

**Humanists of Minnesota  
Board of Directors Summer Retreat  
August 9, 2020**

**Attendees:**

Harlan Garbell (President), Suzanne Perry (Vice President), Dave Guell (Secretary), Jerry Smith, Christine Retkwa, Marcy Woodruff, Nick Haylund (Treasurer), Ellie Haylund, Seth Engman, John Walker

**Not Present:**

Mitch Thompson

**Location:** Zoom online meeting

**Communication Strategies**

Harlan suggested that we consider advertising in a community newspaper (such as City Pages). Jerry noted that any online meetings conducted via Zoom could be recorded and posted as video content. It was noted that a previous video we attempted to post to YouTube was banned for violation of the terms of use but without any explanation of the specifics of the violation. It was noted that Vimeo is an alternative site for posting videos but that it would cost money.

Harlan also suggested using various forms of conventional advertising, such as radio, newspapers, bus benches, and billboards. The ethical problems raised by continuing or increasing advertising in Facebook (and by Instagram as well) were acknowledged. The need for people who can create content was noted.

**Action Items**

1. Christine will look into costs of advertising on City Pages.
2. Nick will find out the cost of Billboard and bus-stop bench advertising.
3. Suzanne agreed to contact StarChapter to discuss alternatives to moving our website to their platform.

**Geographic Outreach**

Jerry repeated his belief in the value of reaching out beyond the “blue bubble” of the Twins Cities humanists, to cities such as St. Cloud, Duluth, and Rochester. It was noted that some such cities already have relevant Meetup groups that should be leveraged to publicize our programming if we take it to those cities. Jerry believed there are plenty of humanist topics that would translate well to an “out-state” audience.

## **Operational Redundancy**

The need was noted for backups to the key people who know the key (software) tools for operating the organization. Some felt that most such needs had suitable backups (thanks to work early this year to spread out those responsibilities and identify those people) except possibly for QuickBooks (as separate from the practice of accounting). Others felt there remained room for improvement.

## **Culture of Volunteerism**

Harlan would like to see more willingness on the part of members to volunteer for various organizational activities. Harlan proposed that the board be open to considering StarChapter, a software system which unifies many aspects of operating the organization (such as the membership database and website, store, and donations) noting that their website claimed 37 of 50 leading nonprofits use it. David noted the need to investigate all the available competing systems before choosing one. [Harlan noted that at the Media/Tech team meeting the previous week Candee was going to find what those competitors are.]

It was noted that volunteerism could include participating in social action and community service, not simply programming or operational needs. The question was raised how to get more support for such work. David raised the question "if we were to ask for volunteers for just one activity, what would be it", to clarify what we would emphasize. There was not an agreement on what it would be.

## **Diversity**

It was mentioned that the issue of diversity in membership was discussed recently by a speaker at a national meeting of American Humanist Association. One speaker there raised the question of "why do we want to increase our diversity", a topic that was then taken up in this meeting. The question of how to reach other demographic groups was discussed. It was noted that in reaching out to student organizations such as CASH might enable university meeting space to be obtained at a reduced cost. The need to (and difficulties in) establishing relationships with people in diverse organizations was noted.

## **Social Action**

The desire to take social action that furthers the values of the organization was noted. On the other hand it was also noted that there seems to be built in impediments against taking social action among the membership. The difficulty was noted the social action team has had in the past year pursuing all their desired causes. David asked whether is it consistent with Humanist

values to be content not to take action to promote those values. It was also asked what it means to diversify current programming.

### **Future Leadership**

The question of future leadership in the organization was noted, in particular, suitable successors for the current officers of the organization. Harlan has been on the board for 6 years and will be ineligible for re-election in two years. Jerry noted that some organizations elevate the Vice President to become President at the end of the previous President's term. Doing the same in our organization was suggested, and Suzanne noted that she would not have accepted the VP position if with that expectation. Likewise, the likelihood of needing a new Treasurer and Secretary was noted. Harlan also suggested the possibility of amending the By-Laws to define the specific responsibilities of the officers, since as he noted, currently the VP has no defined responsibilities.