

Minutes of the LifeRing Board of Directors Meeting: October 11, 2020

Call to Order

It was determined that a quorum of board members was present and the meeting was called to order by Board Co-Chair Lorraine Hull at 9:03am PDT. The other Board Members present were: Dan Carrigan (Board Co-Chair), Donal Breen, Ewa Conroy, Steve Gonzales, Jocelyn Harnois, and Mary Beth O'Connor, Not present: Jamie Itterman, Scott Judkins.

Non-board members in attendance included: Robert Stump, Executive Director; Lisa Swing-Corney, Frontier Region Coordinator.

Public Comment

Consent agenda

The September Consent Agenda package, including the Minutes and Profit and Loss Reports were moved (Mary Beth) and carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee (Dan and Lorraine)

Nothing new to report.

Finance Committee (Donal and Mary Beth)

Nothing new to report. Some finance matters will be discussed in a later agenda item.

Marketing Committee (Lorraine)

Lorraine and Ewa took part in a phone call with a convenor who has experience in Marketing & Communications. She will do a research project looking for places where LifeRing is found online in searches and make sure there is consistency re spelling of LifeRing, etc. She has already created a marketing plan she will share with the Board at next month's scheduled meeting.

Communications Committee (Ewa)

Ewa also took part in the phone call noted under Marketing Committee. She mentioned the importance of ensuring we are listed on major sites like SAMSHA alongside options like AA and NA. At the moment, on the SAMSHA website, there is no full listing of mutual support group options though there are cursory mentions about 12 Step. The current focus appears to be on treatment options rather than support groups.

Discussion was had about ensuring we are listed on recovery community organization websites where applicable.

Ewa is also working on blog content as she can and discussion was had about how best to share Mary Beth's Wall Street Journal article without violating copyright.

Lisa brought up the idea of making sure we are listed by local/state 211 services where they exist. She is going to forward the application she had to fill out to get listed by her local 211 to Ewa and Jocelyn so they can see what is involved. It is another place to advertise ourselves as an option.

Meetings Committee

There are now 4 online meetings in Massachusetts.

Lisa reported that people who were interested in starting new meetings pre-pandemic have begun approaching her to say they are now ready to go.

Robert mentioned that more wristbands have been ordered for meetings. A test order was placed and the product looks good, so he will be ordering more.

Discussion was had about a Zoom-bombing incident that occurred on October 10 during a video LifeRing meeting. Someone "bombed" the chat function and the convenor had a difficult time keeping them out of the meeting (they kept reentering). Robert worked with the convenor after the incident to help them identify ways to handle these situations when they occur (waiting room, banning the person, changing the password, etc.). The Board agreed there wasn't any major action to be taken since this was one incident out of 1000s of meetings we have hosted online since the pandemic began. If it becomes an ongoing problem, we can explore other options to manage the issue.

Old Business

Update on quarterly convenor training (Dan)

The date will be moved since it is too late to meet our original goal of October 24. Topic ideas discussed by the Board included: the 3S philosophy and differences with 12 Step; what makes Lifering "LifeRing"; how convenors can make meetings inclusive and respect the diversity of our participant; how to ask for donations during meetings (online or F2F).

Mary Beth offered to share a version of her presentation, with her personal story removed, if it could be useful for a "what is LifeRing" workshop.

Lisa volunteered to send her "convenor Cliff's notes" that cover topics like crosstalk and other meeting management issues, how to share experiences without giving advice/saying "you should".

Dan will touch base with Jamie and Kara to set up a planning meeting and put together a statement ASAP to be sent to the convenor's list so they save the date.

Tentative new date is Sunday November 15, 9am-10:30am, during what would be the regular monthly convenors' meeting.

New Business

Possible Financial Adjustments (Dan, Lorraine, Robert)

Lorraine stated that we may need to adjust our finances based on the current pandemic situation and lack of F2F meeting revenue that has resulted. For information purposes, Robert attached a report on meeting money revenue, listed by year, to today's meeting package.

Discussion was had about how to create new revenue sources. Ideas included fundraising more frequently, with shorter themed campaigns. A short conversation was also had about the idea of raising book prices; however, Lisa pointed out that our literature already costs significantly more than other recovery organization's books and Robert shared that he thinks the cost of Empower Your Self might actually benefit from being lowered. No decision was made about the cost of literature but the general feeling was to leave it alone for now and explore the idea of more frequent fundraising first.

Encouraging convenors to ask for donations during online meetings, as they would in F2F, was also talked about. The idea of a short video to play at the beginning of meetings came up again, but it was noted that we would still be relying on our convenors to actually play the video. It was agreed that stressing the importance to convenors of why we need to ask for donations might be more impactful.

There was a brief discussion about using PayPal as a possible donation option, with Lisa sharing that Akron area uses PayPal and while people donate less frequently than they would at in-person meetings, the amounts tend to be higher when they do.

Mary Beth pointed out that when we do our end-of-year fundraising, it would not hurt to remind people why we still need donations even though meetings are mainly online due to COVID-19.

Discuss altering some of our language to encourage inclusivity (Lisa, Lorraine)

Lisa spoke with John, who is involved with LifeRing and also has professional credentials specializing in working with LGBTQ+ individuals. We have an anti-discrimination policy, which is important, but making sure we are actively welcoming is equally important. For example, welcoming language on the website.

Lisa shared proposed language to add to the LifeRing website footer that outlines our position on being inclusive. Discussion was had about where best to place this information on the website and whether the wording was in keeping with up-to-date inclusive language. (particularly use or not of the word non-binary in relation to woman identifying individuals attending women's meetings) Lisa and Lorraine noted they had spoken with an expert on the topic and the language in the proposed statement had been vetted by that individual.

It was also noted that if changes are going to be made to the actual policy addressing this topic, it will have to go through the Board for approval.

Steve said he would reach out to a group he knows who may be able to help. He also suggested having training for convenors on this overall topic.

Lisa and Lorraine will be meeting with the women's meeting convenors to talk about why a statement is being added about including those who identify as women and why it's important, and to make sure everyone is comfortable with everything.

Update on website (Robert)

The beta version of the new website can be found at www.lsrtesting.com.

Robert said that in a couple of weeks (likely 2 Sundays from today) he will be transitioning the public version of the website from the old site to the new one. He is trying to duplicate the interface Steve created as much as possible, but content will likely be reorganized a bit. He would like feedback from the Board about the test site before completing the changeover.

He will give the Board a head's up before the new site goes live.

Pop-Up Committees

Virtual Coffee Update (Lorraine, Lisa, Dan, Ewa)

Lorraine shared the updated poster for our virtual coffee event, which will now be held on October 24 as part of Sober October. She will also post it to several websites oriented toward secular recovery.

Lorraine shared the poster and will post this to several websites that are oriented to secular recovery.

Administrative Note: Ewa mentioned during the meeting that her work schedule has become less flexible and she will need to adjust the time she leaves board meetings going forward. She and Lorraine are going to talk to see if there is a way to adjust the Board meeting time to make it easier for her to attend.

Adjournment

Motion was made to adjourn (Dan). Motion was seconded (Lorraine) and carried unanimously.

Submitted by Jocelyn Harnois
LifeRing Board Secretary
October 27, 2020