

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
FRIENDS OF NIGER
BY SKYPE
APRIL 9, 2017**

PRESENT: Meredith McGehee, Tom Corcoran, Larry Koff, John Baird, Steve Bushell, Yari Rabiou and Penni St. Hilaire

ABSENT: John Hutchison, Lindsay Randall and Anna Falkovitch

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm, EDT.

Meredith thanked everyone for attending.

The minutes were approved as distributed.

Replacement of Lindsay Randall, chair of the projects committee: Lindsay sent a note to Meredith that her schedule, especially her Ph.D. work and that she was not going to be able to go back to Niger in the program, no longer permits her to serve in this role.

John Hutchison talked to Amy Wilson and thought she would be excellent for the position. Penni happen to mention in an email to Tom Dechert that Lindsay had resigned and he said he might be interested.

Meredith will call both Amy and Tom to determine their level of interest and see if they have time, and if they would be interested in co-chairing the committee. Meredith will get back to the board after the calls. Larry mentioned it was important that we move quickly to replace Lindsay. Meredith said she hopes to make the calls this week.

Tom asked if they accepted the opportunity would they be members of the board? Meredith thought that could wait until she had the conversations. Tom said it is important that they attend board meetings.

Treasurer's Report: Larry said there is \$18,000 in the checking account and \$6,000 in the money market account. He will put together a list of what has been funded and with the help of Tom and Penni what has been approved for funding. Larry agree to send out treasure's reports with a status of funding before board meetings.

Project update: Tom suggested that 7 Maringa projects and the goat project had been funded. Larry mentioned that he received a request for additional funding for Bagalam. Tom thought we agreed to fund 5 of the Maringa projects with the funds from the anonymous donor.

A new proposal has been received but that will wait until we have a new committee chair.

Himma: It has been proposed that Himma, an organization that has received funding from FON, help get funds to projects. For some projects it is standard now to use Western Union, but other projects don't always have that option and Himma can be helpful in getting them the money. It has also been suggested that we need independent audits of our projects and Himma has some expertise in the project areas and has experience dealing with bureaucratic hurdles. They also have experience in providing technical assistance. There was a previous discussion of establishing a contract with Himma.

It was agreed that developing a contractual relationship with Himma should wait until we have new projects committee chair(s). Tom and Meredith have had conversations with The Lightbrowns, part of the Senegal/Niger group meeting in September. The group is hoping to raise \$50,000. This is a work in progress but the accountability of the project is important.

Newsletter: Anna sent Meredith a few things for the newsletter that did not get to board members before the meeting, but was sent during the meeting. Board members should read the material and get comments and articles to Anna. Anna hopes to send out the newsletter by ChimpMonkey 3 times a year.

Meeting with Niger Ambassador Alidou: Meredith, Yari and Penni recently met with Ambassador Alidou. She suggested a joint event to celebrate Niger Independence Day, August 3 (a Thursday.) Meredith suggested that the event have a theme, such as girls education. She also wondered whether it could be a fundraiser. Do we need a speaker? Penni noted that the Ambassador specifically said we need music. Meredith asked that everyone on the board share their ideas on how we can take advantage of this event. Larry suggested putting something in the newsletter. Penni was tasked with putting something together either for the CEX or a separate mailing from John B to ask for ideas and participation. Yari agree to be a liaison with the Embassy on discussing ideas.

Ambassador Alidou was concerned about the Trump budget which substantially reduced AID funding. AID and MCC funding is an importance source of aid in Niger and the Ambassador hope that FON would lobby for continued support to Niger. Meredith agreed to get details on the proposed budget for the newsletter and we could request members to write their congressional representatives (those that have them) to support continued funding. It was suggested that we need a committee to follow up on this and the return of Peace Corps to Niger. The Ambassador pointed out that Mali still has volunteers.

The Ambassador was also interested in seeing the reports of projects that FON has supported. Larry, Yari and Penni will follow up on this.

The next meeting will be June 25 at 6:30 pm, EDT.

The call concluded at 7:38 pm. EDT

Respectfully submitted,

Penni St. Hilaire
Recording Secretary
Approved by the FON Board June 25, 2017