

AAUW BENNINGTON BRANCH BOARD MEETING

Friday, May 15, 2020 at 1 pm

Via Zoom Video Conferencing in the Time of Covid-19

Present: Ruth Botzow, Claudia Dalton, Mary Feidner, Beth Hardesty, Gudrun Hutchins, Madeline Kennedy, Jennifer Kern, Suzanne Kirkpatrick, Julie Mackaman, Cathy McClure, Norma McShane, Judy Murphy, Dawn Rodrigues, Kathy Wagenknecht.

Call to Order and Approval of Minutes. President Wagenknecht called the branch's first-ever video conferencing meeting to order at 1:05 pm. Hutchins moved, Murphy seconded that the minutes of the January 29, 2020 board meeting be approved; motion carried.

Reports

- **Finances.** Treasurer McShane distributed a FY2020 year-to-date report, showing a checking account balance of \$6,533 as of April 30, 2020. (See Financial Report, attached.) She reported that LAF contributions in Spring 2020 totaled \$765, with our donation to AAUW to be split evenly between Legal Advocacy Fund and Public Policy. Hutchins moved, Murphy seconded that an additional \$78 received in our LAF fundraising effort last year be directed entirely to LAF; motion carried.
- **Programs.** Committee point person Rodrigues described plans for a prototype "virtual program" proposed by new branch and committee member Mary Brady. A suffrage-era fashion show featuring dresses provided by the speaker, the owner of a local vintage clothing store, would be taped for distribution across multiple platforms. While other programs have been canceled or deferred due to coronavirus, the committee is considering transitioning selected programs (e.g., Voter Suppression, Candidates Forum) to web-based delivery in the fall, if necessary.
- **Fundraising Sales.** Wagenknecht reported that sales from the second Scribble Sisters book, *Scratchings 2*, has netted \$900 to support scholarships, with seven volumes still left to sell, for a total of \$970; and that sales of suffragist notecards have netted \$127 to support program costs, with the potential addition of \$305 when the remaining 61 cards are sold, for a total of \$432.
- **Membership.** Dalton reported that plans for AAUW's "Shape the Future" spring membership drive are unknown. In discussion about hosting a "socially distanced" reception for new members outdoors or as a video-conferencing event, Dalton offered to contact them to determine their comfort level with these proposals. Dalton and Hutchins will update the membership brochure. The deadline for membership renewals was set for June 30.
- **Newsletter.** Hutchins and Rodrigues discussed recent modifications to the newsletter to include "stay-at-home" features, as the suspension of branch gatherings has eliminated the need for program descriptions and most calendar listings. Suggestions in the following discussion included asking readers to contribute ideas for newsletter features and publishing selected Scribble Sisters "Pandemic Journal" entries, a report on the AAUW webinar experience, an article on new Title IX regulations, write-ups of discussions by the book group, and articles by guest columnists, as well as continuing to publish the newsletter across the summer instead of taking the usual hiatus.

- **Member Concerns.** Hardesty said that she has been reaching out to members, working from a list of those who may be experiencing difficulties due to social isolation. She added that the conversations, which often do not focus on the pandemic, are mutually enjoyable and beneficial.
- **Social Lunch.** With no Social Lunch held this spring and Jane Chamay having stepped down as its coordinator, Dalton reminded the board that in the last meeting, organization of the 2021 lunch was assigned to Kirkpatrick and Hardesty, as part of their respective Hospitality and Member Concerns roles.
- **Theatre Fundraiser.** Feidner reported that there is no schedule available for Oldcastle Theatre's fall season, leaving it unclear whether we will be able to hold our annual scholarship fundraiser.
- **Media and Publicity.** The board praised Murphy for her success in garnering media coverage of our pre-coronavirus events. Predicting a trend toward social media over print media, Murphy seeks help from members with technological expertise for expanding social media publicity.
- **State Board.** Hutchins reported that she has begun the process to disband AAUW of Vermont, due to the shrinking number and size of branches and no successor to her as its administrator. She advised that the vote by Vermont branch members required to dissolve the state organization be deferred until Fall 2020. She said that funds of over \$3,000, carried over from branch membership dues and held in a CD that comes due in November, will be split among the remaining branches (\$1,000 each to Bennington, Brattleboro, Middlebury), with the balance conveyed to AAUW.
- **Scholarships.** Kern reported that the scholarship fund is better-resourced than ever before, with \$5,220 on hand for scholarships and an additional \$300 for book awards. She is working with CCV to recruit applicants for upcoming rounds.
- **Public Policy and Campus Liaison.** McClure presented a job description for a Liaison for Legal Advocacy Fund (LAF) and Public Policy, saying that she and Wagenknecht are in conversation with prospective candidates to fill this position (possibly as "co-liaisons"), as well as that of Campus Liaison, to develop relationships with Bennington College and CCV. McClure has agreed to continue serving as Campus Liaison in an intermediary role until a replacement is secured.

Kirkpatrick moved, Murphy seconded that the above reports be accepted; motion carried.

New Business

Leadership. Wagenknecht noted that since the three elected board officers (President, Secretary, Treasurer) are not up for election until June 2021, and that all leadership positions due to lapse in June 2020 have been extended by appointment, with the exception of LAF/Public Policy and Campus Liaisons as described above, there is no need for a Nominating Committee or election this year.

AAUW in the Time of Covid-19

Throughout the meeting the board acknowledged the impact of coronavirus on our branch. Setbacks, such as canceled programs and loss of sales revenues, have been countered by

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creative responses, such as outreach to isolated members, new uses of the newsletter to reinforce a sense of community, and video conferencing. If there remain questions as to why membership in AAUW is valuable even when we cannot meet, our branch has already demonstrated answers.

Adjournment. Wagenknecht adjourned the meeting at 2:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Mackaman
Secretary

Attachments: Financial Report