

2006 Board of Directors Retreat Minutes

Specific Action items are shown in box format, below. Some need immediate attention.

For the MGS Secretary: We agreed to send ideas contained in four documents to each committee and Branch chair [or liaison]—and ask them to review the ideas, and submit specific plans, budget requests and action items for Board approval. These documents are: a) the Board retreat minutes; b) the Board survey summary; c) the year end reports from each committee and Branch group; and d) results of recent member survey [forthcoming from Kathy Lund and Maureen Laughy.]

The 2006 Board retreat was held at the Pilgrim House Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Arden Hills. A dinner following the retreat was held at Axel's Steak House, in Roseville—and included invited guests. Twelve Directors attended this retreat: Robin PanLener; Darlene Joyce; Cecelia McKeig; Mary Wickersham; Maureen Laughy; Jay Fonkert; Jean Jensen; Kathy Lund; Gerald Maher; Bergetta Monroe; Valerie Morrison; Myrtice Orr and Kathie Otto. Five Directors were absent: John Mercer; Sheila Northrop; Paula Goblirsch; Harold Hinds; Tom Rice.

Each Director received a notebook with information items, including: Board roster and contact info; results of the Board of Directors survey; 2006 year-end committee and Branch reports; MGS constitution and bylaws; portion of the MGS Handbook dealing with Board of Directors duties; Calendar; summary of MGS committees and Branch group contacts; standard forms; Financial report, from Mary Wickersham; and a Bylaws committee report, from Jay Fonkert.

The retreat began with a report from the new MGS President, Robin PanLener—he focused on the MGS Mission [see Constitution & Bylaws], and summarized his hopes for the 2007 year ahead. We then went around the table, and the Directors introduced themselves, and shared some of their hopes and concerns. During the day, presentations were made by the Treasurer [how to read financial statements]; the Continuous Improvement Committee [explaining their recommendations regarding Board duties]; and by Jay Fonkert, on bylaws revision task force. Members for this task force were identified, and a deadline for action established. In the meantime, the Board is operating under a 50% of elected/appointed Directors quorum rule.

I. **We divided into groups, and each Director was able to spend time with two of the discussion groups. Each group began with a list of ideas and suggestions gleaned from the MGS Board Survey and the Year-End Branch and Committee reports [summarized separately.] The following BRIEF summary of Retreat discussion points is organized by topic:**

1. **Board, Branch Council, Office, Communications:**

A) Improve Board meetings—get a gavel; define the quorum; set time limits for each discussion; send out materials at least one week in advance of meetings; change the bylaws to allow for email voting.

B) Improve Record Keeping— identify office manager [Kathy Lund]; office manager and secretary to decide what records MGS must keep; design a NEW system for logging in visitors to the library [Maureen Laughy]...present one is useless. We need good stats on building use.

C) Communications—Distinguish between need to publicize events, and improving communication within MGS. **Both need improvement!** Consensus: “Communication stinks right now.” Create a “desk-top kiosk” with info and news, for the Library. Reconsider MGS video. [We are optimistic that our new secretary will make a big difference, but ALL groups and ALL volunteers need to work on improving communication within MGS.]

2. **Program Evaluation and Long Range Planning:**

Develop a concrete plan for 2008 and 2009. Need a long-range committee NOW—develop concept by April 2007.

Volunteer coordination is a MUST...need to prioritize jobs and match volunteers to appropriate jobs. [Maureen Laughy volunteered to assume this role.]
“Bottom line” measurement of success: grow the MGS membership base.
Explore a plan for sharing a part-time, paid Executive Director with another non-profit.
Create a strategic plan for the MGS library: explore other options for housing the library collections, including sharing space with other libraries, scanning documents and moving towards a “digital library”; etc.

3. **Financial and Legal Affairs and Moving in 2007:**

Need a balanced budget! Goal for 2007 is to find a new home and deal with those expenses.
Fund raising is essential: do it! Need to let MGS members know that the actual cost of services to members is higher than the present dues. Make members aware of the MGS budget.
Keep minutes of all quarterly business meetings.
Put financial info and renewal info on the website.
Include financial updates in newsletter and at membership meetings.
Charge for monthly education events and classes. IMPLEMENT the program fee established; this should generate \$5 profit per person registered.
Board members need updated handbooks
Find the draft brochures, plans etc. created by the past Fund Raising Ctte., before Mr. McKune died. [Ask Stephanie Martineau if she has copies.]
Approach fund raising by promoting planned giving.
Put a donation box by the front entrance to MGS.
Regarding donations: JUST ASK!

4. **Library, Collections & Acquisitions:**

Get serious about a relief librarian for Jean. Ask the Branch librarians for ideas.
Maureen will help recruit library volunteers. Provide library training; involve Beth Mullinax.
Improve signage. Prepare brief [written] outlines to UNIQUE collections.
Prepare a Q&A sheet that can be shared with volunteers and guests.

Ask for donations of material to the library. Implement the library acquisitions policy.
Determine a policy for “De-accession” of inventory; consider selling on ebay.
Keep the digitizing idea alive; investigate costs and procedures. Ask Erv Chorn for copy of his proposal. Check with LDS Crystal about their plans/resources for digitizing collections. [LDS is focused on county court records.]

5. **Volunteer Development and Outreach:**

Contact genealogy societies outside Metro area and promote MGS.
Contact scout groups and churches. Reach out to younger audiences.
Send representatives to outstate genealogy meetings.
Study the regions established by the Senior Federation—useful to MGS planning?
Approach the Senior Federation about contacts and mutual interests.
Secure as many periodicals as we can and send them ours in exchange.
WIA societies elect Directors from geographic regions; consider a similar plan for MGS.

Maureen Laughy will work with the list of members who responded to the St. Thomas Survey and the recent MGS survey...and try to match volunteers to needs.

Cec McKeig will interview groups in Greater MN, and provide 2 pages of copy for each MN Genealogist.

6. **Member Services, including website, publications, and Education:**

Continue to enhance the MGS website.
Develop a concept plan for a members-only website; include list of contents.
Establish an informal mentoring program for new members—provide a checkbox where new Members can ask for a personal tour of library, etc.
Support the publications committee in its efforts to get the publications up to date/out on time.

Make sure all four 2007 issues of the MN Genealogist come out on time.
Budget for the catch up publications needed.

Ask the Publications Committee for a specific budget proposal for 2007; this is needed for the Nov. Board meeting.

Improve publicity for programs!

Develop a proactive Speakers Bureau...not just a speakers list. Expand the list. Suggest that
The goal is to a] provide education; and b] promote MGS.
Provide 6 speakers in 2007 and 9 in 2008.

II. **We discussed a number of issues and questions as a group, including these:**

1. **Should the Board of Directors meet monthly, vs. bi-monthly?**

8 people suggested that the Board meet 8-10 times per year. 3 people undecided. 1 no.

It was agreed that this change should be discussed with the full Board at the Nov. Board Meeting.

2. **Is a follow-up “Long Range Planning Retreat” needed for the Board of Directors.**

Yes. Robin will recruit a committee..

3. **Are there any committees that might be added, deleted or combined to improve volunteer involvement?**

- It is recommended that the **Property and Facilities Committees be combined**, and that the MGS Treasurer assist with finance issues related to the upcoming move. Valerie Morrison is willing to chair the new committee.

- It is recommended that the **Program and Education Committees be combined**.

Committee should also be enlarged. Suggested Committee members include: Harold Hinds; Tom Rice; Jay Fonkert; Wes Waring; Bergetta Monroe. Bergetta and Jay have agreed to serve; **the others need to be contacted**.

Both committees have been “committees of one”—this needs to be corrected, and a working committee formed, with defined duties. Combining these very similar functions should:

- allow for cohesiveness and allow classes to tie together
- allow for themes and “building blocks”
- make better use of key volunteers and instructors

DISCUSS THIS PROPOSAL AT THE NOV. BOARD MEETING.

- Set goal to eliminate the **CIC**—however, they have been asked to **revise the MGS Handbook**, before the committee is disbanded. Kathy Lund will chair this effort.

- **Establish a special, ad hoc, 3 month Website Task Force, Jan-March 2007:**

****Ask EVERY Director to carefully review the present website, and make written suggestions.**

****Ask each Branch group and committee to do this also.**

- **Ask the Technology Group** to report to the Library Committee, and advise them on matters related to computing and equipment in the Library.
- **Ask the Correspondence Secretary**, Fran Hiller, to keep a log.

4. **Should the “oversight” recommendations submitted by the CIC [Continuous Improvement Committee] be adopted? And, related, should MGS officers be prohibited from serving as committee chairs?**

There was a general consensus that these MGS officers should have liaison duties to the following specific areas within MGS—and should report back to the full Board any unresolved problems or issues:

President: Institutional affairs; Fund Raising; Property; Government Affairs; Continuous Improvement

First VP: Education, Program, Library, Publications, Research

Second VP: Membership; Outreach; Greater MN; Website; Marketing

Treasurer: Financial Affairs; Insurance

The new By-laws Revision Committee will address the issue of officers serving as committee chairs. Several objections were raised to this CIC recommendation. Jay Fonkert is chairing this committee. Bergetta Monroe and Kathy Lund are members of the committee. They begin work in Jan. 2007.

5. **What special challenges and opportunities will MGS face in years ahead?**

Death of volunteers and members; “location, location, location”; technology shifts; aging population—including mobility, growing gap between young and old, challenge of reaching the newly retired....and reaching out to new audiences. **Challenges are also opportunities.**

6. **What might strengthen the Branch Council?**

Hold regular meetings and invite the Branch reps; have a clear agenda and allow time for each group to talk; give awards in 2007; support the Branches, e.g. they all need an LCD projector; expand shared use of expensive equipment, e.g. scanner; [The Irish Group paid \$7000 recently for a microfilm reader/scanner, and keeps it locked in Irish office. Branch groups would benefit by sharing such equipment.] Increase communication between the Branches. MGS should create a “reserve fund” so that Branch groups can seize an opportunity, and then work out ways to share the cost across groups.

7. **IF MGS were to hold a “special” fund raising drive, what are some of the purposes you’d like to see funded?**

Library equipment, e.g. LCD and scanner; paid staff; additional microfilm purchases; subscriptions at the library to Ancestry.com, etc.; WIFI in the library; specific acquisitions for the library.

8. **How can we improve customer service at the MGS library?**

Improve signage; welcome all guests; provide training for library volunteers; use nametags; Identify a person to call when there is an emergency with equipment; get a phone answering machine and someone to take care of messages; get wireless Internet service; provide coffee.

9. **What are some activities MGS might pursue to celebrate the Sesquicentennial in 2008?**

Be at the State Fair; establish an “Early Minnesota Families” group; publish the history of MGS; Re-instate a travelling exhibit; host an all-Minnesota genealogy conference; host a history writing contest: tell us about your grandparents or your great-grandparents; invite Minnesotans to submit copies of their family genealogies; invite special donations of county histories and burial transcriptions.

10. **How can we improve volunteer recruitment and retention?**

“Be positive!”; ASK; fill committees, and give them CLEAR job descriptions; give awards; increase library volunteer hours; encourage branches to help find more library volunteers; keep MGS open on Mondays, when MHS is closed; do not close library all of August...this discourages the many summer visitors who come to MN.
Log phone calls to MGS!

Update the handbook annually, and make pertinent sections available to people.

11. MGS' #1 goal is to increase membership. How can we do this?

- Provide brochures at golf courses, and senior complexes. Put them in related places, e.g. public libraries.
- Send email reminders.
- Make online membership renewal easier to find.
- Add a one-time “Life membership” category
- Consider an over 65- retirement membership rate.
- Add an outstate member rate.
- Start a reward challenge—recruit five new members, and get a one-year renewal for yourself [have person put your name on the membership form as the referring person.]
- Send a special membership invite to previous members.
- Encourage gift memberships as holiday gifts.
- Get articles in local newspapers.
- Make sure advance info on meetings goes out to Greater MN and beyond the state, early.
- Have a press release kit, and standard press releases “ready to go.”
- When you go somewhere to lecture, research, etc.---promote MGS.
- Membership growth is the responsibility of every Director, and every MGS committee/group.

III. Specific 2007 Committee Assignments were Reviewed:

Standing Committees:

Chair Executive Committee	Robin PanLener, MGS President
Chairs Board Meetings	Robin PanLener
Chairs Branch Council meetings	Robin PanLener
Fund Raising Committee	Robin PanLener
State Fair Committee	Robin PanLener
Library Committee Chair	TBD—Darlene Joyce will convene brainstorming group
Membership Committee Chair	Cecelia McKeig
Property/Facilities Chair	Valerie Morrison
Research Committee Chair	Mary Wickersham
Education Committee Chair	Harold Hinds

[Program Committee Chair]	[Abolish? Merge w/Education]
Long Range Planning Committee	the full Board of Directors
Publications Committee Chair	John Mercer
Chair Nominations Committee:	At issue; to be decided by the full Board by. January.

Ad-hoc Task Forces:

By-Laws Revision Group	Jay Fonkert
Continuous Improvement	Kathy Lund [revise MGS Handbook]
Get library catalog updated online	Ask Tom Rice, and new Library Committee to address this. Online catalog is not current.

Coordinators:

Greater Minnesota Project	Cecilia McKeig
Cemetery Project	Darlene Joyce
MGS Website	Jim Robasse
Library Technology Project	Jim LaValle
Office Management	Kathy Lund
Legislative Affairs	Gerry Maher
MHS Liaison	Duane Swanson
MGS Newsletter Editor	Kathy Otto

IV. High Priority Commitments Made by Directors—action items for 2007:

Kathie Otto:

1. Work with Education Committee on spring classes for 2007.
2. Lay out the 2005 combined issue of *Minnesota Genealogist*, so it can be published and distributed in 2006.

Mary Wickersham:

1. Update holding valuation & work with insurance company to be sure coverage is adequate to protect MGS.
2. Solicit budget input from committee chairs & get a draft budget to Board of Directors in a timely fashion.

Maureen Laughy;

1. Recruit volunteers to staff the library.
2. Update sign-in log at the library.

Jay Fonkert:

1. Help with Education Event planning
2. Write one article for the *Minnesota Genealogist*
3. Chair the Bylaws Review committee

Bergetta Monroe:

1. Work on the Bylaws revision committee.
2. Serve on the combined Education/Program Committee.

Darlene Joyce:

1. Convene a new library committee [and identify a chair], by Feb. 2007
2. Publish revised MN Cemetery Guide in 2007.
3. Contribute to the planning for the 2008 Sesquicentennial.

Kathy Lund:

1. Work with the Publications Committee, to get journal caught up by 2007.
2. Suggest revisions to the MGS Handbook, by Jan. 2007 Board meeting.

Gerald Maher:

1. Actively serve on the MGS Property committee.
2. Take over Government Affairs function.

Robin PanLener:

1. Send out announcements of 2007 programs.
2. Get MGS back to the State Fair.
3. Institute a Volunteer Appreciation/Awards Event.

Myrtice Orr:

1. Help find new volunteers.
2. Grow membership and member services.

Cec McKeig:

1. Personally visit or contact 15 Greater MN organizations by Jan. 15, 2007
2. Increase awareness of genealogy issues among Minnesota Chippewa groups on reservations.
3. Taking over the chairmanship of the Membership Committee.

Valerie Morrison:

1. Chair the newly combined property/facilities management committee.
2. Actively participate in the Branch Council.

TBD: These Directors were absent when we did this exercise, and need time to identify their priorities for 2007.

Sheila Northrop:

1. Improve communication within MGS.
- 2.

Harold Hinds:

1. Chair the Education Committee.
- 2.

Tom Rice:

- 1.
- 2.

Paula Goblirsch:

1. Assist the Publications Committee.
- 2.

Jean Jensen:

1. Assist with the effort to improve library services.
- 2.

John Mercer:

1. Edit and publish the *Minnesota Genealogist*.

