

AAUW BENNINGTON BRANCH BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, January 18, 2022 at 10 am

Via Zoom Video Conferencing

Present: Ruth Botzow, Jan Day, Beth Hardesty, Madeline Kennedy, Jennifer Kern, Suzanne Kirkpatrick, Julie Mackaman, Sheila Mullineaux, Judy Murphy, Dawn Rodrigues, Kathy Wagenknecht

Call to Order and Approval of Minutes. President Wagenknecht called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Murphy moved, Kirkpatrick seconded that the minutes of the May 25, 2021 board meeting and June 19, 2021 branch meeting be approved; motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Day presented a financial report for the period July 1 through December 31, 2021, showing a checking account balance of \$9,334 with reserves (operations, scholarships, book awards) of \$2,615, leaving \$6,719 available. (See Financial Report, attached.) Wagenknecht relayed Mary Feidner's report that Silent Angels donated \$1,700 in 2021 for scholarships. She added that while the late Marge Carter's husband Bob had continued to match book group donations to the Marge Carter Book Awards, his death signals the end of this support unless we hear otherwise from his estate. We discussed the possibility of diverting revenues from sales of the Scribbles Sisters publication *Scratchings* from the scholarship to book fund to match book group donations, or alternatively for simplification, consolidating the scholarship and book award funds. Since the Scholarship Committee has discretion in allocating money from both funds, we decided there was little reason to redirect *Scratchings* revenues from one fund to the other, and we agreed to continue the book awards as a distinct fund to honor Marge Carter's memory. In addition, we authorized the renewal of our Zoom subscription.

Committee Reports

Membership

Wagenknecht announced that due to Membership Committee Chair Claudia Dalton's ongoing health issues, Norma McShane has agreed to step into this position, which Kirkpatrick has been filling temporarily. Wagenknecht reported that we currently have 62 members. Discussion:

- **New Members Reception.** We discussed having a virtual social gathering to welcome and orient members who have joined our branch during the pandemic. Some combination of McShane (Membership), Kirkpatrick (Hospitality) and Hardesty (Member Concerns) will plan such an event, patterned after the new member receptions held in recent years at the homes of Dalton, Botzow and Gudrun Hutchins, and held on a day (weekday vs weekend) and at a time (e.g., afternoon tea, evening cocktails, weekend coffee) that will optimize the participation of new members who have jobs.
- **Member Profiles.** We resumed the discussion in our last board meeting about member-to-member interviews to help new and continuing members get to know each other better, with profiles published in the newsletter and stored in an easily accessible online archive. (See below, Member Profiles).

Newsletter

Rodrigues, reporting that Carolyn Webb has stepped down as newsletter co-editor, said she wants to increase the number of newsletter contributors. She asked for a commitment of each board member to make at least one contribution per year. Discussion:

- **Member Profiles.** We agreed to receive assignments from Rodrigues for interviewing a new or continuing branch member toward creating a profile series in the newsletter, also to be archived for general reference and for “live links” in stories that reference members by name. In consultation as needed with Wagenknecht and Hardesty, Rodrigues will develop an outline of sample interview questions. Following the interview, the interviewer will send a draft of the profile to the interviewee for revisions or approval before forwarding it to Rodrigues and Wagenknecht, who will have final editorial control. While the profiles will be published across time at the newsletter's discretion, they will be added to the archive as they are submitted instead of holding back until publication.
- **Board Profiles.** We agreed to receive assignments from Wagenknecht for interviewing each other for profiles on board members for the archive. Wagenknecht and Rodrigues will develop a pre-interview questionnaire for interviewees to capture biographical information (e.g., education, work experience) and the responsibilities of the position held so that the interviewer can focus on more lively aspects of the board member she is profiling.
- **Newsletter Content.** Rodrigues asked for suggestions for topics for newsletter coverage. Among the suggestions, in addition to Member and Board Profiles (above): Adventures in Reading, a periodic column with guest writers submitting stories about “our reading lives” (e.g., books we’re reading, books and authors that had an impact on us as young readers, literary excursions in When and Why I Joined AAUW, a series or sidebar in which members look back on their first encounter with AAUW and their decision to join). Scribble Sisters Corner, with entries submitted by our branch “writing corps.” National AAUW Spotlight, with republished or excerpted articles from national’s website.

Programs

Mullineaux, the designated contact for the Program Committee, presented an outline of upcoming programs, all to be presented via video conferencing unless and until it is safe to meet in person:

January (Scribble Sisters), **February-June** (Great Decisions, with UU Fellowship of Bennington), **March** (Social Luncheon, to be coordinated by Thea Church if safe to meet indoors, with donations raised in support of some AAUW political advocacy or education project of our choosing), **April** (Vermont Women Candidates for U.S. Congress, to be scheduled in whatever month works best for the candidates), **May** (Environmental Journalist and Author, Judith Schwartz), **June** (Picnic, perhaps combined with deferred Social Lunch, if needed). Discussion:

- **Great Decisions.** Mullineaux said that the Program Committee is creating planning teams for each of the monthly Great Decisions sessions. Branch and board members are welcome to join planning task forces for any program.
- **Vermont Women U.S. Congressional Candidates.** Vermont is the only state that has never elected a woman to either the U.S. House or Senate. The proposed event this spring would not be a campaign or fundraising event, nor would it replace a Candidates Forum in the fall, which will likely include all local candidates for the State legislature. Instead, it would be limited to Vermont women Congressional candidates regardless of party and designed as a discussion about the special opportunities and challenges facing women as they run for an elected position. Murphy expressed concern that the candidates may be reluctant to participate in a forum that expressly excludes campaign platforms and policy positions.

Theatre Fundraiser

Kennedy reported that the September 2021 scholarship fundraiser through which we sold tickets to Oldcastle Theatre's production of *The Turn of the Screw* was more successful than recent years, netting \$740 for our scholarship fund from net sales of 28 tickets (\$280) and additional donations (\$460). She added that she and co-chair Feidner will review Oldcastle's 2022 schedule, which will be announced shortly. Mackaman suggested that as a pop-up event or otherwise, a post-theater discussion might add value to the experience of collectively watching a play.

Scholarships

Kern noted significant changes in CCV-Bennington's financial support administration, saying she will continue to work with appropriate staff at the state level to encourage and work directly with scholarship applicants from the CCV-Bennington service area. She said that the Scholarship Committee was to meet that afternoon and Murphy will write a newsletter article and press release summarizing our first funding round of 2022.

Involving New Members in Leadership Roles

In discussion about involving new members in leadership roles (e.g., committee chairs and co-chairs, program leaders), we suggested that we first look to those who have become active in our special interest groups (e.g., book group, Scribble Sisters, Read-Arounds). We also revisited suggestions from past meetings, such as asking committee chairs to recruit their own replacements, perhaps including a "co-chair" year in which a retiring chair orients an incoming chair, and using new member receptions to invite new members to join committees.

Vermont Coalition to End Child Marriage

Wagenknecht said that our branch has been asked to join the Coalition, but noting that at this point in the meeting we no longer have a quorum, she said she would resend a link to the Coalition's website and ask the board to vote by email as to whether we should add our branch's name to the Coalition's list of supporters.

Adjournment. Rodrigues moved, Mullineaux seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Motion carried; meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Mackaman
Secretary

Attachments: Financial Report Summary