



Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors
Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
Wednesday, March 6, 2024 at 7:00pm

Board Members

Sarah Armour
Adenike Bamgboye
~~Peter Capek~~
Joshua Clyburn
Mitzi Elkes, Executive Committee At Large
Joan Gaylord
Neil Gordon, Treasurer
~~Scott Greathead~~
Samantha Hicks, President
~~Gareth Hougham~~
~~Arthur Jones~~, Vice-President
Aaron Mair

~~Jennifer McMillan~~
~~Tom Murphy~~, Executive Comm. At Large
Jeremy Rainer
~~Dan Riesel~~
~~Larry Rothbart~~
Gabrielle Spielberg
Steve Stanne, Executive Comm. At Large
Donna Stein
Rosemary Thomas, Secretary
Sarah Underhill
Julia Wilson
(~~strike through~~ indicates absence)

Staff Members

Jen Benson
Erin Macchiaroli

Meg Mayo
David Toman, Executive Director

Members

Jeremy Baron

Alan Thomas

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Mission Song sung by Steve “Step by Step,” Pete Seeger’s setting of words from the preamble to a union constitution.

Approval of Minutes

The 01/11/24 and 02/07/24 Board meeting minutes were approved by a show of hands, including minor updates from Steve.

Executive Director's Report

With our regular CPA firm exiting the audit business, the Audit Committee identified five other firms and is preparing a Request for Proposal for the FY2023 audit. David said a realistic estimate for audit completion is July timeframe.

There were multiple staffing updates. One person is on family leave until summer, and another is entering family leave shortly. Captain Liam Henrie, who has been engaged with Clearwater for some time, will start on 3/23/24 as a second captain. Ann Mellor, long time membership manager, is retiring on 4/19/24 after 15 years of service. Hal Cohen, IT Director (volunteer) and a founder, will retire on 5/5/24 after 55 years of service in countless and invaluable ways.

Spring scheduling for the Education program is well under way. Tideline booking are at 80% of target (34 booked, target 42) and sloop school program are at 75% (41 booked, target 56). Outreach is underway to schools who sailed but are not yet booked.

David shared scheduling improvements made after meeting with Steve, Sam, Eli and Joao to discuss historical context and brainstorm opportunities. Improvements include making it easier to 'contact scheduler' if assistance is needed, increasing the number of available slots, and outreach to summer camps for sloop and Tideline bookings. Steve said a calendar of sloop and location is expected to be available for distribution by early April.

David spoke to sailing / shipwright trainees. From 2023, five individuals progressed from volunteer to trainee to pro crew. Three of our four winter 2024 trainees will continue into the sailing season as crew trainee to become pro crew during the season, including the Engineer position.

The EA Director, Jen Benson, organized a new winter virtual learning series, with three successful programs held (COP28, Invasive Species, Hudson River PCBs), four spring 2024 Hike and Learn programs (see website for event details), and had several advocacy days in Albany including a Friends of a Clean Hudson press conference with Senator Gillibrand, a Hudson River Advocacy Day focused on environmental budget issues, and a day on CO2 fracking.

Mitzi said Teatown is planning a panel in May with Riverkeeper on water testing and sewage and suggested this could be an opportunity to reach out.

David reviewed the revenue initiative worksheet from the budget meeting, updating each line item to show progress, challenges, and where concentrated effort is needed. Several items have conversations started but nothing concrete happening yet. Areas needing board help include new corporate charters, locating seed money for a concert, sponsorships, and, along with staff, putting in concentrated effort towards a new fall event.

David encouraged Gala tickets and table purchases as soon as possible, as it helps both with cash flow and event logistics.

Nominating Committee

Sarah U. reviewed the 2024 election timeline, which directors have expiring terms, and said the annual board survey will go out in the next few weeks.

Key dates are: 3/3-deadline for incumbent decisions; 4/11-notice to membership that nominees are being sought, via e-news; 6/1-list of potential nominees presented to board; 7/1-nominations close; 8/1-Final slate presented to board; 10/5-Annual Meeting and election.

Sam asked everyone to think of folks in their lives who would make good board members and to reach out to her or Arthur to discuss.

Sam spoke to a by-law update request, from the Nominating Committee, around board indemnification. The update is needed to allow continued participation in the Board Lead organization, and will be driven the Planning & Governance Committee (Chair: Larry Rothbart).

Development Report

Meg began with year-to-date revenue, up 17% over the same period last year.

The annual membership campaign kicks off in March, and a new monthly membership option, which includes a free sail ticket(s) depending on level, will follow. A comparison of monthly vs. annual membership levels and benefits was shown. Meg thanked Julia and the Membership Committee for identifying different options. The new option generated a lot of interest.

Results from our first Flash Fundraiser, focused on funding a new jib, were shown including data on the number of donors and revenue generated. Meg gave credit to Amber, and said we had outside confirmation on its success.

Moving on to Gala, the theme is ‘connected through time and tides’. Auction items have been finalized and will be available for preview this week, with bidding going live on Friday, 3/22. An anonymous donor has purchased a table for the Next Generation Environmental Leader honoree Xiell Owens. Table assignments are on a first come, first served basis, so people are encouraged to get their tickets early. Everyone’s support in selling tickets and in spreading the word on the online silent auction will be greatly appreciated.

Meg shared plans for the spring Patron Fish Appeal, where a donation of \$500 or more gets a ticket to a special sail with food and live music. Feedback is requested on sail location and whether a transit sail would be more interesting / exciting.

A one page (two sides) flyer (thank you Chelsea and Amber) for sparking interest in corporate sails was sent to board members. Chelsea is the point of contact for help or further information. Keep in mind there is room for flexibility.

Budget Gap Efforts

Sam kicked off with two polls to get ideas flowing, then split folks among three breakout rooms, with the big eye towards identifying obstacles. Afterwards, we regrouped to summarize key points.

Rosemary’s group covered each person’s short and long term goals, the progress being made, and the challenges. Short term goals included identifying and reaching out to schools, summer camps, and businesses that may be interested in the education program or corporate sails and raising awareness of Clearwater’s impact. Connecting with potential sponsors / benefactors who will choose to either invest or just ‘give back’ in support of the organization’s values and mission is a longer term goal, as finding the right contact and then stewarding them takes time. Donna is working to influence other sloop clubs to get a sail this year. Another challenge is that many people are not in a position to support non-profits financially.

David’s group discussed interesting organizations to reach out to – unions, environmental groups, corporations and using the corporate sail flyer as a way to start connecting. They also had ideas on ways to enhance corporate sails, blending in food, music, a lecture, or an educational opportunity.

Steve's group went into depth on two topics – individual outreach and board charters. Individuals are encouraged to take advantage of guest spots to bring potential supporters on board to experience, ideally, an education sail. This is a very effective way to show Clearwater's value. To get started, the sail calendar will be available in early April. Each sail has three guest spots (you plus two). The other topic was board charters, where a number of directors have found that partnering up with another board member makes the lift easier and has the benefit of meeting new people (some of whom turn out to be musicians!), making for a great sail. The group spoke of the attractiveness of a transit sail and how those sails could be further enlivened by a special program – music, a historian, an artist, or some to talk about the river could be compelling. Steve suggested working directly with the scheduler to book your sail, minimizing fees.

Sam asked people to leave knowing there are resources available, to write down the places you want to outreach to, and if you need anything to contact Sam, Rosemary, or Meg. Sam will write up an aggregate for follow-up and said it was good to see the broad reaching responses.

New Business / Member Comment

None

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rosemary Thomas, Secretary