

Development Committee Meeting – September 4, 2020

Attendees via Zoom: Peter Watt, Jeff Ridgway, Debbie Welles, Jackie Kangley, Cheryl Heffernan, Gary Rogers, Anna Grenier, Natalie Yonkers, Jane Bolles, Kitty Stalsburg, Jane Chapman, John Catlett, Rachel Edwards, Scott Douglas, Greg Varga, Sara Qua, Kerrie Gaurino.

Absent: Hannah Childs, Edna Beaudette

An overview was provided on High Hopes' current operating status and committee goals for FY20/21 were distributed at the start of the meeting. Agenda items discussed were as follows:

Fiscal Year 2020/21 Development Budget

The approved FY 20/21 budget was reviewed and areas of concern were noted. These were:

- Appeal – goal is aggressive as we don't yet know how the economic downturn will affect individuals giving. The fall appeal process has been revised to ensure mail date of Oct 5th, well before Election Day, is met. The appeal process for note writing is attached. During the months of November and December, committee members will be provided with weekly updates.
- Restricted Giving – meeting goal will be challenging as many foundations are making meeting basic human needs their mission priority for the coming year.
- Holiday Market and Big Barn Bash – Holiday Market is going virtual and this has resulted in a reduced budget. Garnering corporate support for a virtual event is difficult. The Big Barn Bash budget was reduced, but alternative plans will need to be created based on the level and size of in-person gathering that will be considered safe and attractive. This was discussed in greater detail later in the meeting.

Major Donor Engagement

Significant focus of the Development Committee in this fiscal year will be donor engagement. This is especially important given the impact COVID 19 has had on our program and on our ability to engage donors through events. Members of the Development Committee and other members of the High Hopes organization will be asked to reach out to specific donors in a stewardship role. The purpose of these engagements is not for solicitation, but to engage our supports (or individuals we are cultivating) and informing them on activities at HH, how HH has had to adjust due to COVID, and to thank them for their past support. This type of engagement can be successful in the long run. The committee is not asking people to do something they are uncomfortable doing.

Sara, Peter and Jeff will develop a list of individuals for engagement and will meet with committee members to privately identify whom they are comfortable and interested in reaching out to. Sara will also provide guidance and talking points so we are consistent in messaging. The point of these donor meetings is to keep our donors informed and to thank them for their support.

Sara is planning on creating an informal video where Kitty, and or various staff members tour the facility and explain where our operations are at this point. Another PATH program, Green Chimneys in Brewster NY, did something similar and it was very impactful.

Next steps: Peter Sara and Jeff to meet early next week to divide up list of committee members to reach out about doing this.

Big Barn Bash

Not being able to hold the Big Barn Bash is one of the biggest risks the Finance Committee sees in the coming year. It is High Hopes' largest single source of operating income and our strongest connection to our constituents. While we won't know what we can or cannot do regarding in person gatherings until January at the earliest we need to start brainstorming alternative ideas now in case we need to replace this event.

Peter discussed the success of the recent Lyman-Allen in person event. They did an outdoor, socially distanced event, combination of box lunches, live and online auction items. The event was nice and successful and limited to 100 people.

Pivoting to smaller, more frequent events, in the short term is something we can be thinking about – i.e. space the June gala out into four or five events over the winter/spring. With smaller events we need to be sensitive to not excluding people and to the wear and tear on the staff and facility.

It was also noted that there are venues holding larger events. Organized outdoor events are allowed to have up to 500 people. Recommendation is to start by determining how many people you feel comfortable having on site.

Ideas raised:

- Combine a physical event with table sales and events in neighborhoods at people's homes where folks pick up the family style dinner and a live zoom that encompasses all the venues.
- An event at the Winkleman's, outdoors with food stations and a live band. This is something we have a template for. This event could also be live streamed to create a hybrid event. If music is involved it would need to be a concert as opposed to dance music.
- Picnic lunch on a Saturday outside at HH.
- Drive in Movie Night
- Farm to Table dinners at High Hopes – Hillstead Museum in Farmington did these over the summer. Limited to 75 attendees per dinner.
- Garden dinners, find several beautiful gardens in the area and do dinners in them.

It was noted that we need to keep in mind:

- Things like rentals and catering are expensive and it drives costs up. The symphony is expensive, \$15,000 is just to get the music.
- People will come to a venue or a space but they are not hosting stuff in their homes.

Next steps: Trudy to put together a task force, with Barbara and Robin to start to explore some of these ideas. Peter suggested that they may want to work backwards, if we don't have this one big event and instead do these three or four small events - what can we earn from these? We need to consider cost in both dollars and manpower.

5:30 meeting was adjourned. **Next meeting is October 27, 2020 at 4pm.** A Zoom invite will be sent out closer to that date.