

**Northwest Blacksmith Association
Fourth Quarter Board of Directors Meeting
November 8th at 1pm, 2023
Minutes written by Clair Guy**

Attendance:

Board Members: Pele Warnock, Steve Lafferty, John Karlik, Derek Lanhart, Darby Pereira, Jon Andersen, Silas Maddox

Missing Board Members: Adam Murray

Support Staff: Patricia Dawson and Clair Guy

Membership: Jim Garrett, Mark Manley, Michelle Cooper

Approval of Minutes from 2023 Third Quarter Meeting: Motion to approve made by John Karlik and seconded by Derek Lanhart. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business: Committee Reports

Treasurer's Report: Darby has had meetings with a new CPA and accountant who is in contact with our old CPA to transfer things over. The first step is conducting an internal audit. Overall we're in good standing in the bank account and received a lot of donations at Swaptoberfest which was really helpful.

There's another donation for the NWBA that's currently at the Bull Run Powerhouse, but we need hands to sort what can be used and what can be sold. Derek said there was also a large book donation for the library and he and Lee will be going through it at the beginning of the year.

There were questions as to why our bank account standing wasn't going to be printed in the Hot Iron News. Pele shared that, because the NWBA hasn't had an audit in so long, the accountant and new CPA are conducting a full audit to give a more accurate depiction of our finances rather than just printing a number with no context. The Treasury Committee wants to be able to accurately communicate where NWBA funds come from, if our growth has increased or decreased and by what percent, while protecting the organization from sharing too much information which can attract scams.

Patricia shared that while there may be a reason behind the decision, it's important to remember the association has gone through difficult financial times in the past so there are members who may be concerned by a perceived lack of transparency. As such, she requested a written explanation be shared in the Hot Iron News, which Darby agreed to provide as he wants to ensure members have the same confidence in our financial standing as he does.

Motion to approve the financial report made by Derek and seconded by Silas. All approved and the motion was passed unanimously.

John Karlik asked about the possibility of putting reserve funds into CDs or treasury bills for a short enough duration that it wouldn't affect our overall spending, but long enough to make a few extra thousand dollars a year. He said treasury bills are currently paying 5.5% for three months and beating out bank CDs. Darby said he'd look into the matter and will ask the CPA as well.

Darby asked about the property donation (located in Fossil, Oregon) that was floated to the NWBA at Swaptoberfest as he wasn't sure where the board was at in that process. Pele shared that she spoke with the man who offered to make the donation, and that it's not a straightforward offer. It would require talking with local commissioners about developing the property, in addition to the land being located in a floodplain out in the middle of nowhere.

Silas was the first person who was contacted about the donation. He said the property is industrially zoned but the guy doesn't have plans to develop it, nor the resources to make it happen. If there were someone close by willing to spearhead the project it might make the offer worth looking into, but that doesn't seem to be the case as the project would involve a large capital campaign just for the NWBA to run a facility out in the middle of nowhere. After discussion, no action was taken and no motions were made.

Secretary's Report:

Darby sent Steve the manual of the office of the secretary. Steve said that most of what was in the manual is being taken care of by Patricia, like maintaining our member list, communicating with members about their questions and more. Patricia reminded the board that it would be a good idea to talk with the head of our Manuals Committee, Lee Cordochorea, so the manuals can be updated to reflect the reorganization of responsibilities.

Good of the Order:

Jim Garret shared that, in the process of soliciting potential board members, he spoke with an architect who he thought could help cultivate a more robust interest in architectural forging within the association. He feels this could be needed, as the NWBA Membership is a group of diverse interests but he doesn't see architectural forging opportunities being offered. He then wondered what our members' interests might even be, in terms of what kinds of forging opportunities they would like to see offered in the organization.

Dan Partin asked if we could float a survey to the membership regarding their interests in joining the group. Clair mentioned we had success in the past with Survey Monkey. Patricia said she could add a line to the membership form and that - while it would take a full year before we'd know for sure - we'd likely get a more full picture of our members' interests that way. Darby added he'd like to set up a survey at Spring Conference that includes a section on if people would like to demo or teach a class at the MC, and if so on what topic.

Silas said he would certainly appreciate creating avenues for smiths to more meaningfully engage with architects about the craft, but that he didn't know if there was enough interest to warrant the effort. It was generally agreed that more demos and classes on architectural forging

should be offered to give our members the opportunity to learn if they'd be interested in such endeavors, though no motion was made or action taken.

Darby shared that it would be a good idea to print a recurring Meet a Member article in the HIN. Pele said Survey Monkey would be perfect for that. Clair said she could set something up to run by the board at the next meeting.

Communications Committee:

Hot Iron News and Membership: Patricia's currently working on the Winter Issue of the Hot Iron News, focusing on a recap of some of the Swaptoberfest events that didn't fit in the last issue as well as Board of Director candidate statements, a few highlight reports from members and, unfortunately, some memorials as well.

She shared her concern about membership numbers as we're lagging about 15% behind from last year. She said part of the reason for the lag is that Spring Conference was held in May, but the event was held in June the year before, and a lot of members just don't renew until they're at a face-to-face events despite her sending out mail and electronic reminders. When she sends out the hard mailings for renewal reminders (which she's working on doing again) our membership numbers tend to pick up by around 10%.

She said a common request from members is asking for the option to sign up for automatic renewals rather than having to remember to pay each year. Clair will look into setting up an annual renewal option that members can opt into through paypal. Another suggestion is providing lifetime memberships for purchase or in recognition of longtime members, especially NWBA founders.

Patricia said virtual membership is down to only 17 subscribers and that trend will likely continue as we're not providing many incentives to keep it. She suggested we take the recorded demos at the MC and send them out to the virtual members as a way to provide more incentive for people to sign up and keep a Virtual Access Pass. She suggested nailing down our schedule so social media posts can be made a few months before Conferences rather than right before the event. She believes that earlier promotions and recurring annual renewals could help bridge the gap and increase growth.

Website, Virtual Events, Social Media and Newsletter: Clair finally got a schedule set for the next few months and put them on our Facebook Events page, shared them to our groups, posted on the website and social media accounts, and included them in the monthly email newsletters.

She's started a MC Schedule for 2024. January and February are oftentimes sketchy with weather so those might be more suitable for Open Forge Days. She's hosting a Sand to Steel Meeting in January and will check in with Lisa Geertsen and Scott Szloch to see if they can demo in March or April. Conference will be held in May or June, and the Cowlitz County Fair is

in July. Ideally we can nail dates for Spring Conference down so even if we don't have demonstrators confirmed there's something to promote online, in the Hot Iron News, on the website, and in our email newsletter.

She shared that, when she started her role as webmaster and social media coordinator, David Tuthill was in charge of scheduling MC events, then the role passed on to Kellen. During that time, they sent her pictures and text describing events and she would share that info through all our online accounts. But she's come to realize that much of her current work is centered on creating or pinning down events, lining up new ones for our schedule, and tracking down info about them to share. She said it would be ideal if this work were taken back over by one or more board members as it takes focus away from other projects that are a part of her role.

She also shared that, while registration for events used to be organized and run by our past treasurer, Jim von Mosch, after his passing she took over the role out of necessity and would like to move away from de facto setting up, closing down, and/or running the registration table during events as it's a lot of effort that's also not related to her role. She suggested the board create a Registration Committee that she's willing to work with in the meantime, towards the goal of organizing the office and setting things up so the registration table is more streamlined and self-sufficient during events.

She offered the example that we have considerable backstock of vintage NWBA tshirts in the office, but when they're not displayed during events they don't get sold. Derek mentioned that one of the glass displays could be used for the tshirts so they're always on display, while freeing up space for the registration table too.

Derek made a motion that a Registration Committee be formed, Steve seconded and all were in favor. Clair and Steve are co-chair and Darby and Derek will join. Pele suggested we find a mentoring center coordinator in the next year as well, but no motion was made or action taken.

Finance and Budget: Pele mentioned that the board should set aside funds for a promotional budget to amplify marketing our events. Clair mentioned that while it could help, it would have more of an impact if she received info on events with advanced notice rather than last minute, so we're not paying to promote events that people can't plan to attend. While it was discussed, no motion was made or action taken for setting aside \$20 a month on promoting events.

Member Services:

Pele asked if Steve could make a checklist for updating the Board Manual. Patricia mentioned that there are policies and procedures relative to changing the document and that the changes will have to be voted on. Mark said that the Advisory Committee has advised the Manuals Committee to consider updating the manual so, while Steve is welcome to be a part of the process, talking with Lee Cordochorea will be step one.

AI Bart Grant: No applications at the moment

Events and Programs:

Pele would like to create a list of possible demonstrators and instructors who the board would like to see demo or teach a class in the next couple of years. She also wants to set dates for Spring Conference and Swaptoberfest at this meeting, so we can work towards planning our events a year plus out.

Silas shared that, historically, scheduling Spring Conference between mother's day and memorial day has had the least amount of complaints from the membership. Pele mentioned we need to check our Swaptoberfest dates against what the Events Center has scheduled to make sure we don't have another large event overlapping with ours, as there were issues with blocked roads hindering our members' mobility from building to building at Swaptoberfest.

Steve Lafferty asked about the possibility of having another gate open during our major events and Darby said he could ask if that'd be possible the next time he sees Ryan at the fairgrounds. Spring Conference Dates were set for May 17th, 18th and 19th. Swaptoberfest dates were floated for October 18th, 19th, and 20th or for the following weekend depending on what events they may already have scheduled.

Nominations and Elections:

One thing Jim Garrett would like to address in the Policies and Procedures manual is how the nomination deadline is November 15th, and how that lines up with the Hot Iron News deadline which is November 1st. While it's never been a serious conflict as he and Patricia have been able to work it out, it gets harder to work things out the later in the month that Swaptoberfest is scheduled.

He shared that, in the past, potential board members were solicited at Fall Conference which left enough time between the event and the Hot Iron News Deadline to follow up with candidates, track down their statements, edit and confirm corrections etc. But Swaptoberfest is held later than Fall Conference ever was and, while Patricia and Kellen did a fantastic job soliciting candidates and those members actually sent in their bios on time, such an outcome is rare.

Pele asked if it would be a big kerfuffle to change the nomination deadlines, to which Jim responded that that would be a function of changing the Policies and Procedures manual. He mentioned that if Swaptoberfest is Halloween-centric then it might be a good idea to solicit new board members at a different time, to which Derek asked if the positions could be promoted at Spring Conference, to which Jim replied that would be a good idea.

Patricia said that would help her too, as the candidate statements often need time for correction, and time is needed for the information to be printed on ballots and mailed to the membership as well. Jim said that, short of moving the deadline to the 1st of November or changing the Policy and Procedures manual, it would be best to solicit new board member candidates at Spring Conference.

For the 2024 cycle, Jim has six candidates that are ready to roll. There are five positions that are open, and out of those five there are four that are eligible for reelection, with only Derek and Pele running for reelection. John Karlik and Silas Maddox are enjoying forced retirement from the board this year, and Andromeda Jacobson, Ben Loelinger, Dan Partin, and Todd Elsner are new nominations.

Pele had questions around expanding the board to include all of those who are running and Jim suggested it would be best to do at the next board meeting after the votes have been tallied. Regarding when two members are in a tie for one position, he thinks that a coin toss when someone has won over 50% of the vote is absurd, and that it'd be better to expand the board to include both candidates. He stressed that the coin toss element is another thing he'd like to see change in the Policy and Procedures manual, as there's a benefit to adding more seats to the board if both nominees have gained our membership's confidence. The board can expand to 15 members.

Silas clarified that if there are five spots open on the board and, with six members running to fill those 5 positions, they could each conceivably pull over 50% of the vote as members are allowed to vote individually for the five they'd most like to see on the board. As such, he said it might be wise to only expand the board if all the nominees receive considerable support from the membership to be there.

Estate Planning Committee: Jim reported that the Estate Planning Committee accepted Jerry Culberson's Library and, thanks to Derek, the books are waiting in the Mentoring Center. He said that Ina had received a receipt for the donation, that there are some real gems in the collection and we owe a great deal of gratitude to Ina for donating them.

Advisory Committee: Mark shared that portions of our Policies and Procedures Manuals, as well as our Bylaws, deserve consideration for updating and refining, which would likely entail a multi-year project.

He reiterated an earlier advisory statement about the Cook Shack being current with all regulations in Washington State. Pele shared that she ran it by our insurance and that they were fine with the Cook Shack so long as we didn't sell tickets, but that it would be a good thing to look into. Silas agreed that we should look further into Washington regulations to cover all bases, and that he would be willing to take lead on answering those questions.

Jim thinks each committee should read and offer edits for their section of the bylaws and manuals. He acknowledged that there are some overlaps between certain committees, like donations and estates, so there may be better ways for things to be organized, but that committees should direct those changes. He said his wife Kathleen works as a professional editor and that she's willing to help with the final refining of the document. Michelle Cooper offered to help as well.

Mark wanted to add that the Advisory Committee suggests that other committees be expanded and utilized more often, as it's a way to have more members share in carrying the load and is also a great way to recruit new board members from within the ranks as they grow in their roles and responsibilities.

Mark shared that Kellen said some of the documents had been edited over the years but didn't know where the process was left off, so we should look into what decisions were made. Clair said she'd try to track down the board minutes from the first quarter meeting of 2020 as she remembers it being discussed then.

Mark recommended the board vote on the Cook Shack action. Silas made the motion that we discuss the legal requirements at the next board meeting to make sure our actions are in compliance with WA state law.

New Business:

Swaptoberfest breakdown. Pele shared a list of things we want to do differently in the future like ensuring no roads are blocked between the buildings we've rented, making sure the Cook Shack is in full compliance with Washington regulations, planning ahead to secure demonstrators that members want to watch, ensuring portajohns are rented by double confirming with the fairgrounds before the event, and making sure all wording for promoting the event states the event is only Friday EVENING and doesn't take place all day on Friday.

For feedback, some members mentioned that, in the past, Swaptoberfest was more about swapping and trading so Pele would like to organize an area dedicated to that in the Swap Meet Barn. The registration table could have been better organized and it would be best for more board members to be familiar with the registration table process to help carry the load.

Silas said that the Policy and Procedures manual mentions that a board member needs to be present whenever the registration table is open, but that regular members and their spouses can help run the table which helps take the heat off board members as they can be pulled in a lot of directions during big events.

Next year's worth of board meetings were scheduled. It was generally agreed that weekday evenings are easier for the majority of the group to attend. Our next 2024 board meetings will be held at 6pm on January 18th, April 11th, July 18th, and October 3rd.

Pele created a document for Dates, Events and Deadlines (DED) to be shared with all board members and staff. The document acts as a general calendar so everyone can see an overview of the predictable things we do each year, including annual, quarterly, and monthly events. It's a google doc that can be shared, viewed and edited, contains board and committee members contact info as well as notes on when bills get paid, when events traditionally happen etc, and can be referenced when board members want to reach out to each other.

She'd like the DED to include a checklist of general requirements for onboarding new board members. She'd also like the document to keep a running list of how much time board members have left in their terms.

Clair suggested that it might be good for the board to review Robert's Rules of Order before the next meeting, in an effort to help meetings run more smoothly with motions not being left on the table. Mark said he thought using Robert's Rules was included in the bylaws and Clair said she could send out a link to a cheat sheet as some of the processes help streamline things when writing the minutes.

Meeting adjourned: Derek motioned to adjourn the meeting and Darby seconded. Motion passed unanimously.