

PLATO BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Friday, January 17, 2014 - 9:30 a.m.

DCS Office, 21 North Park, Madison, WI

Present: Patricia Becker - Chair, Sybil Better, Bob Blitzke, Lauren Blough, Lewis Bosworth, Mary Boyd, Scott Kolar, Aleta Murray, Tim Otis, Don Reeder
DCS: Barry Orton
Handouts: "PLATO Cash Balance 12/31/13," "PLATO Budget 2013-14,"
"Communication Committee January 2014 Report," "Special Events 2013 Report Bus Trips & Lectures," "Special Events Bus Trips Report January 1-December 2013,"
"Special Events 2013-14 Scheduling Calendar," "Charge for PLATO Ad Hoc Committee on Social Opportunities," "Arts Collegium Proposal from Ad Hoc Committee"

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Patricia Becker called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.
- II. **MINUTES** – Tim Otis made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 15, 2013 Board Meeting and Don Reeder seconded it. The motion was passed unanimously.
- III. **TREASURER’S REPORT** – Tim Otis

Tim Otis reported that the application for 501(c)(3) status is on track again. PLATO was informed by the IRS that we had to amend the purpose in the PLATO Articles of Incorporation in order to receive further consideration. The amendment, which was distributed to all Board members and unanimously approved, reads as follows:

Resolved, that Article 8 of the Articles of Incorporation of Participatory Learning and Teaching Organization, Inc. be amended to read:

Participatory Learning and Teaching Organization, Inc. is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and scientific purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

Upon the dissolution of the organization, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by a court of competent jurisdiction in the county in which the principal office of the organization is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

Tim delivered the amended documents to the State office for filing and then re-submitted them to the Federal IRS office. Barry Orton pointed out that Tim was out in the sub-zero weather tracing and carrying these documents to the State in the short window allowed for response. So the good news is that PLATO is further along in the process than we have been for the past two years.

Tim distributed two handouts: PLATO “2013-14 Budget” and “PLATO Cash Balance 12/31/13.” \$50,000.00 in revenue was collected for the first six months (July-December 2013) of the 2013-14 fiscal year mostly attributable to membership fees of \$60.00 x approximately 800 members. 60% of that goes to PLATO and 40% to DCS. April 1st is the starting date for membership registration. April, May and June registrants are signed up for the fiscal year starting in July. Some specific entries on the spreadsheet were noted. Special Events was budgeted at \$30,000.00 but \$29,000.00 has already been received as revenue pointing to an active program of events. The \$852.43 received reflects the transfer of \$500.00 from Fund Development and \$352.00 refunded from DCS for telephone charges. *Agora* costs came in at \$7,300.00. Most revenue is collected in the first half of the fiscal year while expenses mount during the last half of the year. Mary Boyd asked about the rise in PLATO Fund promotion from \$500.00 last year to the current expenditure of \$1,200.00. Tim said that it’s likely that some expenses were carried over to this year. Patricia Becker noted that those will be reimbursed by Fund Development and will show up as revenue in next year’s budget. Mary Boyd also noted that course copying was significantly higher. That is probably due to more accurate record keeping. Referring to the Cash Balance sheet, Tim pointed out that there is approximately \$34,000.00 in cash accounts. The \$20,000.00 in the Indexed Money Market was divided among a new 60 Month CD, and the Checking and Savings accounts.

Tim set up a finance advisory group to assist him with the more complex PLATO structure and to recommend policy and future direction. Members are: Tim Otis, Scott Kolar, Bob Blitzke, Don Reeder, Mike Lovejoy, Mary Boyd and Gail Gordon. They will meet for the first time on Tuesday, January 21, 2014. This is an advisory group for the Treasurer intended to establish a more business-like approach to finances and not a full committee that would require Board approval.

IV. PRESIDENT’S REPORT – Patricia Becker

Patricia Becker reported on the January 14, 2014 meeting with DCS staff. Patricia Becker, Tim Otis, Mary Boyd and Fred Ross representing PLATO met with DCS Dean Jeff Russell, Laura Ingram, Associate Dean for Administration, Julie Klein, Special Projects Manager (Wendy’s immediate supervisor), and Barry Orton. Three issues were discussed: (1) procurement of an office for PLATO staff, (2) the assignment of a replacement for Wendy Kerr, and (3) correcting accounting problems. The meeting was deemed productive. One glaring difference between the two agencies was the (mis)understanding of the dollar amount PLATO contributes to DCS. After the meeting Barry Orton did some research. Based on the first six months of the year, he estimates the DCS share of PLATO revenue to be in the range of \$20,120.00. That’s expected to reach \$22,000.00 by the end of the fiscal year. DCS suggested that it would cost \$22,000.00 to hire a replacement for

Wendy. It might take two to three months to transition to a new person. Wendy would do the training. DCS is looking into construction costs for two offices at the north end of the 7th floor. It was estimated that one for PLATO would run about \$27,000.00. PLATO would contribute some amount although how much is not known at this time. PLATO would be taking on a much more visible role in day-to-day activities, handling walk-ins and phone calls for instance. Mary Boyd noted that the PLATO volunteers and the new hire from DCS need to establish a good working relationship from the start and Board discussion followed regarding PLATO's role in the hiring. Mary Boyd, as incoming President, will set up an Ad Hoc Committee to define what is needed from the new hire in terms of PLATO functions and related duties. There was some concern that the new person would be just as burdened with DCS duties as Wendy is but Barry Orton noted that the new hire would not be working for the Dean. The last issue of accounting discrepancies will be revisited when Tim Otis, Laura Ingram and Barry Orton meet.

V. ANNUAL LUNCHEON SPEAKER

- A. Patricia Becker requested suggestions for speakers for the May 21st Annual Luncheon. One thought was Harold Scheub, recently retired from the UW African Studies Department, who is an accomplished storyteller. Sybil Better will contact Jennifer Chiavarini, novelist and author of *Mrs. Lincoln's Rival* and Rose Stephenson who does historical monologues, taking the roles of important American women such as suffragettes. Aleta Murray will contact John Zimm (editor) and Michael Edmonds (wrote the foreword) whose book *This Wicked Rebellion: Wisconsin Civil War Soldiers Write Home* was researched at and published by the Wisconsin Historical Society. Honorariums are sometimes given to an agency with whom the speaker is associated. For instance, in 2013 the honorarium went to Wisconsin Public Television. The announcement for the May Luncheon will be distributed in mid-March. When Patricia Becker hears from Sybil and Aleta she will send email to poll the Board for preferences.
- B. Tim Otis, Past President, will convene the Nominating Committee to prepare a slate of candidates for the election at the luncheon.

VI. **DCS REPORT** – Barry Orton's comments on the January 14th DCS/PLATO meeting are included in President's Report, Section IV. A. above.

VII. REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

- A. Curriculum and Facilities – Lewis Bosworth

The December Board Retreat was summarized for the Committee. Lewis reported that there are plans for a demonstration of the PLATO website at the Spring Luncheon on May 21st. There will be a Curriculum Committee table where two enthusiastic coordinators, Helen Aarli and Lewis Bosworth, will be on hand to answer questions and to encourage people who might be interested in coordinating a course. The Committee discussed three proposals for new courses. Two were approved for the Fall 2014 Semester – Bill Eisinger's "Biofuels: Sustainable Energy for the Future?" and a collaboration between Helen Aarli and the Madison Public Library

staff called “Art at the Library.” Another proposal for summer 2014 “Introduction to A-Dualistic Philosophy,” was returned to the submitter with a request that the description be made understandable to the general public.

B. Communication – Patricia Becker and Scott Kolar

1. Greg Bell was not at the meeting but he submitted a report. See attached. Scott Kolar said the website developers have been working on the Courses and Special Events postings, perfecting the events displays and adapting forms so that the data submitted can be easily extracted by those posting the information. Although there are some volunteers they need more, especially from the Curriculum and Special Events groups. Scott thinks that there may be opportunities for utilizing technology in the transition from the current DCS/PLATO functions to a new plan of operation. Costs would have to be investigated.
2. Patricia Becker noted that Greg Bell requested feedback on the current issue of the *Persimmon*. Mary Boyd said that the *Persimmon* needs to be up-to-date. It can be a challenge to complete an interesting and fresh article in November for January publication. Tim Otis suggested a bi-monthly digital version could be posted on the website and this could change the emphasis to more timely reports. Mary Boyd suggested it could be something like the currently emailed Weekly Announcements, possibly with Committee updates and short reports from the President. Scott Kolar said that a move to electronic format would mean that the publication could be expanded and could include artistic contributions from members. Sybil Better asked that the Communication Committee develop a proposal for an online version of the *Persimmon* and submit it to the Board. Aleta Murray asked for an explanation of the name. Barry Orton supplied the information. Here is the reasoning according to a 1991 statement from Barbara Nodine: “Give us no common fruits. We’re not talking bananas. *Persimmon*. It invigorates, restores, stimulates. The *PLATO Persimmon*. Another thing – to be edible, a persimmon has to be really ripe. And who, if not PLATO members, are really ripe.”
3. Tim Otis pointed out that as PLATO becomes more complex we will have to operate in a more business-like manner. In reference to the costs for PLATO promotional material, Tim said that the expenditures will have to be examined more closely when they begin to exceed the budgeted amount.

C. Membership – Patricia Becker in the absence of Nina Sparks

1. The Membership Committee continues to visit fairs and other venues. They made a presentation to the UW Retirement Association that was very well received. Judith Strand said they were very grateful for PLATO contributions to the DCS scholarship fund.

2. Tim Otis said the current membership count is 905 which includes 170 new members. 190 people have not renewed.

D. Special Events – Bob Blitzke

1. Bob Blitzke said he is looking at the Committee structure and considering a division of labor that would give an Assistant Chair responsibility for lectures and Bob would devote his time to the field trips. There are 25 people on the Committee but some are inactive. Mike DiIorio is doing the work on the Special Events web pages. Bob distributed the “2013 Special Events Report” showing a very busy year with 16 bus trips and 8 lectures. Bob also provided a detailed report for each of the 2013 trips and a calendar of events for 2014. See attachments.
2. Some participants have requested short trips and the Milwaukee Rep at the Powerhouse Theater works well in that regard. The theater may be the choice for those who do not want bus trips involving vigorous exercise. It might be a good idea to try a split bus approach. One bus might leave from Oakwood East and another from Oakwood West saving the time spent to pickup and drop off from more than one location. This plan could be used for the larger events that would require two buses anyway. It may increase the cost.
3. Scott Kolar asked about online registrations for the field trips. Bob Blitzke said online use is high but some people have trouble entering their credit card information. Bob is working with Wendy to update the online registration form.

E. Fund Development – Tim Otis

Tim said that very few people make donations to the PLATO Fund online. Approximately \$14,000.00 was contributed by 76 people in 2013. As of September 30th the Fund totaled \$106,000.00 so it has probably increased to \$110,000.00 as of January 2014. \$7,184.00 in spendable income was generated. \$6,000.00 was expended for scholarships and \$500.00 went to Fund expenses. There is a concern that the number of contributors decreased from 119 in the first year to 76 this year. Why is the Fund not generating more support? The scholarships are beneficial for the recipients and PLATO’s relationship with DCS. Tim had a conversation with Pat Guttenberg about organizing a fund raising event for both PLATO and the Madison Senior Center. One idea is to have a wine and cheese reception with a silent auction. Pat was interested in the idea and MSC has the space to host the event. With 501 (c)(3) status PLATO will be able to provide a check-off on registration forms for Fund donations.

VIII. AD HOC COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Aleta Murray presented a proposed charge for the Ad Hoc Committee that was formed at the Board Retreat in December. **MOTION:** Aleta Murray made a motion that the

following charge be approved by the Board: “The Committee will review and assess PLATO’s current provision of ‘Social Opportunities’ for its members. It will report its findings, with recommendations, if any, at the Board’s April, 2014 regular meeting.” Lewis Bosworth seconded it and the motion passed unanimously. Committee members Frank Power, Aleta Murray and Lewis Bosworth discussed what it means to be social and how to expand social opportunities. There are associations formed on field trips and in after-class meetings. Some ideas presented for the future are summer picnics and gatherings with wine and cheese. Lewis Bosworth described the Arts Collegium concept formulated by the Committee. It would be a gathering for all PLATO members interested in the arts. It could be a series consisting of art and photography exhibits, poetry and play readings and music performances held quarterly in an appropriate space with food service. The details have to be worked out but the idea sounded intriguing.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

Retreat follow-up discussion was postponed for another meeting.

X. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was presented.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Lauren Blough