



**Minutes of Open Board Meeting, February 24, 2015
Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology, room U202A**

Board Members Present: John Alekna, John Chambers, Dave Crowley, Bill Gregor, Betsy Hall, John Herbert, Elsa Hill, Barbara Hoffman, Ed MacLean, Regina Pyle, Marie Schappert, Ellen Sheets, Jane Siegel, Carol Trust, Ken Tutunjian, Jane Watt, and Mike Worhach.

Board Members Notified Absent: Patty Brennan, Tony Gordon, Michael Hall, Ha Orbon, and Toby Rodman.

Board Members Absent: Paul Duffy.

Guests and Members: Stacy Koepfel, Executive Assistant and Ed Collins, Moderator.

Bill Gregor read a card from residents of Pine Street Inn thanking Ellis for Christmas presents.

Ed Collins moderated the remainder of the meeting. He began with a trip down Memory Lane to bring attention to the historical fact that neighborhood associations tend to coalesce around civic issues, which we do not currently have. He noted that Ellis has an outstanding social program that no other neighborhood association has.

Mission: Ed C. quoted our current mission statement which appears in our website bylaws and felt it was too long suggesting there be three sentences: stating our mission, our goals and an action plan. He strongly recommended that it is the responsibility of the Membership Committee to develop a script for Directors to use in order to recruit new members.

He felt many people did not know that ESENA existed and young families did not care. Elsa noted Mary Lionette used to invite young mothers to meet at Garden of Eden and suggested this might be reintroduced at Berkeley Perk or some other location. (N.B. This was not an Ellis sponsored initiative.)

Size and Composition of Board: Ed C. felt that we have a large neighborhood and that a large Board is beneficial since it increases attendance, provides a cross section of good ideas, and a pool of volunteers. John H. felt the Board was too large, not effective, did not want to discuss topics, and was reactionary and not leading.

Board Meetings: Mike felt there was not enough participation from the members we do have. Gordon asked how we could activate the Board? Elsa felt we needed to work on openness. Jane W. commented that we lack discussion. John H. said we do not do strategy well and that

committees were uneven in performance. Ed C. said there was the sense that Directors were not comfortable with how meetings are run. He suggested picking one item to work on per meeting. It was mentioned that regular and frequent Board meetings were good and that Board meetings should not be cancelled unless a quorum was unavailable for a vote. The conclusion was an opinion that the meeting structure needs to be changed to less emphasis on committee reports and increased discussion of new business and new ideas.

Committees: Ed C. strongly feels that committees are the driving force of organizations and therefore need a strong structure. John H. feels that the membership committee is critical as it overlaps with other committees such as communications and events. Bill said we work well in a crisis or when there is a clear objective. John A. said the Development, Licensing and Zoning Committee needed direction as no meetings had been scheduled. He added his desire to be effective and accountable. Ed C. asked whether the Board had asked committee chairs to leave? Mike asked whether Board members were ever asked to leave? In both instances the answer was very infrequently. Ed C. suggested the Board review each committee. It was recommended that we create a process of how the committee chair is selected. Ken suggested we revive the family committee, but discussion was deferred. Ed C. advised that it is the Board's responsibility to review the existing committees; discontinue those with little activity and/or value and create new ones as interest is expressed.

The conclusion was an opinion that there needs to be increased committee structure and that each committee chair is responsible for sending a report to the board prior to next board meeting which includes the names of committee members, frequency of meetings (schedule), mission and goals for the next 3 months.

Ed C. encouraged us to consider adopting the following standard Best Board Practices:

1. Rotate committee chairs every three years.
2. Committee members do not need to be Board members.
3. Committee Chairs annually submit a statement identifying its mission, goals and an action plan containing 5-6 items using a bullet point format.
4. The EC makes recommendations to the Board and seeks its approval.
5. All Board members should actively recruit new members using a suggested script and be involved in efforts to retain members.

Elsa felt a lid was kept on talent and that there is an expressed reluctance to entertain suggestions from Directors; vibrancy and innovation are needed. Ed C. felt the Board was too old. Ellen felt people were frustrated and asked what issues do we want to be involved in and whether we have the right committees and ask the right questions? Dave said the EC oversees the committee chairs, who should periodically report their activities to the EC, as has been done in the past.

Ed C. stated that ESENA is the only South End neighborhood organization that charges dues. Union Park Neighborhood Association raises money for the park and the neighborhood activities. NABB (Neighborhood Association of Back Bay) charges dues. Dave noted social events keep people engaged. The Book Group was mentioned and Dave suggested the EC could

shine light on subgroups. Elsa felt that more subgroups or affinity groups, e.g. the Wine Group, would add value for the membership.

Partnerships with Social Service Agencies: Elsa noted we successfully partnered with USES on our movie night. She suggested we consider having a USES Director join the Ellis Board and an Ellis Director join the USES Board thereby tapping into the strengths of each. Marie suggested adding social service agencies partnership as a committee e.g. Old Dover Neighborhood Association which partners with Pine Street Inn. We voted to create a new committee to address social service partnerships. While Elsa volunteered to chair this new committee, John H. suggested and agreed upon to delay the discussion of the chair appointment until the next meeting. Elsa offered to develop a mission statement, goals and action plan for discussion at the March meeting.

Agenda for Next Meeting, March 24, 2015:

1. Prior to the next meeting each committee chair is responsible for sending a report to the Board that includes committee members' names, frequency of meetings (schedule), mission, goals, and action plan for the next three months.
2. 10-15 minute update on old business.
3. There will be a review and discussion of two committees:
 - Social Service Partnerships Committee: Elsa will present a description of its potential mission, goals and action plan.
 - Communications: Currently Betsy is the only member.

In closing Ed C. reiterated that we are a strong organization, which accomplishes and offers a great deal to the membership and the community. His primary suggestions were to strengthen the committee structure, restructure the board meetings to allow more discussion of ideas, and increase the role and visibility of Membership.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Siegel, Clerk