to adjourn.

Minutes by Paul