

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**FRIENDS OF NIGER**

**BY SKYPE**

**February 11, 2018**

**Present: Meredith McGehee, Tom Corcoran, Larry Koff, John Baird, Steve Bushell, John Hutchison, , Yari Rabiou and Seybou Douma and Penni St. Hilaire**

**Ex-Officio: Tom Dechert**

**Absent: Amy Wilson**

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 pm EST. Several members had problems with Skype at the beginning of the meeting.

The minutes were approved as corrected.

Treasurer's report: Larry reported that the organization has generated about \$50 K in funds. He will send out actual numbers. The funds for the support of the Albino Group has been paid. There is a balance in the FON account of about \$43,000. With the change in banks the \$6K that was in a CD is now in a money market account. This is the rainy day fund from the original FON. It was requested that the board get a really good report on what funds were received, what is earmarked. It was requested that we receive a treasurer's report prior to the meetings.

Larry noted that he had sent a report a week or two before the meeting (February 1, 2018). There is about \$18,000 in uncommitted funds. There were no instructions on how the \$10,000 donation was to be divided except between the Dosso (Potentiel Terre) project and the Moringa project. Of that \$18,000, \$4,000 is from PayPal and gets sent to FON in \$500 portions.

Projects:

- Potentiel Terre: From Tom Dechert's report to the board: Potentiel Terre has made an impressive start to their project. It has been clear for some time from their photos and receipts that they were likely to run out of money. Last week we received a proposal from them to augment our financial input to the project. Given that FON had just received more than \$5,000 dedicated to the Potentiel Terre project, and given that their proposal makes sense in terms of what they need to do to make their training center more comfortable and functional, we are recommending immediate approval of the proposal

**Board Action Requested:** The Board is asked to approve funding for Potentiel Terre to improve, enhance and add materials to their training center in Dosso. The Board is

asked to approve funding of 1,211,000 CFA (approx. \$2,422) which should come from funds recently received dedicated to the Potentiel Terre project.

This funding request was approved. Meredith noted that the project looks pretty rudimentary and would like to see it set up as self-sustaining. She asked Tom D to nudge them along in this direction.

- Solar Lighting of Health Clinic: John H, Tom C and Larry each gave \$800 to install solar lights for health clinic in Niger. They have received receipts for the work and have pictures. They would like to provide a report for the CEX. This was a project financed by the 3 individuals and the board was not consulted nor were FON funds used. They did request the Board's approval to consider this a FON project so they could claim the contribution on their income tax. The Board, after the last meeting approved the project as a FON pass through project.

Meredith thought that any project done in FON's name should be reviewed by the projects committee. Tom D thought there should be basic standards any project should meet and offered to draft them. It will be circulated to the board.

The New African Development University in Niger: We then had a presentation from Meredith Segal on this initiative. She described the organization, funding and progress so far. The University is now dependent on financial support but hope to become self-sustaining. They are looking for help in spreading the word. They need financial help, visiting faculty and help in identifying talent. This is a U.S. based foundation. Ms. Segal can be contacted at Meredith@ad.org.

We returned to Projects: again from Tom Dechert's report

## **BFR**

**Board Action Requested:** The Board is being asked to approve funding for the proposal to rent a training workshop area for 6 months. At the end of 6 months, rental for the workshop will be self-sustaining using fees from the trainees. The Board is being asked to approve funding of 540,000 CFA (approximately \$1,080).

The second proposal is asking for the purchase of 30 sewing machines for training and production purposes. Poor women with little means of support will be trained to sew as a means of learning to provide their own support. **Board Action Requested:** The Board is asked to fund the proposal for the purchase of 30 sewing machines for the training center. The funding will be broken into two tranches – 15 machines now, and 15 more machines by the first of May, depending on successful Dropbox reports from the project. In addition the May payment will include salary for an accountant who will work setting up the project, the business plan, and the accounts for the sewing microenterprise development corporation. It has been agreed with Lightbowns that FON is to use part of their \$5,000 donation to pay for the second tranche. The Board is being asked to approve funding at this time of 900,000 CFA (approx. \$1,800) out of FON general funds. The Board is also asked to approve funding of 1,050,000 CFA (approx. \$2,100) before May 1, using the Lightbown donated funds. Tom Dechert will inform the Treasurer when the second tranche should be paid.

**The Board unanimously approved the above.**

A third proposal is pending progress on the first two. Those women who do well in the training will be allowed to purchase a sewing machine on credit – essentially a microcredit setup with the addition of business training for those who have the greatest potential. The Lightbowns are requesting a business plan from BFR as part of the proposal, and that seems reasonable to expect in this situation. It is expected that the third proposal will run over 2 years, with small amounts of funding every 6 months for replacement sewing machines and accounting services. It is also assumed that the Lightbowns will agree to pay at least half of this third proposal.

Moringa Project: John H provided an update from Moustapha Harou. While a lot of progress has been made there is a problem with the lack of water. There is also a question of who should be studying the issue to see if there can be water available: Niger resources, Himma or Expats? The project committee believes we are at a decision point and need to determine the best means for delivering the water before going forward.

Prior to the meeting Tom D provided a proposal as to how he could get the aquifer study done (see 2/11/18 email which can be included in minutes.) Before proceeding we need to have a better handle on what is in the ground. He laid out a number of requirements he had to be able to conduct the study.

Meredith thought it would be good to have some FON eyes on the ground. She has hope that the Moringa project will really work and leans toward sending Tom D. Getting the testing equipment through customs will be a big expense. Tom D was under the impression that the equipment was not available in Maradi. Tom C proposed sending Tom D and using some of the \$10,000 for the project and Potentiel Terre to fund the study. Yari said he could reach out to the government agent in charge and put Tom D in contact with him. Larry said we should be looking to what kind of system works, possibly solar pumps. Tom D said that would be expensive and proposed oxcarts (but my note says Tom C).

Meredith said she was hesitant to put more money in the project until we have answers. Tom D will follow up with Yari about getting equipment through customs. He will not go without government support. Tom D and Yari will look into this and get back to the board in the next couple of weeks.

Tom C proposed a contingent resolution that the board should authorize \$3 to 5 thousand for the study, but the funds would not be spent before the board receives the report. The resolution was unanimously approved.

On February 12 Tom D sent an email to the Board saying he will no longer work on Moringa projects in the Kornaka area as he did not receive the support he needs.

Aid for Double Amputee: Prior to the meeting Yari sent a photo of a young high school student who lost his two (2) lower arms due to an accident in 2016. They need help to purchase 2 prostheses for his arms. The family reached out to a prostheses maker in Kano Nigeria, and the total cost is: \$2,400 (1.200.000 FCFA). FON does not support projects for individual. Board members had given Yari some ideas for raising the funds. This is the kind of project that FON could publicize and help in the raising of money.

Nominating Committee: Amy, John B and Penni formed a nominating committee for the upcoming elections. A request for nominations is to be included in the Spring newsletter. The committee thought the first step should be to poll current board members about their willingness to continue. Penni, the recording secretary is retiring. We do not know about Tom C as we had not reached him before the call and he lost his connection at this point in time. All other board members are willing to remain on the board.

Amy has expressed some interest in serving as chair. Meredith is willing and interested in working on the newsletter.

The nominating committee thought it would be good to review the bylaws. Meredith asked if it could be done before Penni leaves the board. It is not clear that it can, but Penni is willing to continue with the committee on the bylaws after she leaves the board.

Newsletter: John B said the Spring newsletter would be in the Mail Chimp format. Meredith said she would work with John B on this. In addition to articles on the projects there will be a solicitation for board members.

CONUSA: The shipment of medical supplies arrived in Niamey and was well appreciated. CONUSA, Douma and Yari, thanked FON for its help. They will write up something for the newsletter and are happy to be part of the board.

Other business: Meredith will follow up on African Develop University to learn more and how we might partner with them.

**The next board meeting will be April 22, 2018 at 7 pm EDT.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm, EST.

Respectfully submitted,

Penni St. Hilaire

Recording secretary

Approved by the Board April 22, 2018

Addendum to the minutes:

On March 29, 2018 Amy Wilson made the following motion based on the projects committee recommendation:

It is moved that Friends of Niger provide the amount of 1,344,440 CFA to OURZP of Tchintabaraden, Tahoua, Niger, through the person of Sabit AHMED, Coordinator of OURZP, to fund a portion of the construction costs of digging a well in the village of Chintighismen. The well will provide water for needy women and their milk goats who are associated with the "Milk Goats Projects" that FON has supported over the last 2 years.

On March 30, 2018 Meredith reported that the motion passed.