

September 9, 2020
South End Rowing Club
Board Meeting Minutes

Note: This meeting was conducted via Zoom because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Roll Call

Member	Present		Member	Present
S. Dominguez	X		A. Calder	X
F. Hegeler	X		B. O'Malley	X
J. Sale	X		J.C. O Campo	X
B. Ip	X		A. Ramelmeier	X
M. Montgomery	X		B.J. Jaurique	X
M. Riley	X		K. Whalen	
S. Greva	X		V. Cornwell	
B. Wygant	X		S. Blew	X
T. Wurm	X			
G. Lazaneo	X		S. Wintersteen	X

Approval of Minutes

The August minutes were approved (14 – 0 – 0).

President's Remarks

Simon begin the meeting by noting that we are living in strange times with COVID, the upcoming elections, wildfires and heated arguments on the Google Groups. He urged everybody to stay cool and to put the Club's best interests first and assume that your fellow members are doing the same.

He acknowledged the pent up frustration directed at the Board over the BLM flag. But Simon reminded people that a lot of time has spent thinking and discussing the flag even if its not evident to the membership. Simon warned all 84 people present at the meeting that it was likely nobody was going to get everything they want but that this is the nature of compromise. In the end, we have to do what's best for the Club.

Members Moment

Cy Lo thanked the Board for its service during these tough times. He urged that the BLM flag be flown. He noted it would only require a small effort. That the flag is just the beginning. That the flag isn't communist. Not flying the flag means not healing ourselves. He read a letter from Ellen Campbell in support of flying the flag.

Maryam Sharifzadeh described coming to the club and falling in love with it, wanting to embrace everybody. She noted that she is first generation Iranian-American and she understands how difficult it can be to be an outsider. That women haven't always had it this easy at the Club. That it wasn't this hard for queer people to be accepted. None of this should be threatening to the SFPD.

Deborah Aghib expressed her agreement with the previous speakers and that she wants the BLM flag to be flown. She noted that a beach begins with the first grain of sand and that the BLM flag is a first grain of sand. She's a first generation American. She's been searched, stopped and asked about bombs. Her father is a Holocaust survivor. As a North African Jew, she knows that we must fight racism; that we can't be a bystander to racism. The Club has a powerful voice and its morally incumbent that we take a position.

David Kimball noted that in our country, justice is meted out on a sliding scale. How we treat each other is the acid test of our character. For many of us, the Club is our community and family. A moment of truth is upon us. David also noted that law enforcement is an honorable profession and that we have many officers who are members in good standing. He urged the flying of a symbolic flag not tied to any organization during Black History month.

Manish Sharma described himself as a new immigrant to our country. Manish has traveled widely and said we are the least racist country he has experienced ... yet here we are struggling with it. He said he joined the Club to hangout, exercise and meet people and not to talk about politics. He been on ride-alongs with cops and noted that its

very stressful. He reminded us that our charter is to be a sports club and expressed opposition to flying the BLM flag.

Imani Brown has been a member since 2018. She received poor treatment at the Club until her wife sent out an email detailing the mistreatment. She's been deeply offended by the recent discussions on the Google Group. There should be no debate about flying the BLM flag. It's a symbol that her life has value. The recent discussions have made her cry again. She asked when the Club would live up to her devotion?

Will Benjamin thanked Imani for her powerful remarks. Will explained that BLM is both an organization and a movement. We need gestures that say something needs to be done.

Joanne Sakai said "yes" to the flag. Her father was born in the US and after Pearl Harbor tried to enlist in the Navy. He was rejected because of his Japanese heritage. She said it's not possible to understand discrimination unless you've experienced it.

Allan Levin said that the flag is super important. The fact that we're even discussing it reflects poorly on us.

Jennifer Greene said the flag should be flown in perpetuity. She said that police brutality is real even if the police that we know are nice. We must listen to the people around us and end up on the right side of history. Flying the flag is a step in the right direction.

Sarah Mehl noted that we shouldn't even be debating the flag. There wasn't pushback for pride. She noted that pride was and always has been fundamentally an anti-police movement. She invoked the Stonewall Riots. She thinks that we only let her fly the pride flag because of the way she looked.

David Schreiberman noted that you can't face tyranny with silence. We need to raise the flag against tyranny.

Scarlet Nerad was happy when Pod 5 put out the call. She thanked everybody. We as a Club need to focus on inclusion.

Jessica Gammell said we should fly the BLM flag. That it will make a statement that the SE condemns racism. She noted that our sports are about individual liberation but that BLM is about collective liberation. We're being called to act.

Kim Hooper said to raise the flag because it's the right thing to do.

Dylan Tweney noted that race is out of sight at the Club. He has no idea who our first black member was. He asked our Club historians and they didn't know either. He said we should fly the flag because it means that we're committed to change.

Donal O'Sullivan is Irish. People have spoken about their pain. He suggested that we look at the 12 step programs which are focused on renewal and recovery and stay away from politics. These programs don't allow one group to force anything on another group. He suggested that the Club engage a neutral 3rd party.

A. Allan Calder as Rowing Commissiner

Simon explained that Jerry Purmal is unable to complete his term as rowing commissioner because of the COVID virus. He thanked Jerry for his service this year and announced that Allan Calder has agreed to finish Jerry's term. The Board approved (7 – 0 – 0) Allan's appointment.

B. Anti-Racism Committee Update

Dominica shared a slide deck that summarized the work of the committee. The presentation was broken into three areas: background, the survey and recommendations. The slide deck can be found here:

<http://serc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/AREC-Recommendations.pdf>

The Board thanked Dominca for the clear and well organized presentation and look forward to the committee's next steps.

C. BLM Flag at SERC

Simon shared a slide deck that summarizes the recently completed survey that focused on flying the BLM flag:

<http://serc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BLM-Flag-Survey-Results.pdf>

Before making his motion, George noted that the Board trusts the membership and that the membership needs to trust the Board. That we are always acting in the best interest of the Club. George noted that he was greeted with open arms when he joined the Club but that his Asian wife didn't receive the same warm welcome. He noted that the BLM flag is a lightning rod. He urged people to listen carefully and be supportive of each other.

George made a motion: Shall the South End Rowing Club purchase a BLM social justice flag (white font on black field - not affiliated with the Black Lives Matter Global Network) to fly on the club flagpole from sunset, Friday September 18 to sunset September 25.

George's motion resulted in significant debate. It's a cop out; the opinions of black people matter more than white peoples; fly it more than a week; put BLM on the web site; put something at the front door; we need diversity training; the flag is polarizing; maybe we should put up another flag pole for these kinds of flags; the Club's flag pole is special and we should be cautious about what we fly; the Google Groups are upsetting; there is a lot of shaming going on; no room for compromise; this is a white people's problem; be kind to each other; have an election and let the membership decide; I believe in democracy; we need to be more accommodating; a majority of the people taking the survey were in favor of flying the flag; don't compromise on racism; BLM is a rallying cry; people have been restrained

Prior to the vote, George (the maker of the motion) asked “who was our first Black member? How do we celebrate them?”

The motion passed (13 – 3 – 0).

Before the discussion, Josh offered a substitute motion that was seconded. However due to misunderstanding of parliamentary procedure by the chair, it was never voted on. Generally the motion would have flown a flag that condemns racism but with no connection to any organization, placed a plaque at the front door, required diversity training for Board members and created an on boarding process for new members. Even without a vote, it was clear that the substitute motion didn’t enjoy majority support.

Suzanne then offered a motion requiring:

- A statement at the front door declaring that black lives matter, that the Club is welcoming to all and that is in line with our Eligibility language.
- An addition to the Club’s website declaring our support for BLM.
- Diversity training during each Board member’s term in office.

The motion passed (16 – 0 – 0).

D. Reopening Committee Update

Fran begin her report by wishing Van good luck on his upcoming English Channel swim.

She then reminded the group that our reopening is tied to City policies and that we’re currently reopened under an outdoor sports rental exemption. That we’re currently limited to 5 people in the Club house at a time. This has allowed rowers to get back on the water and for swimmers to escape Aquatic Park via the revived sunriser program (10 to date).

Going forward the plan is to allow more rowers in the Club at a time, figure out how to get both rowers and swimmers into the Club and figure out how to swim through the winter months. Handball and the gym await reduced restrictions from the City.

Fran also singled out George for the amazing work he's getting done and doing himself to improve the Club house.

E. Treasurer's Report

This item was skipped.

F. Transfer From Special Fund

Susan described the Club's current cash position and her forecast of expenses thru yearend. We can only pay our current and forecast expenses with a transfer from the Special Fund. She offered two motions:

Authorize the Treasurer to transfer \$121,000 from the Special Fund to the General Fund to cover expenses for the balance of 2020. Per the by laws, such a transfer must be approved by two-thirds of all officers present at the Board meeting.

Direct the Treasurer to transfer any residual funds from the September 9, 2020 transfer back into the General Fund no later than January 31, 2021. For the purpose of this motion, residual will mean funds not spent or offset by income (excluding 2021 dues and locker payments). This transfer is approved by a simple majority vote of all officers present at the Board meeting.

Both motions passed with unanimous votes (16 – 0 – 0).

G. Membership Report

Andy reported seven new members last month. He also mentioned the ongoing pain associated with keeping the Club's various membership related databases in sync.

H. Trial Volunteer Steward Program

George reminded the Board of the tremendous amount of work that's been done over the last 60 days even though he's been largely deprived of volunteers. He asked for Board authorization to let select members into the Club to perform specific maintenance tasks (e.g., deep cleaning). This wouldn't interfere with the rowing/piloting access to the Club. The Board approved (16 – 0 – 0) this request.

I. Increase in Initiation Fee

Josh reminded the Board of last month's votes on a proposal to increase the Club's initiation fee. He then noted that subsequent to the August meeting, Joe Butler reviewed the minutes of the November 2018 vote to increase the initiation fee. Joe noticed that the November vote hadn't received the requisite 2/3 majority (it received 9 favorable votes whereas 9.3 was required).

Josh indicated that he was aware of the 2/3 requirement at the time but did the math wrong in his head and apologized for the error.

Josh then clarified that there is currently no pending change in the Club's initiation fee.