

FAI Board of Directors Meeting November 19, 2020

In attendance:

Lisa Schwartz (President)
Matt Sever (Vice President) – left at 3:41 PM
Deana McCloud (Secretary)
Alka Sharma (Treasurer)
Ellen Stanley (at Large)

Enrique Chi
Lynn Cingari
Rosalyn Dennett
Lou DeMarco
Susie Giang
Chloe Goodyear
Michael Kornfeld
Sara Leishman

Gary Paczosa
Chris Porter
Amy Reitnouer
Laura Thomas
Meg Tarquinio
Gerald Torres (joined at 3:53 PM)
Reid Wick

Aengus Finnan, Executive Director
Jennifer Roe, Director of Operations

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by President Lisa Schwartz at 3:00 PM CT with a brief check-in and reminder about confidentiality of the proceedings. The agenda was accepted with no additions.

Minutes

After a review of the minutes from the previous meeting, Laura noted that there were a couple of typos on page 7 and outstanding committee composition updates.

Motion: To approve minutes with noted corrections
Made by: Reid Wick
Seconded by: Chris Porter
Result: Motion was approved

Aengus noted that Page 2 of the Board Kit included a link to the 2019 edition of the Bylaws. The link will be updated in future kits and has been updated online to reflect the referendum question results of last election regarding Nominating Committee composition.

Next board meetings and AGM

The dates were previously set assuming an in-person conference. Staff is asking if FAI can move the board meeting to a week prior to the conference. A discussion followed about dates and preferences to enable deeper conversation during meetings.

Aengus noted that prior to the staff recommendation, and per Matt Sever's request during the last meeting, a survey was distributed to all members to determine if they preferred to have the AGM during the week or weekend, and during office hours or after. A weekday during office hours was preferred.

Directors approved scheduling the Board meeting on February 10 and AGM on February 11.

Executive Director's Report

Page 11 of the Board Kit provides big picture highlights to enable the board to tackle items and activate wisdom during virtual meetings rather than reporting on all the details that can be read in advance.

External Risks and Opportunities

Up to this point, FAI has existed as an organization that relied on a conference to generate operating revenue. This meant that due to the pandemic the business model has to be tweaked in order to think more dynamically about finances for the future. That involves mitigating against using too much of the cash reserve due to the impact of COVID19, as well as finding new sources of funding, expanding our donor base, and in particular looking to folk music fans for general engagement (not including the conference, charitable giving, and non-voting membership; ("fans" have not been a focus in the past).

Internal Challenges

Aengus noted that he couldn't be prouder of the remaining staff team as they continue to maintain FAI's international status despite the capacity challenges and human reality of a diminished staff, and the challenges (personal and professional) of working from home.

One success noted is the cultural equity work that continues behind the scenes and the values that are inherent with the ideals of Folk that examines change and community. Treasa Levasseur has been a real inspiration on the team with her own self-examination and positive challenging of the staff to continue their own self-examination. Committing to Conversation series was conceived by New Orleans-based FAI member Lilli Lewis. The aim of this initiative is to create and hold space for small scale, facilitated conversations about race, cultural equity, and social justice between willing participants who are invested in the desire to hear and understand each other.

The Cultural Equity Council is being co-convened by Karima Daoudi and Dom Flemons (who replaces Reggie Harris) is moving ahead in 2021 and will do community listening sessions and provide recommendations to the staff and Board in advance of the strategic planning sessions next year.

Conference Registrations

Registrations are open with and choose-you-own price point. 80 delegates are registered to date. The Official showcases are called Spotlight Showcases this year in the virtual space and will be presented by official partners, and the private showcases are called Unlocked Showcases.

Fundraising Goal

Aengus provided an update on the fundraising goal, matching funds, and other support, noting that staff FAI received a \$100k anonymous donation from a Donor Advised Fund managed by the Seattle Foundation. This is a nice sign of momentum that what FAI is doing is resonating on a national level for substantial funders. FAI is currently at the halfway point for fundraising goals for this fiscal year but will still see a substantial loss this year.

Showcases

Jen provided a link to the unlocked showcases. An email about those showcases went out to membership immediately prior to the meeting.

Finance Report

Alka noted that financial reports moving forward will have a revised format and some higher level summaries in a dashboard “info-graphic”. She reviewed the information provided, noting the pertinent details about the donations received, that the TD Canada Trust account has been closed, and its funds (\$106,626.38) were moved into the US operating account.

Income

Income noted included higher than anticipated summer campaign funds under Grants and Foundations. Membership income was not expected for 2020, but there are a handful of people who joined in the last couple of months. A membership drive is planned for March 2021. Of further note:

**The auditor informed FAI that membership revenue must be adjusted to reflect the new IRS rules regarding Recognized Revenue. In the auditor’s view, membership has a direct correlation with conference registration as members receive a \$100 discount off of their registration fee. This is more than the full value of an individual membership. Because of this, membership income must be tied to the fiscal year of the conference that the membership discount is related to. Consequently, any memberships taken out between February 2020 and February 2022 will be considered registration income for our in-person conference planned for February 2022. Because of this, FAI will need to defer membership income received in FY21 to FY22. The auditor will provide more guidance on how to make this transition.*

Expenses

Payroll expenses will continue to be lower since the full time position for Ethno USA ended, and the cost of unemployment is less than budgeted due to the CARES Act. The cost of the online conference digital platform is \$4000 over what was budgeted. Other expense information and data was highlighted in an infographic dashboard so that finances could be viewed at a summary level.

Budget

A new budget based on the reality of the current situation and changes that have occurred in order to better forecast will be drafted and submitted to the board for approval.

Village Fund

Aengus reminded directors about the Village Fund that would have been provided to those experiencing financial difficulty; however, the required external seed money was not successfully procured. Staff is proposing moving forward with the Village Fund with FAI being the initial seed funder in order to move the fund ahead and enabling the public to donate to the fund. This is a way of moving the initiative forward in a way to encourage foundations and donors to help support the community. A discussion followed about the benefits of this fund and the positioning of direct support for the community.

Fundraising Committee

Sarah noted thanks for all of the efforts and contributions. Fundraising is halfway to the annual goal, and thanks were expressed to Directors who had successfully hosted Facebook birthday fundraisers. The committee is shifting to monthly meetings. Thanks was given to Chris for recommending FAI for a contribution from an organization. More tools are coming soon including an elevator pitch and a selection of bite-size messages for sending to contacts for future asks.

Lisa mentioned that Directors can refer to Aengus’ notes and resources about the role of a board and staff for a nonprofit. Aengus noted that ExCom had been talking about an annual Board orientation focusing on a governance and a fundraising refresh for everyone.

Nominating Committee

Amy Reitnauer reported that the election process is underway. The three new appointees, Kevin Dalton, Caroline Randall Williams, and Carolina Rojas Posada, were reviewed. The Committee has been working with Angus and Jen in order to streamline the workflow processes from NomCom to ExCom and staff as well as orienting new Directors about what to expect going into their first meeting. An orientation will be held two weeks before the February board meetings and will be attended by ExCom, staff, NomCom and new Directors for onboarding. The additional extension of that is the establishment of board groups rather than board buddies for resources and people to go to for questions as well as enabling smaller group discussions.

Lisa also noted the succession plan for ExCom, looking at institutional memory and asked any Directors with interest in serving in a officer's role to please contact her. While ExCom has a list of potential new officers, this is decided by the board for select currently elected directors as ExCom members.

Action Item: On the Committee list, Deana will confirm that Maria Ivey and Chris Porter are included as on the Nominating Committee

Advocacy Committee

Health SubCommittee

Laura Thomas provided a general summary of the committee's activity. The Committee continues looking for participants to provide social media testimonies and videos. The PLR (Peer Listening Room) has had two Zoom sessions, after which participants were asked for feedback in order to fine-tune the sessions.

Legislative Action SubCommittee

Michael Kornfeld noted that it is hoped that monthly subcommittee meetings are held that will allow investigations of additional ideas and resources to bring back to the Board and the community. Although the focus is legislative action in the U.S., the subcommittee is also looking at ways to engage with international policies. All participants felt the first meeting was productive and a great start.

Programming Committee

Deana McCloud reported that the Programming Committee had recently met with staff to discuss plans and brainstorm ways that the Committee can assist with programming ideas and contacts. FAI is in an advantageous position with its digital programming plans in that the organization is able to participate and learn from other organizations and their programs to establish best practices. Jen noted that additional programming ideas should be sent to Treasa.

For the next meeting, Deana will email a Doodle poll to the Committee as well as NomCom in order to coordinate a call about those who were brought forward as potential Directors and might be good resources for programming.

Action Item: Deana will send Doodle poll to Programming Committee, NomCom, and staff for Zoom meeting dates.

Aengus reminded Directors to register for the conference, and also noted the #iheartfolk campaign to engage a folk music fan base and broader community in discussion. The campaign will move from general awareness into a fundraising campaign by the end of the year.

Michael extended kudos to SWRFA, Far West, and FARM for their digital content.

Motion: To adjourn meeting

Made by: Alka Sharma

Meeting was adjourned at 4:39 PM CT.