

PLATO BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Friday, June 21, 2013 - 9:30 a.m.

DCS Office, 21 North Park, Madison, WI

Present: Patricia Becker, Chair, Sybil Better, Bob Blitzke, Lauren Blough, Mary Boyd, Harold Green, Scott Kolar, Mike Lovejoy, Aleta Murray, Frank Power, Don Reeder, Barry Orton, Wendy Kerr.

I. CALL TO ORDER – Tim Otis the outgoing President was absent. Patricia Becker took over as President and Chair, calling the meeting to order at 9:37 a.m.

II. MINUTES – The minutes of the May 17, 2013 Board Retreat were approved.

III. TREASURER’S REPORT – Mike Lovejoy

A. Mike Lovejoy distributed the “Summary Financial Report – June 2013.” As of mid-June there is balance of \$3,635.84 remaining in the operating budget. When pending charges are applied and the DCS report for the last 4 months is issued in July, it is estimated that the operating budget balance will be \$1,500.00. PLATO assets in cash and Money Market funds amounted to \$30,946.64 at the end of May. Note that the second entry under the Assets heading should be “Money Market” instead of CD.

B. Contributions to the PLATO Fund are slowing down. Tim Otis submitted an article for the August *Persimmon* to report on the status and encourage support.

C. Current policy states that the PLATO Fund shall be self-funded. Payment for promotional charges of \$518.36 is due. Mike explained that the process of withdrawing money from the UW Foundation is a time-consuming and involved process and he suggested that we take smaller amounts like this from the operating budget. Sybil Better thought that the money should come out of the PLATO Fund to set the precedent for self-support. Don Reeder suggested that the decision could be made on a year-by-year basis. He noted that keeping the money in the Fund earns interest but the operating budget does not. Mary Boyd said the Fund is a politically-charged issue not appealing to all members so it’s important to follow through with the stipulation that all associated costs would be covered by the Fund. **MOTION:** In consideration of the UW Foundation’s extremely slow bookkeeping practices, Mike Lovejoy made a motion that the policy of self-support remain unchanged, but that charges related to the Fund be paid from the operating budget with financial adjustments to be made once a year between the accounts. Frank Power seconded it and the motion passed unanimously

IV. PRESIDENT’S REPORT – Patricia Becker

A. Patricia Becker reported that the Annual Luncheon on May went well and that the speaker was well-received. From an administrative viewpoint Mary Boyd said that

the Special Events Committee was disappointed with the service at the Sheraton. It took 45 minutes to serve the meals and promised beverages were not provided at the tables. There were complaints about 2 of the menu items. The Committee will look for another place. One suggestion was the Arboretum catered by UW staff. Don Reeder said that UW students are the wait staff so it's best to schedule an event when classes are in session. Another suggestion was the Fluno Center on campus. Mary Boyd also suggested that registrations will have to be reconciled on a more frequent basis as there were eight to ten people who came to the luncheon but who were not registered. Wendy Kerr noted that some of the walk-ins said they had not registered.

- B. Wendy Kerr reported that there are between 930 and 940 PLATO members now. A membership renewal mailing was taken to bulk mail on Monday, June 17th. The renewal form was accompanied by a letter from Patricia Becker explaining the need for the \$10.00 dues increase. One member donated \$100.00 to cover the \$10.00 increase for ten people. Tracking this in accounts is problematic so Patricia sent a letter offering an alternative. The \$100.00 could be put in the operating budget and used to subsidize members who can't afford the \$60.00 dues. The contributor has not responded.
- C. There was a request to change the Board meeting time. Don Reeder coordinates a class from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Fridays and the Board meets at 9:30 a.m. on the third Friday. There are other conflicts with a later schedule for the Board meeting so the 9:30 a.m. schedule is maintained. Don will switch his course to Thursdays.

V. REPORT ON PRE-LUNCHEON FORUM – Mike Lovejoy

There was a better than expected turnout for the Forum held before the luncheon. Most comments were positive. A few members remarked on the dues increase but there are allowances for those who cannot afford the annual fee of \$60.00. Patricia Becker suggested that it be made a regular part of the luncheon planning. Frank Power approved of the transparency that it provides and Bob Blitzke said he appreciated the overview for new members. Don Reeder said that an annual Forum in conjunction with the luncheon is a good idea and that if another venue is needed perhaps a short time could be scheduled after the President's address at the Previews. Frank Power suggested that there be a table designated as a site for Q & A because the time frame for presentations at the Previews is limited.

VI. DCS REPORT – Barry Orton

- A. Barry Orton said the PLATO-UW/DCS Memorandum of Agreement has been approved and signed by the DCS Dean but the Business Office won't sign off until Tim Otis as PLATO President has signed the document.
- B. The office allotted to PLATO volunteers has been turned over the UW Retirement Association. They lost their permanent office. PLATO volunteers have been move to cubicle (7145). There is some designated PLATO storage space.

- C. A student helper for DCS has been hired for July and August. He/she will be available to assist Wendy with PLATO projects on Friday afternoons.

VII. REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Curriculum and Facilities – Harold Green

1. Harold Green reported that Stephanie Sorensen has joined the Curriculum Committee. Work continues on strategic planning and Guidelines for Course Selection/Rejection are being developed. Harold noted that Board policy would take precedence over guidelines devised by the Committee.
2. Two new courses will be offered for the Fall Semester. Frank Power is planning the Fall Preview which is scheduled for Wednesday, September 18th. Nancy Wynn has decide not to coordinate the PLATO Chorus so the class will be cancelled as there is no one willing to take on the role of Director. There were problems with members who were not willing to commit to the practice schedule and the Chorus had problems maintaining a reliable accompanist. Representatives including Nancy Wynn met with the Curriculum Committee to discuss the issues. The final decision was that the flexible nature of PLATO class attendance could not sustain a Chorus with performance commitments. Without the Chorus there will be 38 courses this fall.
3. The Coordinators Luncheon venue has been confirmed. It will take place on Wednesday, September 11th at Olbrich Gardens. Bunky's will cater the lunch.

B. Communication and Membership Committees – Scott Kolar

1. In the absence of Greg Bell, Scott Kolar reported for the committees. Scott is chairing the work group charged with website development. They received three proposals from local well-recommended vendors. Their bids were all around \$4,000.00, discounted for nonprofits. It covers development of a site with basic functionality and recognizes that PLATO volunteers would take over maintenance of the site. There are additional costs of approximately \$100.00/month for web hosting. In response to a question about technical support, Scott noted that the vendor will be responsible for correcting bugs in their software. However, there would be a fee if PLATO requested a new feature for the website. For now the scope of the work is to replicate the look and feel of the existing PLATO webpages on the UW Senior Learning website. Barry Orton asked Scott to contact him to get the UW Communications approval for the webpage templates. For the present the site will not have forums, blogs and photo galleries. The work group will meet next week to review the vendors' references and the three proposals. A decision is expected in the next few weeks.

2. Once the contract is signed and the upfront payment of approximately \$2,000.00 is paid, the vendor should be able to deliver the product within 45 days. The delivery is dependent on how quickly PLATO provides the content. Some time will be spent on constructing a new PLATO home page with a good guide to the different sections for users. Event registration and membership that involve transfer of money will remain with UW-DCS for now. The plan is to have the site up and running by September. Volunteers Don Reeder and Mike DiIorio are committee representatives helping with the project. The Website Work Group is authorized to select the vendor. **MOTION:** Don Reeder moved to authorize the PLATO President to commit to a contract based on the Website Work Group's recommendation. Mary Boyd seconded it and the motion passed unanimously.
3. A subcommittee is working on devising a member survey. Greg Bell will chair the Membership Committee but a decision has not been made on the new chair for the Communication Committee.

C. Special Events – Bob Blitzke

1. Bob Blitzke distributed two reports: “PLATO Special Events Bus Trips Report, 2012-2013” and “Customer Service Innovative Experiment.” He noted that a few bus trips came up with negative revenues but it is hoped that the policy of allowing nonmembers to accompany members will fill seats and cover costs. For the eight events from September 2012 through June 11, 2013 PLATO realized a gain of more than \$2,000.00. Bob said the aim is to attract members before going far afield to fill buses so three new pickup locations have been added. This should make the trips more convenient.
2. The long excursions to Milwaukee and Chicago are difficult for some members so there are plans to offer two options for some of the Milwaukee trips. The “Express” version will be limited to attendance at the event. The other option is the “Explorer” which will depart earlier and provide free time in Milwaukee before the play. This experiment will begin with “Ragtime” in Milwaukee on October 2nd. Bob will report on the response after the trip. He suggested adding a question to the Membership Form: “Why did you join?” It might reveal whether some new members were introduced to PLATO through the trips and whether they decided to join because nonmembers pay the \$5.00 surcharge.
3. Future trips include the Paine Art Center and Gardens in Oshkosh, Black Point Estate in Lake Geneva, and a boat ride on the Mississippi to see the trumpet swans that also includes a presentation on birding by the DNR.

D. Fund Development – Mike Lovejoy

Tim Otis has written an article on the PLATO Fund for the August *Persimmon*. There will be a separate item on donors. Solicitations will be limited.

E. The Agora – Lauren Blough

The Editorial Board has made the selections for publication in Volume 3 and the proofreading has been done. A final copy will be submitted to Christina Finet at DCS and she will do her magic with layout. We're on schedule for a September publication.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

Discussion of the Board Retreat was postponed for the next meeting. See the attachment to the Agenda "Summary of 5-17-13 PLATO Board Retreat Decisions."

IX. NEW BUSINESS

Patricia asked for volunteers to review and revise the Bylaws to reflect the decisions made at the May 17th Board Retreat. Mary Boyd, Sybil Better, Mike Lovejoy and Lauren Blough will serve on the task force. In light of the needed revision to the Bylaws, Sybil Better and Mary Boyd raised questions about the status of the Fund Development Committee and the Board's process of financial planning. The minutes from the Retreat record that "Sybil Better made a motion that Financial Resources' financial planning tasks be assigned to the President's kitchen cabinet or advisory groups assembled for the purpose, and that the remaining Fund Development Committee's focus be limited to charitable purposes. Don Reeder seconded. The vote passed unanimously." Mike Lovejoy responded to Mary Boyd that Financial Resources devoted a few meetings a year to preparation of the Budget and to handle any major financial decisions. Minutes of the Board Retreat also indicate that "Sybil Better moved that Fund Development should not become a Standing Committee but that it should be a special purpose task force of the Board and Aleta Murray seconded it. Scott Kolar proposed withdrawing the proposal pending the provision of additional information on the committees' functions. Sybil Better declined to withdraw the motion and the vote was taken. The result was 6 ayes and 6 nays so the motion failed... There will be 5 Standing Committees...." including Fund Development.

X. FUTURE BUSINESS

It was noted that the Conflict of Interest statement that Board members have to sign had not been distributed lately. It will be brought to the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 11:19 a.m.

NOTE: Next meeting Friday, August 16, 2013 at 9:30 a.m. DCS - 21 N. Park, Room 7041.

Respectfully submitted,
Lauren Blough