

Minutes of the Quest General Membership Meeting

April 10th, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by President Bob Gottfried. In the absence of Secretary Carolyn McGuire, minutes of the meeting were recorded by Treasurer Steve Allen and Council member Jane Lubin.

President's opening remarks

Bob opened the meeting with the good news that former Quest member Ken Leedom had bequeathed an additional \$150,000 to Quest in addition to the \$200,000 we received last year, bringing the total to \$350,000. Bob added that we might receive a little more in the final settlement of the estate. To date, some money from this fund has been used to buy a keyboard for Quest.

Bob announced the vote on the membership cap. 172 of our 260 members voted. This 66% response rate indicates a healthy level of engagement of the Quest membership with governance issues. The last time we held a vote on the membership cap, in 2017, which also permitted voting in person or by email, the response rate was 56%. Bob offered his thanks to all who participated in the voting and in the lively discussion on this issue. 111 members voted in favor of an INCREASE in the cap, while 61 members voted in favor of KEEPING the cap at 260. The average of the votes for the cap number was 270, exactly half-way between the lower and higher ends of the 260 to 280 range.

Bob noted that this decision was reached democratically and while there were disagreements between members, these represented honest differences about what is in the best interest of Quest. Bob urged all members to regard these differences in this light and to

continue to utilize the democratic process of Quest by attending the meetings with candidates for the Council, questioning them on their views on issues, and utilizing this information in voting. Bob noted that his door is open to meet with members for suggestions, complaints, or comments from 9:30 to 10:30 every morning and at lunch time and that member concerns can also be taken to other officers and Council members.

Bob noted that some members who participated in the discussion of the cap issue expressed the need for increased opportunities to get to know other members. Following up on this, Bob announced his intention of submitting to the Council a proposal for funding monthly social gatherings with wine, cheese, coffee, and cake. He also urged all members to wear their membership badges to make it easier for members to greet and socialize with one another.

Bob urged all members to refrain from using cell phones during presentations as their use is rude to the speaker and distracting to other members of the audience.

Bob thanked Vice President Marian Friedmann, Treasurer Steve Allen, and Secretary Carolyn McGuire for their valuable help and members of the Council for their support over the past year. He acknowledged the valuable contribution of our new Office Manager, Barbara Bianco. He congratulated the Marketing and Communications Committee on the production of a new Quest brochure that can be used in marketing Quest to potential members.

Curriculum Committee Report

Committee Chair Brenda Wilder spoke about the difficult task the committee has in coming up with interesting, varied, high quality courses. She introduced Joyce West, who will succeed her as

Curriculum Committee Chair next year. She reported that 14 courses will end at the close of this Spring term (though some may return in later terms) and that 13 new courses will replace them. The lead coordinator of each of these new courses gave a brief introduction to them:

- From Grunts to Tweets: Exploring How We've Communicated Through the Ages. Lead coordinator: Beth Callendar
- Chautauqua Dialogues. Lead coordinator: Steve Allen
- Film Directors, Then and Now. Lead coordinator: Sol Makon
- Between Faith and Reason. Lead coordinator: Paul Golomb
- Memorable Members of Congress. Lead coordinator: Ellen Gottfried
- South of the Border: Before Columbus. Lead coordinator: Frank Montaturo
- Inventions that Changed the World. Lead coordinator: Pete Weis
- Jazz: The Soul and the Sound. Lead coordinator: Vivian Oliver
- Across the Universe: Travels in Space Time, and Wonder. Lead coordinator: Michael Hamburg
- A Sampling of Israeli Literature. Lead coordinator: Martha Drezin.
- Classic Perspectives on Human Nature and Politics. Lead coordinator: Sandy Kessler
- Bleak House. Lead coordinator: Lynnel Garabedian
- Managing Money and Investments in Retirement. Lead coordinator: Peter Frleischman

The catalog of courses for Fall 2019 and a schedule of summer presentations will be distributed shortly.

Treasurer's report

Treasurer Steve Allen reported that Quest finances continue in a healthy state. Our annual revenues from membership fees cover our annual

expenses and we have a robust reserve that has primarily been built from charitable contributions that is available for emergencies. This past year has seen outstanding growth in our reserves, due to the enormously generous bequest from Ken Leedom, and strong operating results due to the membership fees from our outstanding freshman class.

Quest reserves of \$665,00 consist of \$350,00 we have recently received from the estate of Ken Leedom, about \$215,000 in other membership bequests and contribution we have received over the 25 years of Quest's history, and about \$100,000 we have built up over these 25 years in small annual surpluses of membership fees and other revenues over expenses. These consist of about \$280,000 in our banking accounts, mostly in bank CDs, \$350,000 in US Treasury Notes, and \$35,000 in our account at CWE in excess of budgeted expenses. Quest recently opened a brokerage account that allows us to invest in US Treasury securities.

Annual revenue from membership dues will be about \$139,000 this year, about \$4,000 more than currently projected expenses of about \$135,000. About 75% of our \$135,000 in expenses is directly related to CWE – \$67,500 in rent and the cost of an office manager, contributions to CWE, and mandated insurance. The remaining 25% covers professional printing services for our catalog, QReview, and QNews, our copying machine, honoraria for Wednesday afternoon guest speakers, funding for some museum trips, and support for Quest's social activities – primarily coffee and the Holiday lunch.

- One member asked whether this increase in reserves could be used to reduce member fees. Steve noted that this was an issue for the Council.
- One member asked about the risks in investing in Treasury securities. Steve responded that investments were being kept short term – from 2 years to 3 years maturity, because he thinks the risk of rates going higher outweighs the risk of rates going lower. But in any case,

investment in Treasury securities provides excellent liquidity and ability to make changes at minimal cost.

- One member asked about the possible use of brokered bank CDs. Steve said that this possibility had been discussed with our broker, but that this option at the present time was less attractive than Treasury securities.
- One member asked how our reserve funds have been used in the past. Steve responded that our reserves are primarily intended for emergency expenditures such as would be associated with the loss of our CWE-rental space. (While our relations with CWE remain excellent and while CWE does have a long-term lease on its 25 Broadway space, we must be aware of the possibility that changes in politics or priorities of City University could lead to a termination of CWE's lease). The only spending that has come from these reserves in past years was about \$35,000 in 2007 for a marketing campaign, when Quest was facing a worrying decline in membership, and for major capital expenses such as hearing loops.

Membership Committee report

Membership Committee Chair Michael Wellner reported that we have reached our current cap of 260. Five people have already joined for the Summer session, and there are five more who have indicated that they wish to join in the Fall. The committee has interviews scheduled with two or three other prospective members for the Fall. Renewal letters will be sent out soon, and we will then determine how many current members will be back in September and how many will drop out. We usually lose about 10% of current members each year. Michael emphasized that the committee will be in no rush to reach the new cap of 270 but will take its time in meeting with new prospects. Michael noted the excellent job done by committee member Steve Rubin in personally contacting by telephone every person who has

indicated an interest in joining Quest, making sure that everyone who is interested does get scheduled to come for a visit and interview.

Travel Committee report

Travel Committee Co-Chair Michael Wellner reviewed upcoming trips to Washington, DC this month, a May return visit to the Rockefeller home, Kykuit, in nearby Tarrytown, a mid-September week-end trip to Philadelphia museums, and two January break trips: a Caribbean cruise and a Road Scholar trip to Oaxaca and Puebla, Mexico.

Nominations and Elections Committee report

Nominations and Elections Committee Co-Chair Ruth Ward reminded Quest members that Bob Gottfried would be running unopposed for a second term as Quest President and that eight candidates would be running for four Council seats. The eight candidates are incumbents Palma Gemelli, Eileen Kelly, Frieda Lipp, and Stephanie Butler, Wayne Cotter, Linda Downs, John Spiegel, and Michael Wellner. Bios and photos of all candidates have been sent to members by email and have been posted on the bulletin board. Candidates will give speeches and answer members' questions at lunchtime on Monday, April 29, Tuesday, April 30, Wednesday, May 1, and Thursday, May 2. Voting will take place on Tuesday, May 7 and Wednesday, May 8.

Year-end luncheon report

Jane Lubin spoke briefly about the year-end luncheon which will be held, again, at the Battery Gardens Restaurant on Thursday, May 16th. Menus were distributed and members were reminded to submit their menu choices and payment by May 1st. Reserved seating forms will be distributed next week and members are asked to have only one person at each table submit

a reserved seating form request. Members who do not request specific reserved seats will have reserved seats assigned to them.

25th Anniversary Party update

Bob Hartmann reported that the 25th Anniversary Party will be held at the Harmonie Club (4 East 60th Street) from 12PM to 3PM on Friday, May 15, 2020. The party will be free to members. The Harmony Club can accommodate about 24 tables of 10 each for a total of 240 attendees. The policy on guests, both as to numbers and to charges, will need to be decided after more is known about how many members plan to attend. Bob Gottfried noted that Quest's founding members will be honored at this party.

Guest Speakers Committee report

Guest Speakers lead coordinator Arlyn Greenbaum noted that all slots for the coming term have already been filled. A special Ken Leedom/ Peter Cott Memorial Lecture will be scheduled for October 23 with noted author Colin McCann. Bob Gottfried noted that the valuable service that Arlyn has provided to Quest. – her experience as a professional agent for speakers has allowed Quest to negotiate favorable rates that might not be available to other organizations.

Culture Quest Committee report

Committee Chair Rene Woloshin reported that over the past year there have been 12 scheduled trips averaging about 20 members per trip. A similar schedule is planned for next year. With the success of this year's trip to Cold Springs, a trip to the Dia Center in Beacon is being considered for next year.

Emergency Response Team Report

Emergency Response Team Chair Doreen De Martini reported that the team has 17 members, all of whom receive extensive training. All Quest members should make sure they know where the four staircases are and to note where fire extinguishers are located. All members should be honest about their ability to use stairs in an emergency – if a member will not be fully capable of using the stairs without slowing up other members, he or she should make sure they are on the list for using the freight elevator. Some members of the Emergency Response Team will soon be trained in CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and the use of an AED (automated external defibrillator) use. The Team is still working on getting help from CCNY on active shooter classroom protection.

QReview report

QReview Editor Wayne Cotter reminded Quest members that the current issue is available in the office and asked them to consider contributing to next year's issue. In response to a question, he stated that copies will be mailed to any Quest member who cannot get to 25 Broadway to pick up a copy in person. Any member who needs a copy mailed should inform Office Manager Barbara Bianco.

Technology Committee report

Technology Committee Chair Wayne Cotter noted that there are currently 15 members of the Technology team, but that the team is always looking for new members, so any Quest member who feels comfortable with handling computer and audio/visual equipment is encouraged to apply for training.

Quest's new keyboard

Caroline Thompson reported that the new keyboard is a full 88 key high-quality instrument available for both instrumental and choral performances. Any Quest member interested in an instrumental performance should contact Caroline; those interested in a choral performance should contact Joyce West. Bob Gottfried noted that Arlene Hajinlian has agreed to use the keyboard to provide music at the 25th Anniversary Party. Later this term, an instrumental performance will be scheduled at lunch time with Arlene Hajinlian on the keyboard and Caroline Thompson on the recorder.

All business having been attended to, Bob Gottfried concluded the meeting at 2:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Allen & Jane Lubin