

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
FRIENDS OF NIGER
BY SKYPE
SEPTEMBER 17, 2017**

Present: Meredith McGehee, Tom Corcoran, Larry Koff, John Baird, Steve Bushell, John Hutchison, Amy Wilson, Seybou Douma and Penni St. Hilaire (whose speaker was not working but could hear.)

Ex-Officio: Tom Dechert

Absent: Yari Rabiou

Treasurer's report: Larry reported that FON has \$13,000 in the checking account, plus the \$6,000 that is held in a money market account. There are no ongoing liabilities. We have been getting about \$500 a month from PayPal, but there is only about \$300 left in the PayPal account. Amy asked how much we can anticipate from a year end appeal. We received about \$25,000 last year, \$10,000 was one anonymous donation. We don't know if the large donation will be repeated. Meredith requested that people get back to her about the end of year appeal.

Membership: About 200 people have made donations in the last 2 years. John B has 762 contacts.

The minutes of the June 25, 2017 Board meeting were unanimously approved.

CONUSA: Seybou Douma reported that he became president of CONUSA in May. He came to the Niger Embassy's August 3rd Independence Day celebration and also participated in a forum on immigration legislation in Harrisburg. He is looking forward to working with FON and said to call him Douma. He lives in the Bronx and is a CVS store manager. He has been in the US since 1997. He is from Ayarou but grew up in towns all across the country as his father was a Sous-Prefet.

Newsletter: John B said he would be willing to pull together articles if Anna Falkovitch would be willing to do the mailing. It is important to get the newsletter out. Meredith and John B were to talk and John B would contact Anna. John B has at least 648 good email addresses.

Projects: Tom D said that FON has been requested to provide \$2000 to CONUSA for a shipment of \$20,000 worth of medical equipment. The total cost of the shipment is \$9,000 of which FON is contributing \$2,000. Meredith said FON should get confirmation that the materials arrive and their disposition. Tom D said he will send the information for the check to Larry. It was unanimously approved to provide the \$2,000 to CONUSA. Douma said he would report back.

Potentiel Terre in Dosso, is proposing to provide home skills training for rural girls and young women. They are asking for \$2,300 to train 55 women. John H met with project on his recent trip. The \$2,300 was unanimously approved. Tom D will send information to Larry on funding.

Meredith thanked Tom D for his thoroughness on the projects.

Tom C calculated that at the start of the meeting we had \$13,000 and voted to send \$2,000 to CONUSA and \$2,300 to Potentiel Terre which leaves \$8,700 in the checking account.

John H's trip report: John noted that Moustapha Harou is taking on a lot expense with the Moringa Project and we may need to do something as we take on more and more projects. John H did not meet with the Bagalam project. The Tchén Tabaraden project for deep water wells is very expensive. Rotary Niger is interested in the Tin Hinan project.

Niger Independence Day, August 3: Meredith noted that John H was like a rock star with the group. She was pleased to represent FON for the Embassy's impressive celebration of Independence with the panel discussion and the reception at the Willard Hotel.

John H, representing Partners for World Health visited the hospital in Filingue which is in terrible shape. He is hoping that the hospital can work with Partners to improve the hospital.

John H also visited projects of Pencils for Kids, Eliminate Poverty and the Future Farmers of Africa in Libore

There was a general discussion of the Moringa projects. Tom D noted that the Board would like a written evaluation of Moringa projects. Related to the question of moving ahead there was concern that we may not have the ability to maintain the financial stream; that we do not want people to be too dependent on FON and FON should not be too extended.

Tom D said he will put something together for the new appeal. We can move forward without providing a commitment beyond our means. The yearend appeal should include Moringa and have good with photos, especially those including John H.

Meredith will talk with Jackie. Part of Meredith's goal in fundraising is to increase membership (paying members not just contacts.) Members are not being replenished.

Fundraising: Tom C: He met with a Rotary leader in Wilmington, DE. Their minimum grant is \$30,000 and they are very excited about the Moringa project, working in one of the poorest countries and women's empowerment.

Tom C said that with the \$4,000 per village cost that John H. developed after his trip to Niger, we scale down our request to 20 villages x \$4,000 each for a total of \$80,000. FON could apply for a \$80,000 grant in the 18/19 budget year. We would need an application in early 2018 for approval in July of 2018. This will take a lot of work. Rotary helps with applications. Tom C would like permission to proceed. Meredith was positive. Tom C said the project committee would be involved in the application.

Amy has been actively involved with the Rotary. Do we need anything to qualify? Tom C said being a 501C3 qualifies us. The global Rotary foundation has \$1 billion. Larry saw no downside. Tom D said we have to think how we will manage an \$80,000 project on the ground, paying someone for the follow-up. The grant would need to have administrative and accounting support. Tom C said he would check to see whether we can have help on the ground and include administrative support. Meredith and Amy discussed that this is a big project going from simple projects with PCV's. It could need almost have a full time person managing it. We could be getting ahead of ourselves. Tom C thinks this is a valid concern.

John B hears back from 40 to 80 people on his contact list. He thinks he could work with contacts and members and maybe we could grow one person at a time. Meredith agreed that we really need to reach out. How can we do a better job of engaging our contacts. Amy said she was happy to work with John B on this issue. Would like to ask people what they are looking to get out of FON. Steve suggested using Google Group or the Facebook page to have dues paying members to connect. It is nice to have a place to find people where they can get together. Information would include service years, location, projects. Amy and John B will work together on how we can connect and report back to the board.

Ann Sulkovsky had proposed doing a strategic plan for FON. Meredith said she did not think this is the time to go down this path. Amy said her goal is to do a survey and have more internal discussion.

Succession planning: Meredith said she would stay on as President through the end of the year and we would have more discussion in January. Need member outreach, need to recruit. There are lots of good things going on and we/she wants to keep the momentum going.

Meredith reported that the young Nigerien woman who had lived with Meredith and her family had won an Amigo Scholarship to the University of New Mexico.

The next meeting will be December 3, 2017 at 7 pm EST.

The meeting adjourned at 10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Penni St. Hilaire
Recording Secretary
11/12/2017

revised 11/18/2017
Approved by the board 12/10/2017