

Development Committee Meeting Minutes January 12, 2021 via Zoom

Attendees: Sara Qua, Cheryl Heffernan, Debbie Welles, Rachel Edwards, Natalie Yonker, Jackie Kangley, Kitty Stalsburg, Scott Douglas, Peter Watt (Chair), Jeff Ridgway (Co-Chair, Eliza Sharp, Jane Chapman, Greg Varga, Gary Rogers, Jane Bolles

Agenda

Review 2nd Quarter

Holiday Market Review

Big Barn Tailgate Update

Spring Appeal concept

Peter welcomed the members. Thanks to everyone for their involvement.

Review of 2nd Quarter:

Sara shared the development report for the 2nd quarter. The first quarter of the fiscal year is always quiet as the appeal hasn't gone out yet. The 2nd quarter is a big one and the development numbers look good. The appeal is at almost \$153,000, which is above where we were at this time last year for the appeal by almost \$14,000. We have had some gains and losses with the major donors (\$5000 and above) that ultimately provided a net gain in that category. Working with Overabove on the messaging and design for the appeal package has produced positive results, particularly with the postcard that mailed after the election and before Thanksgiving. This coupled with end of year giving after Christmas gave of three distinct waves of donations, instead of just two waves. The post cards were more impactful than the traditional letters. The post cards were an additional extra cost, but overall the fall appeal package design was smaller with less printed pieces and therefore less expensive to print and mail.

45% of the board have given. Jackie and Peter will discuss who will make the pitch to the Board at the January 20th meeting.

Thanks to an anonymous donation of \$50,000 we have hit the Restricted goal (\$200,000) for the year. We still a lot grants submissions pending and more applications to go out.

The number listed in the Development report for Unrestricted operating funds is wrong, we are at 105k and the goal is 135k. A large part of that are foundation gifts totaling \$61,000 (\$40,000 of that is from the Crippled Children's Fund. We also received a large individual gift for \$24,000 and a \$10,000 unrestricted grant. The Stressless Chair promotion from Saybrook Home has been a help this year as well.

Holiday market exceeded its budget this year. We were concerned about the raffle sales as we were not able to do in person sales, which in years past brought in over \$12,000 of raffle sales. Despite that, we had a record level of raffle sales of \$53,000. Thank you to Rachel Edwards and her team at Dreamscapes for handling the social media campaign and to the group at Julia Balfour for the marketplace web design and event graphics for the Holiday Market. Their combined expertise made a significant impact our meeting budget goals.

With regards to social media and on-line giving we are seeing a huge improvement in responses to that form of engagement. These changes will guide our planning for next year's Holiday Market and Raffle. The Holiday Market will continue to have a virtual component and Rachel has begun pulling analytics to help us in our marketing and planning for 2021.

Big Barn Tailgate

Last, was the update on the Big Barn Tailgate. We are going to have an event in the field limited to the number of cars that we can fit in the field. There will be VIP areas in the front for corporate sponsors and those who purchase a VIP package. We are going to have a basic ticket package with add-on levels. Dominion has come on as the event partner. Northstar has merged with Principal and opted to drop down to the \$2,500 level. We are looking for additional event partner. The corporate sponsorship campaign will kick-off the last week in January and is headed by Gary Rogers and Jamie Childs.

Gary asked for help from the Development Committee and to let he, Sara or Jamie know of new businesses in the area that would be appropriate for a sponsorship solicitation. Committee members who are interested in making follow-on phone calls are also welcome. Sara showed a draft of the corporate sponsor package, and the sponsorship levels are up on the High Hopes website.

Jeff Ridgway, Property Chair for the event, sent out an email in the last hour or so with a preliminary draft layout of the field for the event. There are challenges to doing this outdoors; we need a large generator for powering lights and band, 2 large screens for viewing the action in limited darkness and the ability to broadcast music on FM radio so folks in the cars can hear. The Committee is a remote/virtual alternative to the event in case of rain or a uptake in Covid cases. The Auction will be completely online via the platform we have used for the last two June events. Bidding will be open a week before hand. Celina Merrill has agreed to Chair the Auction (with continued support from Event Chairs Robin Schonberger and Barbara Willkens

Kitty requested that members let Sara and Kerrie know names and addresses of people moving to town. Hope is to have some smaller gatherings as things loosen up in the spring/fall.

Spring Appeal – Scheduled to go out at the end of February and will primarily be social media driven, with an initial postcard mailing. We have a gift of \$25,000 to \$50,000 that can be used as a match or challenge in the appeal. The Committee was then solicited for ideas on how we can structure this match/challenge in a new/different/exciting way. One idea is to tie the donations to a specific need that has broad appeal, such as a Participant Scholarship Fund. Another is to state the amount needed to close the gap between fees and program operations.

Jackie brought up the idea of the horse teams again. Sara thinks that is appealing for the folks who know the herd but may not appeal to our larger donor base. It also can become complicated with multiple horse teams. A simpler version would be to have a graphic illustrating a horse race, with the amount needing to be raised as the finish line. This graphic would constantly change as we progress in the campaign and could provide a sense of urgency.

Another suggestion is to create “Sis’s challenge”, for our founder Sis Gould but that theme may be too close to Phoebe’s Challenge used by the Old Lyme Library in last year’s Capital Campaign.

Scott Douglas suggested using the word Hope as part of the marketing? Tying the campaign back to the organization. Over the course of the campaign we could tell various participant and horse stories – i.e. Stories of Hope that would be shared via social media. Each story would appeal to different demographics, i.e. veterans, individuals with autism. These stories would show the diversity of the organization. Other name suggestions include “Hopes Challenge and Got Hope.

Kitty thanked the committee for their service. Sara added her thanks to the Committee for their help at the October meeting in coming up with marketing ideas for the Raffle. Several of these were instituted and help us reach our record setting raffle sales number.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 13 at 4pm