

SEF Executive Committee Retreat
February 20, 2016, 9-11:30, The Orchards

Present: Jerry Belanger, Gail Duffy, George Fournier, Jan Galati, Beth Hosmer, Michelle LeBrun-Griffin, and Steve Proffitt

Absent: Kelly Nolan-Maccione, Dave Monti, and Rick Veilleux

Meeting called to order at 9:30.

Jan Galati, Chair, prepared a PowerPoint presentation entitled “How Can We Best Do What We Do Now?” (Or how can we be a strong board?) Expected retreat goals for members: to gain better understanding of how the Southington Education Foundation aligns developmentally with the Five Life Cycle Stages of Nonprofits; to reflect on where the Foundation stands in regards to the needs, tasks, and impact of governance at each stage as outlined in a universal concept; to formulate ideas for future goals. The presentation was shared with all in attendance via Google Drive.

The following transcription captures the essence of the Committee Members’ discussion in response to the “Five Life Cycle Stages of Nonprofits” presentation.

What did you find most insightful about the content of the presentation?

Loss of powerful leaders who started organization

Importance of addressing organizational needs and efficiencies regularly

Do we know how successful we’ve been at meeting goals?

What evidence do we have of improved results (i.e., level of effort, rate of return, impact)?

Need for ongoing, consistent Board member attendance

Need for new Board member training clearly defining roles and responsibilities

Need for succession planning

Consider small stipend for Chair position (need to recognize BOE members are not paid)

Consider Vice-Chair position as grooming for Chair subsequent year

Consider seeking administrative assistance (e.g., a youth looking for community service hours)

What do you see as SEFs immediate goals?

Recruitment and formal orientation

Renew, revitalize, and explore new and different fundraising activities (see article Jan referenced)

Ensure all work aligns with mission and values

Strategically plan for increased programming/regular disbursement of funds

Generate program that we're purposefully fundraising for similar to initial Science at Sloper campaign

Continue school specific Ambassadorship to promote SEF and increase visibility

Re-evaluate /make decisions regarding continuation of funding of long-standing projects that BOE may not be interested in sustaining

Continue shared leadership and division of labor so workload not too burdensome for any one person

Build in reflection time to ensure all Board members are able to publicly support decisions made

What do you see for the future of SEF?

Change use of meeting time to be used for getting work done vs. informational; revisit suggestion at previous retreat to keep business to 20-30 minutes and then meet by committee to alleviate the need for separate meetings each month

Increase membership by having ongoing membership drive vs. once per year; consider recruiting on representative from each school/PTO

Define more clearly partnership/expectations of SEF Board in collaboration with Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent

Outline marketing strategies (i.e., annual report) (see ideas for this from Nov'14 and Jan '15 retreats)

Develop a five-year strategic plan

The second part of the presentation follows.

A summary of the article: "An Elephant in the Boardroom" presented information about nonprofit history emphasizing that since nonprofit law was created in the 1950's volunteer time for board participation has diminished as need has increased dramatically.

With a goal to achieve boards that were effective, two premises were presented in the article:

Premise #1: To be effective and to roll with the winds of change; to remain fully mission driven, with a diversity of volunteers and funding yielding enough money to do the work and time to do the work; to really be about business of making their communities a better place---to accomplish all this, nonprofit organizations need strong boards.

Premise #2: Board members must have a strong commitment to the mission of the organization. This commitment implies a clear understanding of the work of the organization and an ability to articulate that understanding to friends, colleagues, donors, funders, and the general public.

This article recommended that nonprofits who are looking to strengthen their board focus on the **process** that will work for their group.

A good process solution should:

- Be simple to use
- Easy to understand
- Produce immediate payoff
- Be flexible

Workable processes have in common:

- A process for surfacing and dealing with disagreements in a principled way
- Leaders who want to create a working team
- A culture of both accountability and forgiveness
- Training and education

Part Three: A Need for a Chair

The By-laws Article V. Section 1 Duties of the Chairperson were discussed and clarified. Jan then reminded Executive Committee members of positions open for the coming year. Ideas on how to fill these officer openings were discussed. George Fournier is considering taking on the role of Treasurer. Gail and Michelle are considering the role of Chair, if they can serve as Co-Chairs. Decisions will be made in the coming weeks to provide ample time.

Closing:

1. A nonprofit is a changing organism that needs continued attention.
2. Executive Committee Members need to be ready to tailor solutions to the Foundation at any time.
3. Foundation members are volunteers and as such SEF goals may take time. (Rome was not built in a day.)

Meeting adjourned at 11:30.

Respectfully submitted by,

Michelle LeBrun-Griffin

Jan Galati