# **Minutes of the Center for Communal Studies Advisory Board Retreat**

**May 14, 2014 – 10 AM - 2 PM**

## USI Center Office – LA2009

**Members Present:** Dr. Casey Harison, Dr. Jason Hardgrave, Dean Michael Aakhus, Ms. Wendy Bredhold, Ms. Jennifer Greene, Ms. Marna Hostetler, Dr. Silvia Rode, and Ms. Connie Weinzapfel

**Members Absent:** Dr. Don Janzen, Dr. Jane Johansen, Dr. Susan Matarese, Dr. Don Pitzer, and Ms. Rachel Wright-Summerton

**Guests Present:** Dr. Carol Medlicott, and Ms. Leslie Townsend

**Administrative Assistant:** Ms. Marilyn Thielman

1. **Greeting**

Director Casey Harison greeted Center Board of Advisors members and indicated the regrets of members who were unable to attend today’s meeting due to conflicting activities. Harison then introduced and welcomed Ms. Marna Hostetler, the Center’s newest Ex-Officio member. Hostetler is Director of USI’s David L. Rice Library.

Harison referred members to the handouts packet at each person’s place, including a copy of the Center’s brochure and the flyer concerning the Center’s upcoming conference in New Harmony in early November. He explained that the main purpose of today’s four-hour Board retreat was to develop for the Center a draft of by-laws as well as mission and vision statements, with the help of facilitator Leslie Townsend, Director of Historic Southern Indiana. The Board could then consider and vote on the draft at their fall Board of Advisors meeting.

1. **Nomination of Carol Medlicott to Board of Advisors**

A copy of Don Pitzer’s nomination of Carol Medlicott to the Center Board was read by Harison (copy attached). Harison reminded members of Medlicott’s public lecture at USI for the Center prior to the Center’s Board meeting last November. Harison then directed members’ attention to Medlicott’s CV in their packet. He also added that he feels that she has outstanding qualities as a person who should also contribute much as a member of the Center Board.

***Silvia Rode seconded Don Pitzer’s nomination of Carol Medlicott to the Center Board of Advisors, and all were in favor.***

Harison then left for a few minutes to bring Medlicott from his office upstairs to the Center office for the balance of the meeting. Upon return, he introduced and welcomed Medlicott to the Board and asked members to introduce themselves as well.

1. **Approval of Minutes from Fall 2013 Board Meeting**

Harison asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes from the November 11, 2013 Board meeting.

There being none, Jennifer Greene moved that the minutes be accepted. The motion was seconded by Marna Hostetler, and all were in favor.

1. **Center Annual Report**

Since Leslie Townsend was scheduled to arrive at the meeting around 10:30 AM and the Center’s business meeting was moving ahead of schedule, Harison proceeded to item 6 on the Board agenda, the Center’s Annual Report. He reviewed some of the various items listed on his report and solicited members’ comments. Some discussion points included the following:

Harison indicated that the New Harmony Conference in early November is still a priority. Connie Weinzapfel requested information concerning the three keynote speakers so that she can garner the interest of others in New Harmony; she feels there are residents who would be interested in attending. Harison will send information to Weinzapfel concerning bios of the speakers and titles of their presentations, copying Wendy Bredhold with that information, as requested, as well. Bredhold is working on a planned writers’ workshop. Flyers could be put up around New Harmony. Of the most interest to the general public, Harison explained, would probably be speaker Joyce Appleby. May 26 is the current deadline for submission of proposals, but Harison plans to extend that deadline through the end of July.

The New Harmony Conference Program Committee met last week along with Catherine Cotrupi, Community Engagement Manager, Historic New Harmony. Information is listed on the Communal Studies website. Plans include starting to put together the program in late August or early September. Harison has been publicizing the conference widely, having contacted 60 colleges and various organizations, mostly through emails. He plans to send out a second batch of emails concerning the July extension deadline. It was suggested that Harison also contact Chris Rivera with USI’s International Studies to see if he might suggest some other contacts.

Other facts given by Harison concerning the Conference included:

* He would be pleased with a small conference of some 50 to 100 attendees.
* He hopes to have a panel representing Communal Studies Association as part of the program.
* He has been in contact with Cambridge scholars out of England.
* He also made some contacts in Scotland on a recent trip there.
* Program Committee members will be able to access all of the proposals that will be put on USI’s Blackboard. Jennifer Greene suggested making that available to Center Board members as well.
* Because of the time that will be spent on planning and producing this conference, the Center will have no fall lecture this year.

Harison also reviewed the help that both the Center and the Archives received from student worker Amber Brough during the spring semester, funded by the Provost’s Office. Materials were transferred from the Center to the Archives as part of a resource reorganization project. Amber also devoted time to reorganizing the Center’s books and journal collections.

Concerning the Center Paper Prizes, Harison reported having received only one undergraduate paper submission while receiving five graduate papers. New Board member Medlicott explained that she had not seen any announcement concerning the prizes. Harison will add Medlicott to the mailing list for the future. He further stated that the Center probably needs to have a newsletter with a distribution list, which would also be a way to publicize matters including the upcoming conference.

At this point, facilitator Leslie Townsend came into the Center. Harison introduced her and had members introduce themselves to Townsend.

1. **By-laws: Facilitation by Leslie Townsend**

Townsend directed members’ attention to her separate agenda in their packet. She began by explaining the Ground Rules, which included not using “killer phrases.” An example of a killer phrase is: “We tried that before, and it didn’t work!” This was her way of encouraging members to keep an open mind throughout all of the discussions during today’s retreat.

Revising her agenda a bit, Townsend said that the discussion before lunch would focus on the Center By-Laws; then, it would continue after lunch concerning Mission and Vision Statements.

Townsend asked members to review their handout concerning the By-Laws of the Communal Studies Association (CSA) and the draft of the by-laws from the Center’s By-Laws Committee headed by Jane Johansen. She said that generally by-laws should include the following: name of group, dues, meetings, how decisions are made, membership, and organizational structure. She then asked members to review Johansen’s draft and give their comments as she explored certain areas that needed some decisions to be made. Some of the areas reviewed and the discussions that followed are listed below:

A.) *Director of the Center* – The language states that the Director is the “permanent

Chair” at meetings of the Advisory Board. The point was made that this is an advisory, not a governing, board. LA Dean Michael Aakhus stated that the funding for this position is currently through the History Department, and he would like to make sure that it stays that way. Historically, that has been true as well. Those who responded seemed to agree with Aakhus. The Director is an academic appointment. Currently, curriculum has been built around the History Department, and we were fortunate to have Harison fill that vacancy as Director. It could be recommended to the Provost that the position of Director continue to be filled through the History Department.

B.) *Membership* – Concerning how many members are on the Board, apparently that number has never been listed. Townsend suggested consideration should be given to a number that is manageable. Early on, a range of 10 to 12 was suggested. Later that number seemed to have been changed to: “No less than 8, but with no upper limit.”

The importance of not having *only in-house persons* was stressed, as well as having representation from New Harmony; but, perhaps not locking ourselves into that would be advisable. Having representation by a communitarian or an associate interested in communal studies was also viewed as important. The consensus of members seemed to be to include diversity, but don’t get locked in. All agreed that there needs to be flexibility concerning the makeup of the Board.

C.) *Term* – Generally speaking, members seem to have had four-year terms and have then been re-nominated when their end-of-term time comes up. That may be sufficient. Simply determine whose term ending is approaching and then re-nominate those persons. A good example of someone who has been a long-time member of the Board is Rachel Wright-Summerton. Had a limit of number of years of service been set earlier, we would have lost a true communitarian who has been a very important member of the Board. Length of service would not have to be spelled out, it was agreed. Staggering the term ends is relatively important, also.

D.) *Permanent Seating on the Board* – This was also discussed. Jennifer Greene stated that the Archives Librarian (aka Special Collections person) should have a permanent seat. Harison stressed the importance of having the Director and Special Collections person as permanent voting members. The Ex-Officio term was also discussed. Aakhus said that usually ex-officio members on a board are non-voting members; they are not like the Director and Special Collections person who have a real stake in that organization. He further stated that a provost and dean are usually ex-officio members. Further discussion revealed that there might actually be three categories of membership: permanent, ex-officio, and rotating. The Center’s current ex-officio members are the dean, chair of history department, and library director.

E.) *Voting* – Perhaps a list of voting members should be included in this section. As far as a quorum is concerned, it might be considered to be the majority of “participating” members since members can be considered as attending the meeting if they do participate even by means of Skype.

F.) *Meetings* – Board meetings are held twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. The roles of the Director and the Administrative Assistant were discussed. The Director chairs the meeting, and the Administrative Assistant takes the minutes. The Director approves those minutes. Traditionally, Jane Johansen has served as the secretary of the group, who sees the first draft of the minutes before it is passed on to the Director for final approval of the draft. The draft is then approved at the next Board meeting. This role of the secretary was viewed as an internal thing; there would be no need to create a “Secretary” position on the Board. Any member could speak with the Director concerning the necessity of a “special meeting.” The feeling was that this should not be specified in the by-laws either.

Harison questioned whether there should be anything specified concerning the Center’s budget. Townsend shared that her understanding is that the Advisory Board has nothing to do with budget figures. Since the Director does an Annual Report each year, which lists the annual budget figure and the to-date expenditures, that was deemed all that is necessary. Harison explained that the Annual Report handout is actually a draft; the final version must be submitted to the dean and history chair by the end of May.

The use of Robert’s Rules of Order could be included in the same section as that which lists the Meetings rather than in a different section, members agreed.

G.) *Organizational Structure* – This seemed to have been covered sufficiently in the above section concerning meetings. To compare the Center Board with the CSA, a national organization, would not appear appropriate since the CSA is involved in many things that do not pertain to the Center Board. It was agreed that “simpler is better” concerning the Center’s By-Laws. However, newest Board member Carol Medlicott, who is also very involved within the CSA organization, suggested taking a look at CSA’s Article X, Sections 2, 3, and 4. The Center’s By-Laws may need to simply alter the language found there but indicate something about amending these proposed By-Laws. Also, she suggested that there could be some kind of blanket statement about the duties of Director including “outreach” to others. It could be included in the Center’s Mission Statement, but specified as part of the Director’s duties.

**NOTE:** **At this point, participants took their lunch buffet break. Townsend said the meeting would resume after lunch with discussions concerning Mission and Vision Statements.**

1. **Mission Statement: Facilitation by Leslie Townsend**

Townsend began by saying that members need to consider exactly who we are as a group, which includes our reason for being, intentions, and values. She said that we need to stay focused on the things that are important to us in coming up with a mission statement.

The group reviewed wording on the Center’s website and in our brochure, and then individuals talked about what they liked and/or felt was not necessary to state or perhaps sent a wrong message to those wondering exactly what the Center is. The goal was to keep the mission statement fairly concise, indicating the Center’s real purpose for being. Discussion revolved around terms such as promoting the study of intentional communities, environmental concerns, cultural sustainability issues, public understanding, scholarships, and outreach. Ultimately, this is the Mission Statement agreed upon:

**“The Center for Communal Studies encourages and facilitates scholarship and public understanding of communal groups, intentional communities, and utopias, past and present, here and abroad.”**

1. **Vision Statement: Facilitation by Leslie Townsend**

Townsend encouraged members to envision what the Center for Communal Studies will be in the future.

Discussion centered around what both the Center and the Archives have to offer right now. The Center can be researched for big ideas, and the Archives has a great amount of resource materials. Discussion centered around cultivating recognition and also an appreciation of human interaction and understanding. Ultimately, this is the Vision Statement agreed upon:

**“To cultivate an understanding of the utopian impulse and its potential to encourage the human experience.”**

1. **SWOT Analysis: Facilitation by Leslie Townsend**

Townsend asked members to offer their thoughts concerning the Center’s **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. These are some of the words and phrases that were produced:

*Strengths*

Promoting collections

History and relationship with others

Relationship and proximity to Historic New Harmony

University support from USI – physical space and funding

Time to do outreach

Directorship

Lecture series

Paper Prizes and Research Travel Grant

Fascinating subject material

*Weaknesses*

Availability of funds and opportunities

Wish there were more people knocking at the door

Focus on scholarship and research and understanding (two different things)

Awareness of the Center itself and what it does

Many people on campus aren’t aware that there is a Center for Communal Studies

Students think it’s all about “hippies”

No time and energy to promote the Center

*Weaknesses* (Cont.)

Staff time limitations

How do we generate “buzz”?

Curriculum

*Opportunities*

Curriculum and teachers

Religion (there’s interest for that)

Disciplinary tools

Get the Center into USI’s press machine (media)

Make it a point to talk about the Center in the classroom

Conferences and presentations

Facebook is definitely a good thing

Get a student who is interested

Newsletter and publications

Book award

Best chapter competition – generating something for their scrapbook

There is a lot of crossover

Honor students/Phi Alpha Theta

Have an open house with exhibit, promoted by Wendy Bredhold

A display case is in an open area around USI’s Outreach and Engagement

Center could be a part of the “First Year Experience”

Casey Harison has a power point presentation that could run over and over

*Threats*

Funding

Human resources

History Masters would be ideal

Space – Archives is running out of space

Create a network where people could go to

Electronics committee

Concept of community

Townsend remarked that a weakness could also be an opportunity (*more internal*) whereas a threat could be external. You can have control over a weakness, but you may not have control over a threat.

Other discussion included:

* People need to understand that the Center is something that is current to today rather than just past history.
* Housing for foreign scholars can be a problem as well as transportation to and from places.
* There are existing buildings which could house people; they just need to be maintained. They could become apartments where persons could be rotated in and out.

1. **Next Steps: Facilitation by Leslie Townsend**

Townsend will transcribe the notes listed on her flip chart sheets concerning the By-Laws and Mission and Vision Statements and get them back to Director Harison and Administrative Assistant Marilyn Thielman. The staff will disseminate the notes. She sees this as a guiding document for the next meeting in the fall. After that, the group can come up with goals for the next 2 to 3 years. Members can be thinking about the SWOT over the next couple of years as well. Townsend proclaimed that with a little bit of work, these can help move the Center for Communal Studies forward.

**NOTE: At this point, Townsend thanked Board members for their participation and said this concluded her facilitation. Harison and all members applauded their appreciation of Townsend.**

**Harison then resumed the Spring Center Board of Advisors business meeting:**

1. **Other Items and Announcements**

Harison will soon announce the recipient of the Center’s 2014 Research Travel Grant of $2,000. In advance he thanked judges Jennifer Greene and Silvia Rode.

It is extremely important, Harison feels, to secure funds for the Center to improve its research resources and enhance its options for scholarship and outreach. Jennifer Greene has also been researching writing grants for faculty.

Greene then reviewed some of her projects concerning Collection development in the Archives. Her report is included in Harison’s updated Annual Report, which will be included with these minutes.

Harison said that most meetings don’t last this long, but he feels that this has been a real productive session.

The New Harmony Conference will really dominate fall activities for Harison. He has had some real hang-ups in getting the website going. Right now there is still no on-line registrations. He will also continue to work with the Program Committee regarding the submitted proposals.

Green reported that Don Janzen will continue to be a member of the Board. Greene says that Janzen may go back to Arkansas for more Shiloh materials. Green now has 22 boxes from Janzen, and she understands there may be some 50 others forthcoming. Right now she only has photos from the 30s, 40s, and 50s.

Greene reported having one student write at least one blog on a communal group. She also mentioned USI’s “Throw-Back Thursday” (TBT) where persons post old pictures of themselves. Her thought is perhaps pulling out old photos of communal groups to display. She thinks it might be better to display pictures over in the Liberal Arts Building rather than in the Library. At the Library she needs to know in advance when we might want to display something.

Harison plans to add an addendum to his Annual Report, which will list the Board Advisor presentations, papers/publications, and projects related to Communal Studies.

Harison thanked Board members for their attendance and input. The meeting adjourned around 4 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Thielman, Administrative Assistant