

Saturday January 11th, 2025

Present In Person:

Arson Allen
Kristen Fiore
Caleb Seguin
Lauren Hunt
Kathleen Sheehy
Eliz Bashur
Emily Patka
Sujata Rege Konowitz
Douglas Taylor
Kelly Jennings
David Pynchon
Sam Meister
Vyshali Rege Konowitz
Katie Myers

Online:

Jesse Ditkoff
Lynn Theophanis
Mares Bustamante
Cas Bocanegra

Motion to approve minutes moved to after lunch

New Board Orientation: We need to create one. Gov committee brainstormed what to do. After hearing this, what is missing?

- If someone has a complaint and comes to a board member, the first question that board member should ask is "Have you talked to Lauren about this?" If their answer is "no", give the person Lauren's email and phone number. If the answer is "yes", then it becomes a discussion for the entire board
- We should make a matrix that describes what is allowed to be shared
- You always have the right to say "I don't know" if someone asks you a question
- Youth Rep Orientation: needs a general flyer, for example, with information like who to contact with questions and when the annual meeting is going to be
- Basic Board of Directors Meeting Rules and How to Run A Meeting, How to move a motion, etc.
 - o Documents to be created
- Youth Reps are allowed to serve on Committees
- We don't have a standardized process for Board Members to RSVP to meetings (Are you coming to the meeting? Do you need directions? What food do you eat?)

- Sheehy to work on organizing meeting docs by meeting, reach out to David/Kelly/Sam with questions
- Snapshot of "What is our Board?" Similar to "What is the chain of command?"

Over to Lauren

Did anyone have any questions about the current financials?

Not a lot of expenses in the beginning of the year: salary, insurance

Haven't had time to do the 3-year projection yet, but will do it. Just be aware that the 3-year projection could change.

Camp Members were riled about not knowing the salaries in the years to come

We're in good shape, we have money in the bank to handle an emergency

Tax-wise, the market will probably go up after the inauguration (because it went up after the election). Leave our cash alone for now

Eliz suggested having a non-board meeting time for board members to ask Lauren and Emily questions about the budget if they want to

Lauren suggested having an open finance committee meeting

Talked about getting a new auditor this year. We've been getting a good deal (\$4500 to review our books and do our taxes). New quote for that work is \$8000

This is a new expense that is thousands of dollars more and we haven't already budgeted for it, and so we need to vote on it. Need to make a decision soon because our tax filing deadline is mid-February this year.

Emily: I make a motion to approve the increased cost of the annual review and other associated services with the new accounting firm. This is \$8500. Kelly seconded the motion. After voting, the motion passes unanimously.

To-do going forward for Lauren: file and send out tax forms for the staff and send out form letters to any person who donated more than \$200. Plan to finish this in January

This cost will probably be closer to \$6000 each year afterwards. It is more expensive this time because it is the first time this auditor is going through all of our financials

Moving on to Kristen

Registration is about 2 weeks behind, which is a little upsetting. We have 92 now compared to 119 at the same time last year. More people than expected registered for the highest price tier. This is a good thing. There is a general shift upwards

Church visits: 5 churches that had the highest youth groups that attended camp. Kristen reached out to All Souls Manhattan that used to be a big group and they said there's no youth group worth reaching out to. Declining UU Youth participation is a trend and so we cannot rely on reaching out to churches

Douglas said anecdotally that a similar thing happened for the youth program in Binghamton, but they are about to launch an OWL program primarily made up of new youth

Katie said that *parents* seem to like it more than the youth

Kristen said that we are not going to stop reaching out to churches, but they are producing diminishing returns. So, Kristen created a flyer that we are going to send to churches and queer orgs and Montessori schools and arts academies. We need to hand-address envelopes for these flyers. Kristen and Caleb have started this work

Caregiver survey: "Hey, you are a first time caregiver who interacted with Unirondack. How was registration? Did you feel that things were clear?"

Kristen took data from registration and put it into 4 categories:

- 1.) Everyone
- 2.) Campers who came in 2023 and then didn't return
- 3.) Campers who came in 2023 and 2024
- 4.) Campers who ()

Everybody take 5 flyers, pre-cut them, and distribute in their community

Caleb said we've talked about having tailored advertising to Queer Orgs

Eliz said we are also creating an evergreen flyer in the next month

David and Sam mentioned the big gay markets in (Rome? Albany?) would be a good place for someone to set up a table. David volunteered to take that on.

Eliz emphasized that we can reach out to people based on activity (arts, trip camp, etc.) and not just by identity

Families with camp-aged children tend to congregate together, so let's share our flyers with members of parent Facebook groups

Clearly there is a generational change in terms of people's interest in OWL, so we need to listen to Gen Z and Gen Alpha to hear where they are congregating

Mares: reach out to niche communities like roller derby teams

Sam: we need to create an online feed of all our posts so we can create our own repository of information in the hopes that people see that more than they see whatever AI creates about us

Emily: Nonprofits get grants for ad credits for Google Ads. We need a "Google for Nonprofits" portal.

Link: <https://www.google.com/nonprofits/offerings/google-ad-grants/>

Kristen: We had a Google ads account pre-Kristen, she tried to reboot it, reached a dead end. Kelly will figure out where that works.

Caleb's Report:

Lauren to help Caleb get credit card processing fee added optionally to registration fee
Giving people the option to pay by check in person at registration so we don't lose checks

Eliz's report:

Manager's Report: Still finalizing Spring calendar, trying to make more money this Spring

Non concerned about enrollment for Spring and Fall

Let Eliz know if you see ways to make fixes and updates to the website

Possible Staff Reunion in the fall, scheduling in progress

It is within our budget to create a multi-color tri fold brochure, so we're good for it

Dress code discussion:

We need more clear policies, particularly because our trans campers have been asking for them.

We're trying to create a policy that keeps us and everybody safe because the wider world will define "nudity" differently than we do.

We are going to create something that is legal and safe, above all

We are looking to affirm our campers, but there is not a word that is both trans-inclusive and affirming of all identities. We must accept that we cannot align with our values to the most extent

It's technically illegal in New York State to have a dress code that discriminates based on sex. Keep this in mind as a background item when we have these conversations

We need to create a policy that people can get on board with from the jump instead of us having to explain it.

Trans people, particularly trans women, are inherently sexualized in a way that is different from cis folks. Asking trans people to take part in these conversations is subsequently exhausting. We are entering another era of intense scrutiny. It is possible that these next couple of years are not the time to push the envelope. Doing what is wise will take precedence over doing what is right by our community.

Douglas: I'm hearing two locations: the waterfront and Rumpus (Ballou II only)

Bathing suit required is not enough anymore for the waterfront

Rumpus is inherently wild, so it is hard to have this event and then tell people "but you can't be wild like that"

Eliz: bodies of size are also sexualized more than average or smaller sized bodies

Sam: people take pictures at Rumpus and we cannot control people taking their own pictures and posting them to their own accounts

Katie: campers asking themselves, "Is it more important for me to be able to be topless at Rumpus regardless of my gender or is it more important for me to be able to take photos at Rumpus and share them with the outside world without creating a stir?"

What parent or outside criticism have we received? None about this, but that is partly because we have these risk-averse policies of everybody must wear tops

Caleb has been communicating with other camps about their dress code policies. Vast majority is "something on top and something on bottom." One camp is doing things differently. This is an LGBT camp where their waterfront policy is "campers must wear something on bottom. No talking about bodies policy. Have specific swimming times for people with different comfort levels with being around people who are not wearing tops." Question to ask: does this camp have a private waterfront

Douglas: Ultimately how do we invite our campers into this conversation without sexualizing it

The priority is keeping everybody informed that we care about our campers and we need to keep camp safe in order to keep caring about our campers

Process moving forward: ideally get 100 responses to the survey

Would also like to have a town hall to facilitate the conversation

We would have to have a supplemental policy about photography as well

Reports By Committee

Buildings and Grounds:

Currently no board member on the buildings and grounds committee. Now we need a liaison. Doug's plan is to step down from the Governance Committee chair position, then Kathleen Sheehy will take over as Governance Committee chair

Community Engagement:

Sujata: we're doing a "reverse report" where we would like you to report to us. Passing out 3 questions to answer and passing the papers back

Camper Ambassadors: someone who already goes to camp that we can give X number of tools and information to tell their friends

"Here is something that you can do that concretely helps Unirondack"

Want to center youth interests so that they go to their caregivers and say, "I heard about Unirondack and I'm interested in it"

Need to get people outside the board to be involved in board meetings and community engagement

Need to show people that being a part of a committee doesn't have to be intimidating. "Community Engagement" can mean "Planning a Donut Night"

We just had over 100 campers age out, and they would like to still be connected to camp

Finance:

We are caught up

Fundraising:

Biggest update: year-end campaign likely will net \$15,000. A big part of that was a \$6,000 match from one donor, which was great.

HAGS fundraiser: satellite versions of the same dinner in different areas (house parties). A host will fill out the attendees list and the event would prime the pump of the 75th anniversary campaign

Ongoing: Infrastructure building with consolidating past data

75th Anniversary Campaign: Want to raise \$500,000. Is this realistic? We need to tell people why we are doing this. What are the objectives? What will this money pay for? Pretty human resource intensive

People think this is a good idea. Emily emphasized that we need to tie that \$500,000 number to something more specific than, "We need this"

Caleb pointed out that we are having greater expenses because of inflation and natural disasters, and Camp is just more expensive than ever to run

Lauren: the foundation needs to be over \$1,000,000, and we are currently at \$700,000

Some people have the opinion that the only capital investments in camp are "constructing buildings", so just be aware of the fact that "capital investment" doesn't mean the same thing to every potential donor or member.

Sam: potentially include language like, "Here's why donating does make a difference:..."

David: Kelly and I will need your help with this campaign, and we will mostly need help calling people with a script to ask them to donate money

Arson: perhaps combine phone banks with community dinners

Things that we think we need to be raising money for:

- The foundation
- More staff (and raising staff pay)
- Physical accessibility
- Financial accessibility
- Resistant to climate change
- How important camp is becoming as a tolerant place in an intolerant world
- We do not have the resources on our own to make camp a more racially diverse space, we need consultants

Governance Report:

Big priorities: need to gather minutes from previous board members

Youth Reps: two youth reps, each have half a vote, officially begin at Member's Weekend, and then offboard after the next Member's Weekend and potentially beyond that

Katie: the youth rep nomination process feels a little rushed because it's brought up during Ballou II and then you get 48 hours before voting time. Would like the terms to be a bit longer, perhaps by 3 months

Maris: agreed with Katie, wants to put together a new digital presentation for new youth reps to show what they would be doing

Douglas: correct that the current bylaws can stay as they are? Work on options for overlap?

Gov committee must go to the bylaws to determine how we can change them.

- Check with lawyer
- Send out ballot measure 60 days before voting board meeting to voting members
- Vote at members meeting

Per Katie, not a lot of people know about the Youth Rep positions. People definitely volunteered eventually day-of

Sheehy to notify Eliz when meeting minutes are finalized so Eliz can add the minutes hyperlink to the website

Sheehy to email the minutes out after the meeting in addition to posting them to the drive

Voting on October 2024 Member Meeting minutes
Fix "Catherine Sheehy" to "Kathleen Sheehy"

Voting on November 2024 Board Meeting minutes: [Unirondack Board Meeting_2024_11_24](#)
Compiled list of attendees

Kelly motioned to accept the November meeting minutes, Sujata seconded. All board members voted "yes," minutes accepted

Executive Staff succession plan:

Jesse: connecting with Lauren to get job description.

Doug: board hasn't acted on the description, but there are some suggested edits to be incorporated. Once we have a finalized description of the job, we need to get it out there. Is there a timeline to do that?

Jesse: no timeline as of now. Need to find job boards that will actually benefit us and reach out to our networks because this is a unique job. One other missing factor is what is a correct interview process for this? In what order should the applicants speak with people?

Doug: good to have Jesse at the lead to move this along with some assistance. Emily and David are on board to be supporting players in this. Doug will also continue to ask questions

Timeline of when contracts end:

Kristen, Eliz, Lauren: October 1

Doug: propose a motion to approve an additional 2 week pay period for Kristen, Eliz, Lauren

Kelly: Motion to extend Lauren's pay period by 2 weeks to cover the Member meeting in October 2025

Jesse: second the motion

All in favor? All board members voted "yes". Motion is passed

Lauren subsequently extended the contracts of Eliz and Kristen to cover the Member meeting in October 2025 as well

Caleb: the staff members of the new camp director should be part of the interview process for that new camp director

Emily: a "meet the community" event for individual finalists would be good

Overlap would be great, but we also have to consider the cost of overlapping staff pay

Start date is going to depend on the candidates and when they are available

Need to post very soon.

Where to post? Idealist, LinkedIn, Indeed

Do we have any people who we know internally who are going to apply? Potentially someone related to Dan Gottfried

Want to post to Idealist first. We already have an Idealist account. Lauren will invite Jesse as an administrator so that he can post the finalized job description

Lauren: reminder: our accountant is starting May 1st

Move us now to our townhall: need to pick a date and the topics

Topic ideas: finances, mission, dress code, ask about camp for new campers

Kristen: we know we're going to talk about dress code, so do we want to do it closer to summer instead of at a town hall in February

Lauren: not worth talking about finances in February when we haven't spent any money yet

David: still a desire to have some communication about finances

Sujata/Arson/Kristen: we are investing in strong leadership and making the transition go smoothly and sustainably because the consequence of a leadership vacuum may be a loss of camper registrations and subsequently, revenue. This is personnel investment debt, so-to-speak, and we are handling it.

Kristen: we haven't talked about our mission in about 3 years

Eliz: Are we serving our mission? Have we lost focus on a part of our mission? Are we off course? Do we need to change the mission to fit the course that we are now on to fit what we are doing?

Identity of Camp vs Mission of Camp. Is it queer camp? Is it UU camp? Our identity and our mission are not the same thing.

Kristen: I am specifically talking about the Mission Statement, which is text that has grown stale over time

Eliz: keep our Mission Statement more broad so it doesn't catch the eyes of someone who would like to remove our 501(c)(3) status

Kristen: the purpose of a mission statement is to apply for grant funding and uphold our non-profit status with the IRS

"Hey members, it's normal for an org to keep updating their mission statement every 10 or 15 years or so. It's an IRS status thing, so we will be voting on it at the Member meeting in October"

Kristen: camp isn't changing, but who is at camp is changing, and so that is probably a factor in why some people are reacting with anxiety and saying, "Camp is changing and I don't feel like I belong there anymore"

Arson: "How has camp served you and how can we move forward?" "Who do we need to do more for so that they show up in our community?"

Caleb's letter: all summer camps are experiencing lower enrollment, us included. Youth have never been so mentally stressed and risk-averse because of covid, etc. What can we do about this?

Caleb's letter

Kristen: let's make the February town hall meeting about Caleb's letter. Let's make the next Town hall (April/May) after that a two-subject session: mission and dress code

Dress Code Survey

Douglas: I propose we do this

What date for the February meeting?

Spring agenda: talk to members about finances.

Eliz: We had a discussion about finances and communicating to the members about finances in the January meeting. We will focus on that later in the spring because we have more time-sensitive issues to resolve in the beginning of the year.

Send out a survey? "What questions do you have about our finances for the spring town hall?"

Town Hall proposed for Tuesday March 4th at 6:30 pm