

Monteagle Sunday School Assembly
Minutes of the Board of Trustees

May 16, 2020

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Monteagle Sunday School Assembly was called to order by presiding President Bill Cox on May 16, 2020 at 9:00 a. m. CDT.

A prayer was offered by Amanda Moody.

ATTENDANCE: Paula Walker called the roll:

Members Present: Due to COVID 19 and TN Executive Order and in an effort to allow for full participation by all Board members with better sound quality, the meeting was held electronically with all attending board members present via webcam.

Members present by phone: Susan Acker, Ron Buffington, Jay Cleveland, Bill Cox, Bill Davis, Linda Elder, Lanier Frank, Meghan Hudgins, Jim Humphreys Susie Lipscomb, Morgan Merrill, Tom Montgomery, Amanda Moody, Laurie Peacock, Ed Provost, Jim Reed, Steve Rixham, Frannie Smith, Jimmy Stansell, Overton Thompson, Jim Uden, Paula Walker, Betty Webster and Anne Worthen.

A quorum of the Board was present.

Others Present: General Manager, Scott Parrish, Ruth Cobb, Dr. Walter Merrill, Jenny Jervis, Lucy Keeble and Dede Clements.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Minutes from the May 2, 2020 meeting were opened for comments and approved with one addition clarifying Susie Lipscomb's presence via telephone.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MOTION ON 2020 SEASON:

Bill Cox introduced a motion by the Executive Committee relating to a 2020 Season. Bill noted that trustees have to separate the interest of the organization from that of a particular person or constituency. He asked that the Board speak as one voice on the outcome of any decision, keep deliberations confidential and not share any decision until the Assembly has the opportunity to make a statement on the issue.

Discussion was organized by roll call with each Board Member having three minutes. Once each member had the opportunity to offer comments the floor would be open to add additional comments. Voting is to be by roll call. Bill thanked those who had reached out with feedback and thanked the Executive Committee and Bill Davis.

Steve Rixham presented the following motion from the Executive Committee:

The MSSA Executive Committee unanimously moves that the Board accept the its recommendation to forego the 2020 Monteagle Sunday School Assembly Season .

Steve Rixham led off discussion noting that all want to have a season but took a step back after looking at the details of operation and the number of visitors from other areas of the country. Steve noted that Dr. Schaffner (infectious disease expert from Vanderbilt) agreed. He noted that references to what are local communities are doing are “local’ ad don’t always consider this situation we face – visitors from around the region/country. Steve noted that many in the Monteagle community do not have the resources or access to hospital or medical care. He noted that it was a hard recommendation.

As noted, discussion proceeded via roll call and covered the following issues/concerns:

- Concern that the motion of the Executive Committee was a decision when a decision of this magnitude should be a decision of the whole board;
- Acquiescence to the recommendation of the Executive Committee despite feeling that the committee didn’t work to find a solution, felt there was trash talking, strong arm tactics and hypocrisy among ExCo members; Feeling that a Board member who is a physician was not included because his position differed from those on the ExCo;
- Seasons held during other health crises and disappointment not doing so this time;
- Concern that uncertainty of the situation has led to fear; Monteagle already has travelers in the community (truck stops);
- One Board Member wanted more time and Overton Thompson indicated that more time was available; no board member should feel as if they don’t have an opportunity to speak;
- View that without a season the assembly will take a *laisse faire* and will not police activity;
 - Hope that a season would allow us to support the local community; consider donating to the annual fund in an amount that would have been spent during the season;
 - Hope to have online lectures;
 - We will need guidelines (dogs on leashes; 1 way bridges)
 - Concur with motion; appreciate the thought and time put into it;
 - Hope that the gate will be staffed to keep track of who is on property, helpful in contact tracing;
 - Rental committee hopes to go forward with rental program;
 - Feeling that Assembly will survive as it has in the past;
 - Thanks for time put into the motion; we vary on views but health of those in assembly is of utmost important;
 - Hope that there can be more flexibility as the summer moves on and we learn more;
 - Feeling of hopelessness in what might happen with the pandemic;
 - Support for annual fund idea;

- Respect for opinion of experts, but disagree that we won't know how to conduct ourselves in a safe manner;
- Desire to err on side of caution if a mistake is made;
- Request for more information on the financial impact so that we can fulfill fiduciary obligations;
- ExCo recognizes that this is a board decision; memo circulated was designed to provide background on the factors considered and not in any way meant as condescending;
- We are a privileged group and one season will not hurt us.
- Amanda Moody requested that her comments be included in their entirety:

My comments have nothing to do with "season or "no season" but I want to share my disappointment and concern in the handling of the Co - Vid 19 matter from the beginning.

Two weeks ago, the board was sent a Task Force Plan at 9 o'clock at night the evening before the board meeting. The board, and some of the executive committee had no idea there was even a task force and were given little time to review and consider the document.

2 weeks later, the board is not allowed to meet in person although a quorum could be present.

Finally, we received documents from the Executive Committee and while it is presented as a recommendation they have for all intents and purposes made a decision without considering the input, thoughts or expertise of their 19 fellow board members.

Elements of the document are , quite frankly, patronizing. It spells out widely understood practices such as "social distancing" and "personal hygiene", "flattening" the curve and that Dr. Anthony Fauci testified before the senate as if the rest of the board is uninformed, uneducated and therefore in need of childlike direction.

We call ourselves a church but what is apparent here is a lack of faith and trust that the board is capable of making an informed decision, a lack of faith and trust that our membership could follow rules while also be allowed to exercise free will and a lack of faith and trust in our youth, the youth staff and lifeguards.

We have no problem sending our 6 year olds with no parental supervision to the pool and trust that the lifeguards will keep them safe or entrusting our youth to go to waterfalls, overnights, river trips but yet do not have faith or trust that these same young people are capable of encouraging social distancing and use of hand sanitizer.

I naively believed that the entire board would be involved in a decision of this magnitude but realize now that a select few feel that they know what is best for the whole.

Out of all of the things that I will be remember about the past few months, This will not easily be forgotten.

I respectfully request that my words in their entirety be included in the minutes.

We then began a second round of roll call comments. During the second round comments focused on:

- Impact on renters and concern with impact on revenue but sees allowing renters as “encouraging” travel to the area;
- Potential relief from financial impact available from the corpus of the endowment from Ms. Ella D. Winfield;
- Research didn’t yield any cases to suggest that anyone who developed COVID would have a clear case of liability against the Assembly;
- Concern about renters coming when we aren’t having a season (same concern with renters traveling from other areas);
- Hope that the pool will be available;
- Reiterate Annual Fund donation idea;
- Recognition to Ruth Cobb and the work done on the platform;
- Agreement that renters invites visitors but concern about how to stop people from getting around a “no renter” rule;
- Concern that many renters are Assembly family members who should be allowed to rent;
- Recommendation to limit new rentals but allow existing reservations;
- Hope for flexibility regarding the pool;
- Good remote experience with all on webcams;
- Support for rental program as it currently stands;
- Thanks to everyone’s good faith on a hard decision;
- Support to allow renters to cancel with no penalty if the season is cancelled;
- It is a summer of great personal responsibility.

The motion was reread and the vote occurred by roll call vote with 22 votes to approve the motion; one vote against and one abstention. ExCo motion passes.

GATE TICKET, CAR PASS & DOG TICKET:

Amanda Moody then moved that the Board consider charging a 50% gate fee for summer 2020. Susan Acker seconded the motion. Discussion started with Jimmy Stansell suggesting that 50% was too high and suggested 25%.

Ron Buffington moved to amend Amanda’s motion by (1) eliminating the gate fee; and (2) charging a car pass and dog ticket.

During discussion the comments ranged from no fee up to 50% fee and included recognition that we will incur expenses addressing COVID safeguards and possibly opening the pool. A fee of any sort would help cover those costs.

The Board then voted on Ron Buffington’s amendment to Amanda Moody’s motion on gate fees. The vote was by roll call with 7 in favor, 16 against, 1 abstention. The amendment fails.

Amanda Moody then moved to amend her motion for (1) reduced gate fee to 25% and (2) charging a car pass and dog ticket. Susan Acker seconded the motion. The vote was by roll call vote with 17 votes in favor; 4 against and 1 person did not vote.

RENTAL PROGRAM:

The Board then turned to the issue of the rental program. Jimmy Stansell moved to continue the rental program as currently established. Discussion included the following topics:

- Whether a renter would face a penalty for cancelling a reservation; Scott noted that the cottage owner must release the renter in order to avoid a penalty;
- Concern about cleaning standards for rentals. Susie Lipscomb (from the Rental Committee) noted that the Rental Committee suggested sending a letter to cottage owners who rent about the need to clean as recommended by guidelines; advising renters to sanitize on arrival; and a possible 3 day gap between rentals.
- Conflict between the basis for the decision on the season and allowing renters;
- Need to allow Assembly members to rent for family members to create more space;

Susie Lipscomb moved to amend Jimmy Stansell's motion to allow existing rentals but no new reservations as of today's date. Steve Rixham seconded. Amanda suggested that the amendment add language to allow rentals for Members. Susie amended her motion to amend Jimmy Stansell's motion "allow existing rentals, but no new rentals after today other than to Assembly members and family members. In response to a concern, Overton indicated that we shouldn't have a problem with the amendment as stated.

The Board then voted on Susie Lipscomb's amendment to Jimmy Stansell's motion. The vote was by roll call with 17 in favor; 6 against and 1 absent.

The Board then voted on motion on Jimmy Stansell's motion to allow the rental program as currently in place. The vote was by roll call with 20 in favor; 3 against and one absent. Motion carries.

POOL:

Ron Buffington moved to delay any decision on opening the pool until the next meeting on June 13. Frannie Smith seconded. During discussion the following topics were covered:

- Impact on staff and lifeguards. Scott indicated that we could hold on a decision on lifeguards but other staff would be let go.
- Concern that there is guidance available on opening pools and other community pools are opening so waiting until June 13 may be too late.
- Suggest moving decision to a meeting on May 30;

Ron Buffington withdrew his motion. Bill Davis then moved to hold a special meeting on May 30 to decide on operation of the pool. Jimmy Stansell seconded. The motion carried.

The Board requested that the member communication be clear. Scott clarified that staff let go would be paid 2/5 of their summer salary. There may exist opportunities to utilize staff in support positions.

Overton Thompson moved to adjourn the meeting which was seconded. Meeting adjourned at 11:30 am. Next meeting is a special meeting on May 30, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Walker, Secretary