

Upper Valley Rowing Foundation

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

September 7, 2011

Murray Meeting Room, Howe Memorial Library, Hanover, NH

**Board Members Present:** Jen Friend, Brenda Sirovich, Rowan Carroll, Heidi Lange, Dan Ruml, Karen Sluzenski, Paul Gross, Dick Grossman, Erika Dade, Peter Davenport, Bob Haynes, Kevin Cotter.

**Board Members Excused:** Liz Marshall, Penny Sirjane, Win Piper, Buzz Congram, Dartmouth representative.

**Board Members Absent:** Kevin Cotter.

*Call to order: at 5:45 PM.*

1. **July (revised) and August Board Minutes.** Paul moved approval of both, Karen S seconded, passed unanimously. Brenda proposed deferral of Private Sculling Lesson policy pending upcoming Strategic Planning discussion, specifically in re: financial arrangements with private sculling coaches. It was pointed out we also need to add "commercial" license to language. A few minor changes to the Scholarship policy were proposed and approved. New policy to Karen S for posting to website, which we have not done previously.
2. **End of Season Planning.** Specific needs post return of Dartmouth to boathouse were reviewed. Plans for somewhat festive workday were discussed – e.g. a potluck breakfast after a last row and before a workday. Racing not required. Rowan will compose an email for Karen to distribute to invite rowers. Last year the final workday was the day after the Long Row (which takes place the weekend after the Head of the Fish). This year that would be November 6 for the work day (November 5 for the Long Row). We will include a Save the Date in the email soliciting interest in the September work day. Dock out will be in late November. [We will defer vote on the revised Racing Double policy, when available from Dan R, by email.]
3. **Strategic Planning Part I.** After 4 years of an all volunteer Club, it is time that we reassess what we want to be as a Club, and how we should go about meeting Club needs.
  - Sweep programs. Our membership size has not allowed us to diversify programs as much as we would have wanted. We have tried to promote an Advanced group of rowers who want to row hard but not compete, but this effort has repeatedly failed. We are not the only rowing club that has this issue. This year we were not able to run ANY intermediate (between Learn to Row and Comp) program. Jen wondered about whether the mid-level program was too long (# weeks). Dick suggested that it's possible to make people happy with one program for both Advanced and Comp rowers. Some people row well, want to train hard and to race; some don't row well and want to race; some want to race but don't want to train hard; some row well, want to train hard, but don't want to race. Dick wonders whether there's a way to combine these two groups as long as people say what they want at the outset. This requires a lot of work for a coach but would include all Advanced rowers. However, it would not answer the need for an Intermediate sweep group to help get rowers from Learn-To-Row to Advanced/Competitive. Erika expressed concern that most rowers would be

dissatisfied with this dilution of the competitive program; and it would be a very difficult coaching job to supervise these various boats.

- The real question is what can we do in the middle range (Intermediate / Advanced, also previously named Club Rowing).
- Heidi pointed out that we used to have one program progression – Sweep rowing. Now we have a progression of Junior rowing and of Sculling, and it's likely we've been cannibalizing our own programs.
- Karen S pointed out that the Comp Sweep program is aging and we are not 'refilling' it from younger age people. Karen mentioned that post-college age people may want to row; Heidi said that we allow 21 and older, who now qualify as Masters under USRowing.
- Heidi noted that we do have new members this fall who are former college rowers, but they did not come from within our ranks.
- Paul believes that although increasingly popular, Club Sculling is still not as popular as it was during the 1970's and 1980's.
- Men's rowing has only 4 enrollees this fall, with two spares. This is a perpetual problem.
- Heidi has concerns about the current Sculling progression which is small and labor intensive and does not provide a solid skill foundation (as the Sweep program does) – and appears to be drawing participants away from Sweep programs. Heidi promoted that Sweep was better for the Club.
- We discussed what information we have or could get from those who have participated in Learn to Row. Bob H thinks that most people try it, like it, but are not that committed. Rowan noted that many participants are parents of HHS rowers who want to try it to see what their kids are doing. If they continue, they scull.
- Heidi pointed out that last year she coached Advanced and there were 11 participants, SEVEN of whom were Juniors. Our Junior program has contributed to the failure of our mid-level Masters Sweep programs.
- Penny had sent around some good ideas about Juniors. Heidi pointed out we do have a true Community Program running this fall, with 30 participants – but this is not a learn-to-row program, so it is mostly for Hanover and Lebanon students. However, if we were to publicize and attract non-HHS and LHS students from other high schools to participate in summer programs that will provide a Learn-To-Row experience. Thus far, this fall program is intentionally NOT oriented toward rowing in the HoCR.
- Community-wide Fall Junior rowing could provide an excellent fundraising opportunity. However it could grow to the point of undermining our own success. Currently we use the Chieftain as a site; we don't know how long we will have access to this. The Junior program is 3 days/week for 5 ½ weeks. Dick pointed out that this is our greatest source of future members – but 20-30 years hence.
- Dan pointed out that the genesis of UVRF was to provide locals with the opportunity to row on the Connecticut without the need to own riverfront property. What do we need to do for this group of ~45 boat owners?

- Proposal is to cancel the Sculling Program, and require people to self-seek private lessons. Try to keep the midlevel (between Learn to Row and Comp) Sweep program perking along while we stop self-cannabilizing it.
  - Men's Sweep program: we lose money because we only have 4 rowers. Given 21 rowers among the women, this has presented problems. In fact, we have dedicated two of our three launches to the UVRF Juniors program. Even if we hired an assistant coach at a reduced rate, we would still need an additional launch.
  - A long discussion ensued about how to balance limited resources between the two programs, and accounting for the imbalance between revenues and expenditures for the Masters Sweep programs.
  - Jen threw out the following proposal: Hire a second coach for Tuesdays / Thursdays and move one of the Mon/Wed/Fri to Saturday (with Rowan). Dick is willing to help on a Wednesday morning or afternoon if we can find a 4<sup>th</sup> launch. Paul has a possible 4<sup>th</sup> launch.
4. Phase 2 of this discussion is will be about how we configure our Board and Programs to achieve our goals.

Bob Haynes moved to adjourn, Jen seconded. Passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM.

5. ***Updates and follow up items:***

- Dick will / did try to re-splice the wiring on the bailers
- Scholarship Committee report to Board deferred.
- We need to accumulate policies and figure out where to post – these include Private Sculling Lessons, Scholarship, Unaccompanied Sweep, Club Sculling Boat Use.
- Refunds policy, as finalized in 2010, continues to be used and enforced in 2011.
- 'Stuff' accumulations in front corners of Fuller that needs to be cleared out.
- Board Membership: Brenda will follow up on ? any resignations.
- Website – *deferred*

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Sirovich  
Secretary