

# Board of Directors Meeting

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**Sunday, Aug. 22, 2021 - SPECIAL RETREAT MEETING**

## ATTENDEES

**Jerry Smith, Mitch Thompson (Secretary), Harlan Garball (President), David Guell, John Walker (Treasurer), Suzanne Perry, Christine R, David Guell, Marcy Woodruff, Ellie Haylund (Vice-President)**

**Absent: Nick Haylund**

## Membership Drive

- To move forward with a significant membership push, the prevailing mindset is that the website needs a more user-friendly refresh for new visitors and is less aimed at people already familiar with the organization.
  - <https://humanistsmn.org/>
  - This would primarily be accomplished through a homepage that draws a viewer in first and then brings them in to search for other content.
  - Rebecca Chesin is on board to lead the overhaul, and over the next few weeks, how that process will look should begin to take shape.
  - The deadline for the website redo is likely to be Feb. 1, 2022
- Based on this approach, the board will push back the timeline for a membership drive and look at the very early Spring of 2022.
  - This could likely interlink with the Day of Reason event.
  - The radio ads with KFAI will be paused and picked back up when the new timeline is constructed.
  - Ellie has created a theme and materials for it around the concept of **“Join for goodness’ sake.”**

**ACTION: Harlan and Suzanne will work with Rebecca to create a website redesign plan.**

**ACTION: Harlan will work with KFAI to postpone the radio ad timeline.**

**ACTION: Board will rework the membership drive timeline based on the website update timeline.**

**Day-of-Reason**

- Organizations often have a signature event that they build year-round. The Day-of-Reason Event encompasses many things that could become that signature event for the HMN.
  - The event has an outreach capacity that can speak to a more general public.
    - This can help sharpen a focus to drive new membership.
  - The event has a defined date to build around continually.
    - Events could begin to form around the entire week.

### **Social Action Committee**

- The prevailing energy for the Social Action Committee is to focus more on community service projects that are direct responses to the social action agenda.
  - A prime example is to partner with an organization like AEON, a primary non-profit housing developer that has a stated mission of, **We create and sustain quality affordable homes that strengthen lives and communities**
    - <https://www.aeon.org/>
    - <https://www.aeon.org/volunteer/>
  - There was a significant discussion about what types of organizations or events our organization should be involved in.
    - AEON, for example, appears to have no religious affiliation reflected in its mission, whereas Habitat For Humanity has a substantial mission rooted in religion.
      - There was no specific definition created for what was right or wrong on this front. Several board members have a pragmatic view that, for better or worse, a lot of "good" is organized by religious organizations, and we don't need to maintain a strict separation. Others argue that working with them reinforces the notion that doing good is connected to religion.

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**MOTION: The Social Action Committee will change its focus to an emphasis on community service projects. - Approved unanimously.**

### **Winter Solstice Event 2021**

- Although last year was canceled because of COVID, it is the Humanist's turn to host the Winter Solstice event by calendar years.
  - This is the 35th anniversary of the founding of HumanistMN
  - The event is going to be planned for Saturday, Dec. 18, 2021.

- There is a prevailing thought that St. Paul should get some events, and the focus could be on the Minnesota Humanities Center.
  - <http://mnhum.org/event-center/>
  - **ACTION: Make sure it is available and get a hold on the space.**
    - *Harlan did this on 8/23/2021*
- In the past, the organization collected funds for Bridges For Youth at the Solstice event, and there was general agreement this would again be a theme to the event.
- From a programming standpoint, there was significant energy to focus on the science behind the solstice.
  - Both John and Jerry have speakers in mind that could be approached to give a presentation.
- **ACTION: Jerry and John will reach out to their respective speaker ideas and help formulate some options.**
- There was also energy to create a program piece that reflects on our 35-year history.

### **COVID and live events**

- After attempting to find a countering perspective, the board all agreed with little countering debate that it was in the organization's best interests to take a "fully vaccinated" stance for all in-person events.
  - As all organizations face similar quandaries, the policy will have to evolve based on science, reason, common sense and take into account what is happening in society.
  - At this point, this policy will be based on the honor system, and the board has no expectation of asking for proof of vaccine.

**MOTION: For the foreseeable future, all HumanistMN events will maintain a fully vaccinated policy. - Approved unanimously.**

### **Investing**

- Currently, the organization's money is not getting an excellent rate of return on interest. The question is what, if anything, should be done about this.
  - Too much risk is not advisable because the funds are the bedrock of the organization.
    - Historically, we know that the stock market goes up and down and sometimes with significant drops that would be devastating to the organization if too many funds are tied.
    - Taking risks is also the only way the organization will be able to maximize current funding.
    - Where is the balance?
      - On the whole, the board wants to do better than the current interest rate.

**ACTION:** Jerry and John will look at various approaches and plans the board could take to be prudent with funds while finding ways to generate more income with interest.