

RETIREE ASSOCIATION BOARD MINUTES

June 16, 2021

9 a.m., Virtual meeting via Zoom

Attendance: President Dan Spielmann, Pat Przybelski, Chris Sampson, Carol Emmons, Ken Fleurant, Curt Heuer, Craig Lockard, Frank Madzarevic, Barbara McClure-Lukens

Not present: Kathy Pletcher

Guest: Jacob Depas

Minutes of previous meeting

Craig moved, Pat seconded and the minutes of the previous, April 20, meeting were approved as submitted.

University update; discussion of proposal to raze Cofrin Library building

Advancement officer Jacob Depas shared his monthly briefing on UWGB news. Discussion centered on state Building Commission endorsement of a UW System plan to demolish the eight-story Cofrin Library, which has stood at the center of campus since 1971. Dan Spielmann noted that UWGB officials had long pushed for renovation of the landmark building, which has had usability and maintenance issues. Both he and Jacob described how state facilities planners rejected any campus talk of remodeling and insisted the only wise investment would be a fresh start. The replacement building would be a four- or five-story Cofrin research/library facility projected to cost north of \$90 million, in the same location. This plan is part of a larger State capital budget that remains subject to Legislative and Governor's Office approval. (Funding for smaller UWGB projects including some Studio Arts improvements, MAC Hall nursing labs, and support for First Nations Studies account for another \$6 million in the tentative budget.)

With the Library plan, Retiree board members expressed sentiment about history being lost: The original Library-Learning Center was a landmark and central not only in a geographic sense but also as a curricular and community resource. Discussion followed as to whether the Retiree Association might take a lead or at least play a role in celebrating and highlighting that history, and aiding the transition, if plans progress and the old library comes down. Jacob suggested that perhaps something might be incorporated into a future UWGB Alumni and Family Weekend (this year's will be the weekend of Oct. 8). It was agreed that it will be important to recognize that many alumni and retirees might experience the move as a bittersweet, end-of-an-era milestone.

On another topic, Jacob shared that Arboretum enhancements (bridges and trails) discussed previously with the Retiree Board are progressing, as funding has "fallen into place."

Addressing problems with retiree list-serv

Ken Fleurant stepped forward to describe the ongoing, long, frustrating and mostly unsuccessful effort to address number of significant list-serve and web problems. These issues are complicating Retiree Association efforts to publicize news and events, facilitate communication among retirees and with the University, and welcome recent retirees into the Association. In summary, the issues are:

- The system has effectively blocked new list-serv signups for several months now
- The role of our designated list manager(s) is unclear
- The Retiree website remains out of date, particularly with regard to how to sign up for the list-serv and Association updates

The hiccups began some time after the University migrated to the Google Groups platform for list-servs such as ours. CIT staff member Patrick Goggins has expressed willingness to help, Ken said, but the typically heavy CIT workload and technical questions that resist easy solutions seem to be working against a quick fix.

Ken said he will continue to be in contact with Patrick, and will suggest new content and wording to make the website more intuitive and easy-to-understand for retirees attempting to join the list-serv community. In the short term, the best bet might just be to post a directive to contact Ken directly with any inquiries. Current website/listserv contacts listed are Ken, Kimberly Vlies of University Communication, and retired comp sci professor Bill Shay. Bill has asked off; Kimberly will be asked if it makes sense for her to continue in such a role. Another issue demanding clarification is the email address Retirees@uwgb.edu... Who uses it? Who answers it? How many have access?

Continued discussion of who and how to maintain a Retiree 'master list'

In a related discussion, board members revisited the evergreen question of maintaining the "official list" of retired UWGB employees. Because of state retirement system confidentiality, internal HR policies within the University that naturally focus on current employees, and limited ability of the Retiree Association (working from outside the institution) to maintain an accurate and updated list, it's a challenge that has lingered. Chris recalled previous conversation with the Advancement Office about their desire to pursue a more systematic, effective approach that would benefit both the Retiree Association and the larger University. With the year-long COVID hiatus and the departure of our most recent staff liaison, Morgan Fuller, efforts in this regard might need a reboot. Chris said he would volunteer for a sitdown with our new Advancement liaison to begin (probably along with Pat and Ken, who know this issue well) a renewed push for improving the system.

Format and pricing for in-person Retiree Dinner on Sept. 22

Pat shared what she had learned regarding potential options and costs for the Retiree Association to host the Annual Meeting and Retiree Association Dinner at the University Union on Sept. 22. Basically, the projected \$25 per person charge would just about cover expenses for a plated dinner (our preferred option, as COVID concerns might resurface by fall and make some retirees leery of buffet-line service). In past years, the difference between the Association's \$25-or-so, per-person asking price and the Union's lesser charge to us resulted in several dollars contributed to the Association's student-scholarship endowment. Both Frank and Carol spoke in favor of charging attendees only enough to cover our cost, and being transparent about that cost. We should then highlight the opportunity for registrants to make contributions above that stated per-person charge, and note the importance of doing so in a year in which we again had to cancel our largest scholarship fundraiser, the golf outing. Chancellor Michael Alexander is a firm "yes" to be the dinner's featured speaker.

Programming: Capitalizing on a Zoom-fluent audience

There was very brief discussion of whether the Retiree Association will resume its programming and special-events planning for 2021-22. Volunteer social director Chris said he had not yet investigated, but would report at a future meeting on possibilities for Athletics, Music/Theatre/Arts, lectures and Alumni events that might be attractive. Ken suggested we could capitalize on the generally accepted use of Zoom and related platforms during Covid to enhance our offerings. Might we sponsor or co-sponsor events that would invite far-flung retirees and also locals to gather virtually for University-related presentations or information updates? Offer a mix of in-person and online opportunities? Worth discussing some more.

Next meeting: In-person, 9 a.m. Wednesday, July 28

We'll meet face-to-face. Dan will confirm the location and share closer to the date.

Adjournment

Craig moved, Carol seconded and all "ayes" to adjourn at about 10:15 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Chris Sampson, recording secretary