

Northlands Storytelling Network  
Board of Directors Meeting  
November 6, 2006  
Minutes

**Friday 11/06/06 – Saugatuck, Michigan - Called to Order 7:10 pm**

by President Kevin Strauss

Board of Directors present included:

Officers:

President-Elect - Greg Weiss

Treasurer - Tina Rohde

Secretary - Yvonne Healy

Past-President – Jenifer Strauss

State Representatives:

Iowa – Steve Marriott

Illinois – Marilyn Kinsella

Wisconsin - Hardy Garrison

Appointed Directors:

Don Falkos

Colleen Shaskin

Judy Sima

Business Manager

Karen Wolscheid

- Secretary's report:
  - Minutes submitted and amended to remove names.
  - Email voting policy can allow future minutes to be submitted and approved via email rather than wait until a Board meeting. Thus state representatives can pass information to members sooner.

**Motion 1:** Approve 8/06 minutes as amended to remove names.

Approved.

Action: Secretary will email amended minutes to Webmaster. Webmaster will post 8/06 minute on website. Secretary will submit future minutes before board meeting via email for approval.

- Treasurer's report:
  - Bottom Line: After 5 years of streamlining the organization's accounts, itemizing budgets, increasing fees, Northlands made a yearly profit of \$1,157.35.
  - Financial Tracking System: Business Manager developed systems to accurately track and appropriate costs to expenses for running the organization, providing member services, and producing conference. System has been in place for a year. System accurately reveals real costs of each service per member/attendee (e.g. journal publication, grants, website, etc.) and real costs of each day of conference. Board can now see where it is necessary to adjust conference charges and membership dues to cover the actual costs of providing service.
  - Anticipated Expense Increase: The hotel's anticipated 8% increase of food charges for 2007 is expected to greatly decrease the percentage of profit.

**Motion 2:** Increase 2007 fees to cover actual costs and added value of increasing offerings: \$125 –Friday only, \$150- Saturday only, \$175 – Conference Fri night through Sunday, \$250 – Full conference from Thursday through Sunday.

Approved.

Action: By December 1, Business Manager and Webmaster will post registration information, new fees and pdf registration form on website. Brochure will be mailed later at usual time.

- Online registration options were discussed. Conclusion was that such online services are designed for entities with much larger sales. Thus, the service fees charged make it unaffordable for Northlands.
- Resource Room: By December 1, Business Manager will notify members to start planning now to sell things in Resource Room with Northlands charging commission:
  - make cool stuff to sell;
  - garage sale;
  - bring books for buck-a-book;
  - storyteller garb re-sale.
  - send suggestions for new vendors;
  - 25<sup>th</sup> annual conference product is being investigated.
- Proposed Budget: Business Manager and Treasurer outlined proposed budget. Expenses are expected to be similar with 8% hotel food increase plus slight inflationary increase in other expenses. Compensating income increase is projected to be covered by conference fee increases.

**Motion 3:** Accept proposed budget.

Approved.

Action: Business Manager will email Budget to Board members.

• Committees

- Will meet Saturday 8:00 am-9:00 am and/or 1:00-2:00 pm
- President is member of all committees.
- Long Range Planning: Steve Marriott, Karen Wolscheid, Jenifer Strauss, Yvonne Healy.
- Staff Support: Don Falkos, Tina Rohde, Colleen Shaskin, Greg Weiss
- Executive Committee: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Past President
- State Representatives: (MN) Katie Knutson; (WI) Hardy Garrison; (IL) Marilyn Kinsella; (IA) Steve Marriott; (MI) Dick Strader
- Webmaster: Hardy Garrison
- Membership: all State Representatives plus Business Manager
- Financial: Treasurer, Business Manager
- Policies & By-Laws: Steve Marriot, Marilyn Kinsella, Business Manager
- Conference: Greg Weiss, Gwyn Calvetti, Jenifer Strauss, Hardy Garrison, Katie Knutson, Dick Strader, Business Manager
- Nominations: Jenifer Strauss, Greg Weiss

**Motion 4:** Board will adjourn at 10:30 pm Friday

Approved.

Action: Saturday, Committee meetings 8:00 a.m.; Board meeting reconvenes 10:30 a.m.

- Meeting adjourned Friday 10:30 pm –
- Meeting reconvened Saturday 10:30 am –
  
- By-Laws/Policies Committee Report
  - Attending Minors: Policy used at 2006 conference was reviewed. 3 minors attended and system work satisfactorily.
  - Policies vs. by-laws: Difference between policies and by-laws reviewed. Policies can be changed by future Board because they are philosophical intentions. By-laws, on the other hand, are much more difficult to change.
  
- Membership Committee Report
  - Membership Expenses: Discussion of what financial tracking system reveals about real cost of membership vs. conference.
    - Of the \$40 member fee (annual dues),
    - \$31 covers maintaining the organization (journal, directory, website, credit card fees, scholarships, grants, ).
    - \$9 remainder invested in the fiscal future health of the organization and new projects.
    - Budgeted expenses for advertising stay same, board meetings same, book store same, credit card fees & business manager fees slight increase, conference food increase, grants same, insurance same, postage increase, presenter fees same, miscellaneous expense (\$300 for CEU service, band,) presidential discretionary fund same, printing slight increase (journal, brochures), equipment rental same, rental space same, expendable supplies (badges, ) office same, taxes same, telephone same, website same. With new increase conference fee (\$115).

**Motion 5:** Pie chart of “Where Member Money is Going” will be posted on website Approved.

Action: Business manager will create & design a pie chart for webmaster to post online.

- Survey: Board discussed creating online survey to members to determine our demographic (e.g. when & where interest in storytelling develops, shared crossover interests, etc.) This will help Board to better serve membership needs. Northlands might also share this material as a member benefit to help members focus their local marketing.
  
- NSN Liaison Report
  - NSN will soon hire a new Executive Director.
  - NSN is developing governance policies which clarify duties and procedures and areas of responsibility for staff and board.
  - NSN is interested in partnering with regional organizations such as Northlands.  
Ideas NSN proposed:
    - Northlands incorporates an NSN SIG pre-conference into a Northlands’ conference; in exchange NSN would provide a keynote speaker.

- Northlands guarantees a set number of NSN individual memberships in exchange for unspecified benefits from NSN.
- Northlands would purchase an organizational membership which gives Northlands members discounts on NSN membership.

Northlands' Response:

- Northlands Board thanks NSN for opportunity to consider opportunities for collaboration. Northlands hopes to keep lines of communication open with NSN to find ways that mutually benefit and strengthen each organization. Northlands wishes to support NSN because it's important to have a national presence for storytelling.
- NSN might help Northlands and other regional organizations offset impact on lower attendance at regional conference when NSN conference is held in our region. Northlands lost \$5,000 when NSN visited Chicago. Ideas discussed: NSN grants, scholarships to Northlands conference for 1st time attendees, joint memberships in NSN & Northlands.
- Northlands sees no benefit to assuming the work and expense of adding SIG pre-conferences to our annual conference. Nor do offered keynote speakers fit Northlands' philosophical orientation. Proposed increased attendance of SIG members might compromise Northlands' successful formula of offering a affordable and intimate which is supported by members.
- If NSN were to hold the National conference every other year, suggestions were made to hold SIG conferences and/or small storytelling workshops on specific topics in various areas of the country.
- Concern was expressed that NSN does not offer the same high quality of service to members as does Northlands: recordkeeping, correcting administrative errors, etc.

- Board adjourned Saturday at 12:00 pm for lunch & committee meetings. –

- Board reconvened Saturday at 2:00 pm –

- Conference Committee Report

- Tasks: proceeding on schedule. Search is ongoing for member to become apprentice to takeover managing the bookstore. Fringe will be offered as pilot program with 6 slots: Friday 9:45 pm, Friday 10:45 pm, Saturday 2 slots at 9:45 pm, Saturday 2 slots at 10:45 pm.) Applications will be chosen by random lottery. Fringe will run concurrent with swaps. Both concert auditions and fringe applications will be posted online in first week of December to be submitted by January 15. Decisions will be announced March 1. Neither concert nor fringe performers will be noted in brochure due to printing deadline; but will be noted on website.
- Criticism: One member contacted Conference Chair when schedule was announced. Member was concerned that CEUs were not offered; and that Saturday's track of 3 workshops on healing applications were insufficient since

none are offered on Friday. A lengthy discussion of this person's concerns ensued. Board concluded:

- Selection process in-place is approved and will continue since evaluations consistently show that choosing by quality of individual proposals satisfies better than choosing to fit predetermined topics.
- CEUs will be offered if Wisconsin legal requirements can be satisfied. This is in addition to Graduate Credits which continue to be offered. A Wisconsin member was identified who is so qualified.
- Board understands that we can't satisfy all the people all the time; but works hard to satisfy most of the people most of the time. Each year a different mix of topics are addressed with the current process.

**Motion 6:** Board will ask qualified Wisconsin member to pursue CEUs for both education and healing.

Approved.

Action: Illinois representative will contact identified member to seek his agreement to start the process.

- Staff Support Committee

Business manager has shown tremendous growth and efficiency over past year. With the current sound financial basis, it is time to bring wage up to market value for administrative help. It is not currently possible to bring wage up to value for executive level.

**Motion 7:** Board accepts Staff Support Committee's suggestion to increase wage for Business Manager to \$16/hour with a cap of \$7,350.00 annual.

Approved

Action: New wage rate takes effect December 1, 2006.

- Fiscal Agency Review

Northlands pilot program of acting as fiscal agent for member-driven nonprofit projects began with the Hurricane Katrina Kids' Relief Tour which offered storytelling to displaced children in shelters. This pilot project was a success. Furthermore the trial was a test case as a possible income generator and member benefit. Business manager reviewed such services offered by other organizations and obtained free legal advice from lawyer/Northlands member on ramifications. Since business manager is not staff but is a contract employee, she is barred from overseeing a fiscal agency. Furthermore, LANES & NSN followed Northlands' lead and both now offer this service to storytellers. Thus, Northlands may be providing a redundant service. No Northlands members have sought to use this service. Given the lack of interest by our members, and the legal and accounting costs and complications, Board is advised to watch the programs implemented by LANES & NSN. Meanwhile, other ways of generating income are sought.

**Motion 8:** Board will table formal acceptance of a fiscal agency rule for at least one year.

Approved

Action: Business manager will keep an eye on NSN & LANES experience. Board member will continue conversations with lawyer.

- President’s Project – Definition of Storytelling

Months of seeking and reviewing member and Board suggested definitions of storytelling were discussed extensively and condensed into a short list. Board will table the discussion and re-visit it Sunday morning.

- Conference Site Search

Business manager researched sites submitted by members, board and her own research. She submitted letters with our specifications to 35 sites for their proposals. Business Manager will create a spreadsheet comparing promising sites. She will do in-person visit to the following top 4 possibilities in the near future:

- Cedar Rapids Marriott, IA
- Fox Hills Resort, WI, near Stevens Point
- Woodstock, IL - Resurrection R.C. Retreat Center
- Oshkosh, WI – Univ of WI , Gruenhagen Conference Center

- Grant Proposals Review

Board reviewed and discussed two grant applications received.

**Motion 9:** Accept grant for \$500 to support Minnesota’s Twin Cities Storyfest.

Approved.

Action: Business Manager will notify applicant by letter.

**Motion 10:** Accept grant for \$250 to create pocket altars to stimulate storytelling in a hospice grief support program.

Denied.

**Motion 11:** Decline the grant to create pocket altars to stimulate storytelling in a hospice grief support program.

Approved.

Action: Business Manager will notify applicant that the grant was denied because the proposal did not show sufficient strength of storytelling in this project to fund according to Northlands mission and grant guidelines.

- Long Range Planning Committee

Florida Storytelling Association Model: In response to a member suggestion, Board researched and discussed the reorganization of the Florida Storytelling Association and possible applications by Northlands. Topics discussed:

- Chapter status: chapters are legal extensions of the main entity. Thus the chapter gains benefit of the non-profit status of main entity. Adversely, the main entity

becomes legally responsible for actions of the chapters. Board considered that liability was a substantial disadvantage, especially considering juggling 5 different states' laws.

- Conference separation from Board: Conference is completely run by a separate committee who ultimately reports to the Board. All planning, choices and responsibilities were assumed by a separate committee. Board develops other programs, e.g. youth voices, story labs. Adversely, Board becomes uninvolved in, and loses influence over, conference. It also creates a need to enroll and train additional volunteers for the additional work.

Action: Board members will brainstorm ideas for projects and directions for Northlands' possible future. If conference planning continues to become streamlined, what would Board do: dreams, fantasies, what ifs'. Long Range Committee Chair will email the request to all board members to think about and submit ideas for committee to review.

- Skill labs for performance skills? Marketing labs? If in the next few years, Northlands sponsored an intensive workshop in your local area, what would you like addressed? What would you like to present?

- 6:05 pm Saturday adjourned –  
- 9:00 am Sunday reconvened. –

- President's Project – Definition of Storytelling (continued)  
Board discusses final definition.

**Motion 12:** Board accepts following definition: "Storytelling is the art of live narrative performance, dynamically shaped by audience response."

Approved.

Action: President will write explanatory email to membership for electronic approval.

Notification to membership will include definition above, followed by an explanatory paragraph. Webmaster will design an electronic reply which includes Member Name. Name is required and will be verified via Northlands' rolls. If others want to vote, they must first join Northlands. Form will include two boxes to check. One box will say "I support". Second box will say "I do not support. My alternate definition is \_\_\_\_\_." Form will be designed so that a non-supporting vote does not register without input of an alternate definition. Additionally there will be a space for comments. It also will include copyright notice ©Northlands Storytelling Network, 2006. Permission granted to use verbiage with credit to Northlands.

**Motion 13:** Northlands will send a notice to membership asking for feedback on definition of storytelling collected by an interactive webform as discussed above.

Approved.

Action: Webmaster will design webform. President will write definition and explanatory paragraph. Business Manager will send to members.

- Meeting adjourned 10:00 am – Next Board meeting is 1/12-14/07 in Eux Claire, Wisconsin

- Email Board Decisions –

**Motion 14:** Fees for 2007 Northlands conference will be amended as follows: Friday only attendee: \$125. Saturday only attendee: \$150. Weekend Conference (Friday pm through Sunday): \$200. Full Conference (Friday a.m. through Sunday): \$250.

Approved via email December 11, 2007

Action: Brochure and website will include fees as stated.

**Change:** January 12-14, 2007 Board meeting moved to Oshkosh, Wisconsin at University of Wisconsin's Gruenhagen Conference Center. Business Manager will make arrangements.