

## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

**DATE:** 8/21/2023

**ATTENDEES:** Geri Cicchetti  
Michael Zavasky  
Amy Swartzfager  
Erinn Lake  
Penny Mechley Porter  
Maureen Rizzo  
Karen Staab  
Norm Stark

**1. Call to Order with 4-Way Test**

Geri Cicchetti called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm in the outside courtyard of the Wood Morrison House at the Hagen History Center.

**2. Approve Minutes from July 10, 2023**

Following a brief discussion regarding a resignation from the July 10 meeting, Karen moved to accept the minutes from July 10. (The Board accepted the resignation in July. Geri explained that the resignation did not need further review at the August meeting). Norm seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the motion to approve the July minutes.

**3. Correction to 6/12 Minutes that listed Susan Merwin as a newly elected board member.**

After discussion, the Board approved this change. *Karen Tyler, Rotary secretary, will update the July 10 minutes accordingly.*

**4. Treasurers Report – for Super Bowl pool, it was in “other” expense.**

Amy Swartzfager, Rotary Treasurer, explained recent end of year adjustments and how, moving forward, the Super Bowl pool will have its own line item in the budget; given that it is a significant amount. Amy also explained the end of year adjustment for the Erie Community Foundation donation. (Amy is new to the treasurer role, effective July 2023, and she is trying to incorporate accepted CPA practices into her role, while also explaining those adjustments to the Board). Also, the Erie Rotary Club donated \$5,000 to the Erie Rotary Club Scholarship Foundation. But this year, effective July 1, 2023, the Club will not donate.

Geri reported that she inquired of David Mahoney (former Rotary treasurer) regarding the use of a form letter to collect past dues as twelve people are now 30 to 60 days in arrears and one member (M.R.) is over 90 days overdue. (M.R. last paid in Feb 2023 and a total of \$350 is due.) *Amy Swartzfager will call M.R. to inquire on her future intent.* Amy plans to send dues invoices quarterly. Mike Zavasky moved to accept the treasurers report and Norm Stark seconded. The Board unanimously approved the motion.

**5. Consent Agenda – standing committees from 2022-23** – Norm reported that he did not receive the email containing the committee reports. After a DACdb review by Amy, she indicated that Norm’s email address is correct in the Rotary system. Norm will check his spam folder. Meanwhile, Karen provided Norm hard paper copies of the reports. The Board discussed using the “bcc line” moving forward to send agendas. That way, the “reply all feature” of email does not cause the attachments/reports to be buried in respective email accounts. *The Board agreed to limit “replies to all.” The Board also agreed to use the “reply all” feature only if a specific larger Rotary concern exists.*

- a. Service Projects

- b. Peacebuilder Club/People of Action Update
- c. RI Foundation Committee – Jim Hynes/Diane Chido
- d. Outreach Committee
- e. Red Ribbon Coordinator
- f. Committee Liaison
- g. Ethics Symposium – Karen Staab Chair/everyone needs to help
- h. Fundraising – needs a chair
  - i. 50/50 – Bob Cronmiller
  - ii. Super Bowl Pool – Zac
- i. International/Student Exchange

Geri reviewed the standing committees as noted above. Board members had no questions. *The Board agreed to meet with the District Governor at 1 pm at the Sheraton on Wednesday, August 23, 2023, (after the regular luncheon meeting) per Geri's suggestion.*

## 6. New Business

- a. **Discussion on meeting conduct.** A letter was received from a Rotary member and was read aloud by Geri relative to the July 26, 2023, meeting featuring speaker Emily Fecko. The letter indicated the perception that one Rotary member was rude to the speaker and “soap boxed” on many personal issues. The author requested that the Rotary Board remind members of meeting etiquette as we do not need an unfavorable reputation in community. Maureen Rizzo (past president) shared a prior email where she previously addressed this topic with the same individual about his meeting behavior. *The Board agreed that our membership needs reminded on how to communicate with each other and our luncheon speakers.* The Board agreed that civility matters and is a key Rotary value. The Board checked to see who said individual's mentor and sponsor were. (Diane Chido was his sponsor.) *Norm Stark agreed to approach the Rotary member in question, after conferring with Diane. The Board agreed that an etiquette reminder would benefit all. This reminder will occur via future invocations.*
- b. **Post office box** – Karen explained that, in the past, David and Gary were the authorized users of the post office box. Karen and Amy have keys at present. Karen indicated that she checks the post office box when she is downtown and subsequently delivers Rotary checks to Amy as needed. *The board discussed the topic and agreed that Geri and Amy should have the post office box keys moving forward.*
- c. **Discuss committee structure for our club for 2023-24** – Geri led a discussion regarding how we should communicate with new members about what committee assignments are available. Geri noted that several committees have become redundant because of the consent agenda discussed earlier in the meeting. (The Rotary bylaws indicate that the president will identify the committees each year and seek approval of the board.) Geri explained that the only committees in need of a chair are Fundraising and Finance. Geri is meeting with Blane at the end of month, and he may return to Rotary. Amy expressed her willingness to serve on the Finance committee. Geri indicated that she is not worried about Finance but will keep looking for a Fundraising chair. Geri also noted that strategic planning condensed some committees into one committee. Geri made a motion to accept the current committee structure and Maureen seconded. The motion received unanimous approval from the Board. Karen noted a willingness to train others to accept the chairpersonship of the committees that she is presently chairing.
- d. **Discussion on grant application** – Karen reported that grant application is complete and ready to go. We are requesting \$1,500 in funding which would require the Club to match \$1,500. The current balance for the Ethics Symposium is \$8,993.09. Also, \$1,500 would be matched by our Club. Karen expects that we will have a balance of \$12,993 at the end of the year. Karen indicated that the Club is in decent shape for the symposium. We can cover this year's event and have some extra funding as well, while rolling over funds each year. We had 13/14 schools this spring and twenty-two staff. Karen noted that Stephanie Williams is not charging for Act 43 processing via PennWest-Edinboro. In the past, the Club paid for processing of those credits. Karen is budgeting meals for two hundred people (the target is 160

students while feeding teaching staff and Rotarians, etc.) Amy made a motion to submit the grant and Penny seconded the motion. A unanimous vote from the Board followed the motion.

- e. **Discussion on Team Merchant** – Amy reported on her recent discussion with Team Merchant. A Rotarian developed the tool, along with a colleague, because they were unhappy with credit card fees for member dues. If an Erie Rotary Club member uses Team Merchant for their non-Rotary business, the company will donate 10% back to our club. Amy reported that the flat rate is not that much different from what we are currently paying. We pay more to process American Express cards and each credit card type is different. Amy is currently working on recurring billing instead of sending individual statements. Amy indicated that Team Merchant’s #1 value is “What Would Mr. Rogers Do?” because they are a Pittsburgh-based firm. The Team Merchant costs are similar except for the ACH billing, and they do not require the credit card compliance. Amy reports that alone is a cost saving. Amy does not see a reason not to collaborate with Team Merchant and views it as a good opportunity. She feels that it should be a smooth transition. Amy will continue to discuss this transition with Team Merchant and DACdb. Amy indicated that paper checks are less expensive than credit cards. Mike asked about an exit strategy should the change does not go as planned. He also asked if there a need to sign a formal agreement. Amy indicated there was no need for a formal agreement. Therefore, Amy made a motion to proceed, and Mike seconded. A unanimous Board vote followed.
- f. **Discussion on fundraising ideas** – Rotarian John Evans, from the Savannah Club, spoke at the August 9 Rotary meeting. He advised that his club holds fundraising events once a month with only 50 members. (Our club has 95 members.) Geri shared several fundraising ideas which the Board subsequently discussed. Other clubs do more fundraising than we do and there is a perception (from the new District Governor) that the Erie Rotary Club should do more. Geri volunteered for the recent pancake breakfast for the Presque Isle Rotary Club, and she reported that the event went well. The two clubs collaborated nicely for charity. Geri indicated that we could hold a breakfast at Cathedral Prep, or we could host a celebrity bartending. Norm agreed that we work well with the Presque Isle Club every year and provide at least ten people for their service projects. Mike mentioned that the Erie Rotary gives scholarships which other clubs do not do. Mike also pointed out that we raise funds and provide it to a third party (Rotary Club of Erie Scholarship Foundation) and we also hold an ethics symposium. He feels those events are valuable but not classified as “fundraising” like the Presque Isle Club’s pancake breakfast. Mike feels our club is much more generous to the community. The \$10,000 gift to Matt Harris was an example he provided. Amy indicated that our Club savings account is dwindling because membership declined because of COVID. We have fifty less members which results in \$37K less revenue. Geri indicated that our goal one is to increase membership and the District Governor may mention fundraising at Wednesday’s luncheon. Geri and Amy indicated that if certain club members want specific projects returned to the annual budget, we will need to identify fundraising efforts to accompany those projects. Mike suggested we adopt the Erie Insurance model – i.e., we become major sponsors for five projects and rally our energies around them. Geri thinks we are missing an opportunity by not conducting a public-facing fundraising opportunity. Purse bingo was an example provided by Amy. Geri indicated that Prep cafeteria staff would manage food prep and students would help serve. *Geri has asked Prep for prices, a waiver of the rental fee and will report back to the Board.* Amy indicated that we could have 50/50 raffle as well, and baskets raffles also. *Karen is attending a similar bingo on Friday on and will report back to the Board on her experience at that event.* Maureen left at 5:02.
- g. **Discussion on donation to American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** – Our Rotary International President, as well as our district governor, are prioritizing mental health on their leadership platforms. Karen indicated that Erie County suicide statistics are increasing, and it is a worthwhile cause. Many larger cities host the “Out of the Darkness Walk,” and Karen has a team of six already formed. Karen will call for additional volunteers and there is no cost to walker. Karen proposes the Club donates \$250 for the cause. Norm made the motion and Geri seconded. In further discussion, Mike suggested that the district governor might pitch for more funding on Wednesday. The Board voted unanimously in favor, and all agreed that the donation will be funded via the international account.

- h. **Old Screen and Projector at Erie Cemetery Association** – Geri reported that Clarke Kuebler indicated that we have equipment still on site at the Erie Cemetery Association and the new personnel wants it removed. Clarke reports that screen is good, but the projector is outdated. Geri asked if we want to give the screen to a school. After discussion, the Board agreed that Geri will talk with Clarke and about keeping the screen, should we change our luncheon location in the future.
- i. **Discussion on two new board members needed** – Geri indicated that Julie recently moved to the Keystone Rotary Club (national and virtual) and we that have yet to replace Zac on the board. Discussion ensued and will continue.
- j. **Strategic plan review – working on those.**  
Strategic Planning Committee
  - a. Club Committee Structure – Penny and Diane chairs
  - b. Finance – Needs a chair/Amy Swartzfager member.
  - c. Membership Development/Member Care Committee – Penny Chair
  - d. PR Committee – Geri Chair/Maureen, Brevin and Jeff Evans
  - e. Meeting Programs – needs a chair/Karen temp chair/Dawn, Jeff Evans
 Geri indicated that work on the strategic plan will be ongoing; more to come.
- k. **Other new business** – Amy explained that the prior Italy donation paused because of red flags and discomfort with wiring funds to an unknown international account. Karen moved that we rescind the donation and Geri seconded the motion. No further discussion occurred, and a unanimous Board vote occurred.
- l. **Ethics Symposium** – Mike asked about the Erie Community Foundation Letter of Agreement and our foundation bylaws and what seems to be a disconnect in language and intent. Geri shared the documentation of her conversation with Susannah Weis-Frigon, from the ECF, which took place at 10 am on July 27. Geri indicated that Michael Gaines will meet with the board of the Scholarship Foundation on Friday and he will seek answers for the three points outlined in their discussion. *Mike agreed to email Michael Gaines and ask permission to attend the Friday meeting as well as determine the time/location.*
- m. **Request from Keystone Board of Directors** – The Keystone Rotary International E-Club of District 7280 requested the Erie Club to sponsor their Duck Derby fundraiser. After discussion, the board members of the Erie Club declined to sponsor this event as it was not included in the Erie Club’s budget.

## 7. Adjournment

Karen Staab made a motion to adjourn the meeting, with a second from Amy Swartzfager. The Board voted unanimously in the affirmative and the meeting adjourned at 5:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Karen Tyler, Secretary



Erinn Lake