



Minnesota Genealogical Society

1185 N. Concord Street
South Saint Paul, MN 55075

<http://mngs.org>

MGS Board Meeting
1185 Concord Street North
Saturday, July 11, 2009

Present: Jay Fonkert, President
David Suddarth, Secretary
Valerie Morrison, Treasurer
Robin PanLener, Past President
Bergetta Monroe, Director
John Schade, Library Committee Chair
Sandy Thalmann, Director
Sandy Stadtherr, Director
Kathryn Otto
Jennifer Sly
Jennifer de Fiebre

The meeting was called to order at 1:02 P.M.

A motion was made to accept the agenda. The motion was seconded and passed.
Introductions were made of all present.

Secretary's Report:

David Suddarth reported that minutes from the last meeting were distributed via email. A motion was made to approve the minutes, seconded and passed.

President's Report:

Jay Fonkert reported that he has been preparing for the Star of the North Conference and has been working on the journal. Publicity for the Star of the North conference is up on the website. Jay passed out a schedule and information regarding the conference.

Treasurer's Report:

Val Morrison passed out the Treasurer's Report summary, along with one copy of tax returns for people to review. The Society is not paying federal taxes, but needs to file to show that we are operating as a charity. The return is published for public review. Val reminded everyone that they need to provide their volunteer hours to either Mary Wickersham or herself. She also pointed out that the MGS group return includes the branches.

The MGS budget is around \$100,000–\$110,000, while most branches have a budget under \$10,000. Val asked for comments on the tax return and requested that people email her with any comments in the next week. Robin PanLener moved that the Board has reviewed the tax returns. Bergetta Monroe seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Val then reviewed the financial reports, which included a detailed profit and loss year to date vs. budget statement. Bergetta Monroe asked about how the three year memberships are handled in the reporting. Val responded that an adjustment is made at the end of the year, in December. Jay Fonkert then raised the issue of whether or not to continue the three year membership category. He mentioned that we are not actively pushing it and he believes the Board should address the issue.

Val reported that, overall, income is down from last year and is less than our budgeted target. In addition, expenses are matching the budgeted targets. MGS has total investments of approximately \$432,515. The bond fund has increased about 5%. Jay pointed out that neither income nor expenses are distributed evenly throughout the year, and that things should even out as we go through the year. He mentioned that our single largest event is the September conference and that this is budgeted to make money. He encouraged people to push the conference and the banquet. He then stressed the need to find additional ways to generate income, as membership dues alone will not cover our expenses. Some ideas were mentioned, including MGS pins and a cookbook.

Robin PanLener moved to accept the Treasurer's report. John Schade seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

Mid-Year Budget Review:

Jay Fonkert suggested that the Finance Committee meet to review the budget. He mentioned the need to limit our expenses and do everything we can to maximize the net income on events. Jay talked about the advantages and disadvantages to the three year membership category. He pointed out that having the three year membership complicates the treasurer's job and that it shows up as a liability which needs to be carried forward and split out.

Val Morrison said that the budget is well organized. The library is doing very well, as is research, which is part of the library accounts. Jennifer DeFiebre asked if research requests are up. John Schade replied that a lot of requests are coming from outside the five state region, including some from Canada.

Kathie Otto spoke about the Minnesota Historical Society layoffs and mentioned that they are considering not answering mail and just handing out a researchers list. She suggested putting MGS on the list and contacting Tracy Baker at MHS to have this done.

Publications Committee:

Proposal for New Committee:

Jay Fonkert mentioned that the journal is one of the most tangible benefits of membership, but is also the single largest expense outside of rent and library expenses. He pointed out that Robin PanLener has been editing the newsletter and said that we need to come up with a plan for the journal. In addition, we need to revitalize the Publications Committee. Jay sent out material through email to the Board members regarding a proposal for a new committee. This new committee would oversee the policy of our publications program, such as the type of newsletter and journal we wish to publish, including content, features, regular columns, research, etc. Jay suggested that we move in the direction of a committee consisting of five or six people, with the chair of the committee being a Board member. The journal editor, newsletter editor and webmaster would sit on this new committee. In addition, there would be an at large member on the committee, who could be a Board member but would not need to be. Bergetta Monroe suggested that certain things be in the journal every time. She suggested having topics dealing with cemeteries, women and major events in Minnesota history. Sandy Stadther talked about potential journal contents and mentioned that surveys show the top two things people would like is information about research and about solving genealogical problems. Jay mentioned that we need variety in the journal. Every member should find something of interest. He also recommended standard features, so people know what to expect. Bergetta suggested that John Schade do a column about the library. She also suggested having a column or an article about getting kids interested in family history. Jennifer DeFiebre asked if we are limited by a certain number of pages in the journal. Jay responded that with the journal, the answer is yes. With the newsletter, we are not limited as much since it is distributed online. He also mentioned that we have changed the printer we use for the journal and now have a lower printing cost. In the past the journals have run 48 to 52 pages, but a good journal can be done in fewer pages.

Jay said that he has been in touch with about seven or eight people regarding writing columns dealing with a variety of items. Some of the categories include beginning genealogy, technology, Minnesota records and the collection of resources at the Minnesota Historical Society. He said that we have content for the Summer 2009 issue. In addition, we have some content for the Fall 2009 issue, but need more. Jay asked Sandy Stadther if she would be willing to chair the new committee. Sandy responded that she is considering it. Jen DeFiebre asked if we could use examples from the research committee in the journal. Val suggested doing a column about the research committee. In addition, she suggested looking at the teachers' package we prepared last year.

Jay then asked the Board for approval to set up a new Publications Committee. The Board liked the idea and gave Jay permission to move forward. Kathie Otto spoke about her experience being involved with the committee and working on the journal and newsletter in the past.

She suggested asking Kathy Lund if she would continue on the committee for another year. John Schade replied that Kathy has already indicated she would. Jay mentioned that we have a new copy editor and that the volunteers for proofreading the journal will continue.

Minnesota Genealogist Managing Editor Position Description:

Jay Fonkert then reviewed the position description for the Managing Editor position. He mentioned that the editor should find content and work with authors to get the articles into shape for publication. Jennifer Sligh asked about plans for outreach in order to get the position description out to as many places as possible. Jay responded that we are trying to get the word out. He also mentioned that the Managing Editor will be appointed by the Board and that the Board would review the appointment annually.

Interim Plan for 2009 – 2010:

Jay then talked about a plan for the future issues. He said that we have received all content from John Mercer. He said that we are a little short on content for the Summer issue, but thinks we will be caught up by Fall. He mentioned that we could use articles and columns to fill in for the Summer and Fall issues. Sandy Stadther suggested getting permission to reprint articles from other journals. In addition, the Board talked about putting in cartoons dealing with genealogy.

The Board then took a 5 minute break.

Education Committee Report:

Beginning Genealogy:

John Schade spoke about the Beginning Genealogy classes and asked that people ask him any questions after the meeting. He mentioned that there is a book that we will be providing to the attendees, which we will buy in bulk.

Technology Class:

Mary Wickersham and Tom Rice are coordinating the Technology course.

Intermediate Genealogy:

The Intermediate Genealogy course is in midstream. Harold Hines will be teaching the next session, in September. We have received payments from the Minnesota Historical Society for four sessions. The attendance was down at the last session. Receipts are divided 50% between MGS and MHS. MGS then passes on 60% of its half to the speaker.

Marketing Committee Report:

Robin PanLener reported that the committee has looked at preparations for the technology class. Currently, we have eight computers available and room for four

students to bring in laptops. He mentioned that there is concern regarding the bandwidth in the building, so the Marketing Committee will approach Qwest with a proposal to increase the bandwidth which is coming into the building. The committee will ask Qwest to donate extra bandwidth as an ongoing donation to MGS. In return, MGS would give acknowledgement of the donation to Qwest. In addition, the committee will also approach Comcast and a satellite operator. Robin will talk to building management about putting a dish on top of the building.

Robin then passed out a proposal to re-unify MGS. He pointed out that the membership dues structure is not equalized between MGS and the branches. He mentioned that everyone should get the newsletter because it contains news about events and other things which we want everyone to know. He said that we need to figure out a way to modify the dues structure.

Jay Fonkert said that we will be visiting the issue of the relationship between MGS and the branches. He mentioned that we need to review the way the relationship is designed. Jennifer Sligh said that she is interested in the relationship between MGS and the branches as well as the County Genealogical Societies. She mentioned that she would like to be involved on a committee to look at this issue.

Robin spoke about the annual teachers' conference booklet. He mentioned that we have a lot left from last year and that he has a chance to be at the conference again this year, on October 18 or 19. Bergetta Monroe moved that the Board authorize Robin to enter us in the teachers' conference. The motion was seconded by John Schade. The motion was then passed.

Membership Committee Report:

Jennifer DeFiebre reported that she met with some of the committee. There are no issues or concerns. She mentioned that brochures went out to people whose names were collected from the Intermediate Genealogy course. In addition, she said that there is good interaction between the committee members.

Website Report:

Jim Robasse reported that we now have mngs.org and m.mngs.org addresses. The latter address allows mobile users to access our website.

Jim then reported that he sent the Board a list of concerns in August and is still waiting for a response. Jay Fonkert replied that he did respond to the list of concerns. Jim would like a response from the whole Board and is concerned with the fact that the whole Board did not respond. He then laid out his concerns to the Board and Jay responded to each in turn.

Jim mentioned that there is concern about the members only area of the website. The Marketing Committee has it on its list of issues to discuss. Kathie Otto mentioned that we have talked about it and wanted to know from Jim how difficult it would be to set up. He responded that he needs to know exactly what we want in order to answer that question. The largest issue would be access and being able to limit it to only members.

Robin PanLener mentioned that we want to make more services available to members. He said that the Board needs to work with Jim more closely and that we need to have

cooperation between the Board and Jim. He suggested sending issues of the Minnesota Genealogist to Jim so that he can begin setting up a members only section on the website as an experiment to see if it will work. Jay spoke about the proposed Publications Committee and the inclusion of the webmaster. Jim said that maintenance would be the biggest issue in a members only section.

The idea of creating a list of missing books and posting it on the website was discussed. Robin said that he will send a list to Jim through email as a .pdf file.

It was moved that the Board give Jim approval to purchase software for under \$50 which is needed for setting up a members only area on the website.

Awards Committee Report:

Jay Fonkert reported that the committee needs nominations by July 15.

Nominations for Board Election:

Robin PanLener reported that he has received no nominations for anyone to be an officer. He said that we need nominations for Board members. Jennifer DeFiebre suggested putting an item in the newsletter mentioning that the Board needs nominations.

Programs and Events:

Members' Mornings:

Jay Fonkert reported that the next Members' Morning is August 29.

Star of the North Conference:

Jay Fonkert mentioned that we need volunteers. He mentioned that we need help with registration on the day of the conference. Bergetta Monroe volunteered.

Winter Program:

Sandy Stadther and Bergetta Monroe spoke about the November conference and the program. They reported that things are going well with the planning of the conference.

Additional Programming:

Jay Fonkert spoke about co-hosting a program with the Twin Ports Genealogical Society in Duluth. The program would most likely be held on the 26 of June next year, but that date is not confirmed. He mentioned that the Board needs to decide whether to do both the conference plus a picnic, or only one of the two.

New Business:**Scottish-American Center Proposal:**

Jay Fonkert introduced John McKeen from the Scottish-American Center and Heritage Resource. John spoke about the Center and their desire to become affiliated with MGS. He mentioned the advantages of affiliating with MGS and about their being able to offer volunteers for MGS. John believes that both groups could realize advantages, including revitalizing the Scottish group within MGS. He said that the Center will have a table at the Irish Fair and that they are trying to do outreach to become more well known in the community. Bergetta Monroe asked about the number of members belonging to the Center with an interest in genealogy. John responded that he believes 15–20% of the membership have an interest in genealogy. He said that genealogy is an interest among their membership and that they have received inquiries regarding genealogy. Jay asked about the incorporation status of the Center. John responded that the Center is incorporated as a 501(c)3 organization. The Center would remain an autonomous organization, like the Czech Society.

The fee to affiliate with MGS is currently \$120, plus an amount dependant on the number of Minnesota members, the amount of library space and office space. Robin PanLener asked John how many members the Center has. John said that they have 90 members and that this is shared with the St. Andrew's Society. He mentioned that the Center is looking to increase membership. Robin mentioned that our membership fee is \$35 per year and asked why the Center should only pay \$120 per year. Val Morrison responded that it is not just \$120, but \$120 plus a fee for each Minnesota member. Bergetta suggested that we keep track of how many members from the Center use the MGS facilities by having them note their membership in the Center when they sign in to use the MGS library. Jay mentioned that the Board has the freedom to negotiate the fee for affiliation. John mentioned that the Center has been working with the St. Andrew's Society to gather the names of people at the Irish Fair who are interested in genealogy and then draw them to a genealogical event. Jay asked if there would be an amount between \$120 and \$400 that the Center would be comfortable with and whether we can negotiate a fee. He mentioned that library volunteers would be a significant advantage to MGS. John responded that \$120 is saleable to his Board. Jay mentioned that he does not believe we have anything to lose by trying an affiliation for a year. The arrangement could then be reviewed in one year. Robin moved that we invite the Center join on a trial basis for the amount of \$120 for one year, beginning August 1, 2009 and going through July 31, 2010 with John McKeen as a liaison to the MGS Board. John Schade added that he needs a list of members of the Center who can have admittance to the MGS library. Bergetta seconded the motion. The motion was passed.

MGS/Branch Organization Review:

Kathie Otto reported that the Minnesota Historical Society will no longer be collecting or microfilming newspapers. She suggested that MGS come up with a resolution stating that this is not a good idea. Jay Fonkert said that he will write a letter, with Kathie's help, to the MHS board. Robin PanLener moved that Jay write a letter to the MHS Board. The motion was seconded by Bergetta Monroe. The motion passed. Jay mentioned that he will circulate the letter to the Board before sending to MHS.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. That motion was seconded and passed. The meeting was adjourned at 3:43 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
David Suddarth, Secretary