

November 12, 2020

South End Rowing Club

Membership Meeting Minutes

Roll call:

Approximately 100 members attended the virtual meeting.

Note

Some members had difficulty accessing the Zoom meeting because one of the announcement emails contained an incorrect link. Also, while the meeting was in progress, we discovered that our Zoom account only allowed for 100 participants. Because of this, some members were unable to join the meeting. As soon as this problem was recognized we began recording the meeting and that recording has been made available to all members.

President's Remarks

Simon welcomed everybody and thanked them for attending. He noted what an unusual year we've had with the Club closing in March due to COVID-19. While we did not have access to our club house, in true South End style, members continued to gather outside the Club to swim and run and more recently to play handball in as safe a way as possible.

Spearheaded by Running/acting Membership Commissioner Kevin Whalen, we reached out to older members to make sure they were OK and to see if they needed support from other Club members. We also sent out some very cool neck buffs to all our members.



Thanks to Bill Wygant, Peter Ross and Miriam Hiser we finally have our new lease with the City ensuring our place at Aquatic Park for the next 50 years.

Our Building Commissioner George Lazaneo has used the closure to implement a number of improvements and important maintenance changes to the Club. We cannot thank George and his volunteers enough for all that they have done.

We signaled our strong support for people of color by working with the Anti-Racism Exploratory Committee (AREC) and by flying the BLM flag. We are now in the process of setting up a new Diversity Committee (see below).

As if COVID and racial injustice weren't enough, closer to home we lost some great South Enders this year. Friends to many of us, young and old, all very special people to our Club and community. Darrin, Elizabeth, Wayne, Buck, Mel, Trudy, Aaron, to name a few, Rest in Peace.

Our athletes continued to do some amazing things and this will be covered by the Sports Commissioners later in the meeting.

Most importantly, we did not let the closure of our Clubhouse, the pandemic, the turbulent political environment or anything else define us. We are still the strong, supportive, caring community that we were before the lockdown and we will be stronger still when we are allowed to all come together again.

Long live the South End!!!

Turning to 2021, Simon noted we won't be able to return to the old normal until a vaccine is broadly available. Until then, reopening will proceed slowly as allowed by the City. As much as we love the Club and being with each other, it's not worth dying for! Safety first!

Simon recognized that for some of you, the limited reopening doesn't justify the annual dues. If you decide to not renew, we understand and will miss you. If the issue is financial hardship, we'll find a way to work with you. Kevin and Adele will talk more about this in their section tonight on Retention.

Unfortunately, we will be losing some Board member at the end of next month as their terms expire: Fran, Susan, Van, Andy, Suzanne and Mary. Simon singled out Fran who has been his rock for many years and Susan for the incredible amount of time she has put into putting the Club onto a sound financial footing.

Lastly, Simon reminded people that candidate statements are due on Sunday November 15th. Statements should be emailed to: sercelection@gmail.com.

A. Reopening

Fran walked the members through this report from the reopening committee.

http://serc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/MembersMeeting_2020_Reopening.pdf

And David Schreibman walked the members through this report on the phase 2 swim reopening.

http://serc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/MembersMeeting_2020_Reopening_Swimming.pdf

B. Treasurer

Susan walked the members through this report that summarizes the financial state of the Club.

http://serc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/MembersMeeting_2020_Treasurer.pdf

C. Retention

Acting Membership Commissioner Kevin walked the members through the Board's plan to retain members in 2020.

http://serc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/MembersMeeting_2020_Retention.pdf

D. Swimming

English Channel champion and outgoing Swim Commission Van thanked Simon for all of the support he provided over the last two years. Van said that he has never met a more positive person.

Van pointed out that it's hard to remember, but there were actually three Club swims in 2020 before COVID hit.

He pointed out that the first phase of the reopening brought back (modified) sunrisers and that there are rumors of warm showers in the near future.

A new moderated swimming Google Group was created after people grew weary of all of the off topic postings in the old Group. The new group can be found here:

<https://groups.google.com/u/1/g/serc-swimming>

He pointed out that despite the challenges it was actually an amazing, adventurous year for swimming. People are swimming in every nook and cranny of the Bay. From Tomales Bay to Redwood City and points in between. Records have been set (e.g., RTAI) and created (e.g., IM Alcatraz).

Van did strike a note of caution and urged people, when swimming in unfamiliar places, to swim together.

Feeling optimistic, the 2021 swim calendar has been created and will be posted to the Club website shortly. We cross our fingers that these swims can take place. The 2021 swim calendar can be found here:

<http://serc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/SERC-2021-Swim-Calendar.pdf>

Lastly, Van introduced Erika Gliebe our 2021 Swim Commissioner. Thank you and good luck Erika!

E. Rowing

Allan Calder thanked Jerry Purlmel for being Rowing Commissioner for much of 2020. He also thanked Jules Marenkova who made significant contributions to rowing and reopening before moving to Davis to attend law school (good luck and comeback soon). He also thanked Dennis, Tom and many others for their contributions to the rowing program.

Allan reminded us that a successful, well attended Petersen Regatta occurred before the pandemic shut things down.

2020 also provided an opportunity to analyze the rowing inventory and usage logs. This yielded insights into what equipment is being used and by whom.

Rowers made numerous contributions to the Club newsletter in 2020.

Allan noted that the rowers were the first to return to the Club under the phase 1 reopening. 20 monitors have been trained and more than 30 rowers have taken advantage of the opportunity to get back on the Bay.

Boat nights have morphed into boat afternoons and the fleet is being cared for.

Some rowers have substituted virtual racing (virtual Lake Merced sprints, virtual Head of the Charles) for the real thing and have excelled in the competition (coming in 1st and 2nd).

A virtual rowers meeting will occur before yearend to select 2021 Rowing Commission and Boat House Captain.

He closed by noting it was a tough but good year.

F. Handball

Juan Carlos was unable to attend but handball was well represented by Emily Gable.

Emily begin by remembering Wayne Black. Wayne was a handball legend and a strong supporter of woman handball players (he gave Emily her first gloves and goggles).

Emily noted that handball's first tournament of the year (St. Paddy's) was interrupted by COVID. So they were completely shutout out of competitions in 2020.

She and Juan Carlos have been meeting with the reopening committee, but in the meantime players are engaged in their sport at outdoor, one wall venues. A number of handballers work in the building trades and they are looking at ways to enhance ventilation of our courts for when the City relaxes the restrictions that currently restrict indoor handball.

G. Running

Running Commissioner Kevin walked the members through this presentation.

http://serc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/MembersMeeting_2020_Running.pdf

H. Gym

Bobby thanked fellow commissioners Van, Kevin and George for all of their hard work in 2020.

He noted that the gym is closed but hopes that the City will relax their rules to allow its reopening.

He closed by remembering Darrin, Trudy and Elizabeth. In remembering Elizabeth, he noted that she frequently organized an annual ERG challenge. He hopes to reinstitute that challenge in her memory.

I. Building

Building Commissioner George walked the members through this presentation.

http://serc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/MembersMeeting_2020_Building.pdf

J. Diversity Committee

Simon observed that the South End has stayed predominately white since it was founded nearly 150 years ago. At the same time, there have seen some great steps forward in terms of inclusiveness with the introduction of women members in the 70s and the creation of the Pride swim, just a few years ago, to honor our LGBT members and friends.

But it was the killing of George Floyd this year and the horrible and senseless murders of other black people both before and after this, that signaled to us that we needed to take a stand to show that Black Lives really do Matter.

Earlier this year, a group of SERC members created an AREC. This group included some Board members and was setup to start the investigation of whether there was racism at the Club.

The Committee met regularly and kept the Board updated on their thoughts and progress. The group heard from some Club members who had encountered racism at the Club, both directly and indirectly, and determined that there was more work to do to explore this fully and make the Club the happy place it is for most of us for all of us. The Committee was also instrumental in working with the Board to support Black Lives Matter and the flying of the BLM flag for a week last month.

In addition to flying the flag, the Board voted to place a sign at the front door and notice on our web site welcoming people of color. Starting in the new year, Board members will receive diversity and inclusion training.

Because of the work of the AREC, we are in the process of setting up a new Board sponsored Diversity Committee (with the final name of this committee to be determined once the 7 person committee is formed). The initial three members are Simon, director at large Suzanne Grevia and director at large and AREC member Brian Ip. We will be choosing the remaining committee members following advice given to us from the AREC on how to select members. Every Club member will have the ability to apply to be on this Committee - watch out for an email on this.

The end goal of the new Committee is to make the Club attractive and welcoming to people of color. It is clear that this is something that will greatly benefit us. While the Committee is still new, the initial steps will include:

- Selecting 4 more members for the new Committee
- Working on a sign that will be installed at the front of the Club signaling that the South End is an accepting institution for people of color
- Updating our web site to reflect this

- Coming up with a final name for the Committee

We know we need to examine both the formal and informal processes and policies that are inhibiting inclusion. We will continue to investigate the ways racism expresses itself at the South End and determine ways to eliminate it

In general, we need to make the Club a happy and inclusive place for all our existing members, not just those who are white. People should be able to bring their full selves to our Club and be proud of who they are and be accepted for who they are. We need to determine what we need to do to make the South more attractive to groups who are not currently well represented in our membership.

Simon pledged to be transparent with the membership with this new Committee and improve communication with the membership. He allowed that it is not something that he has done well this year. Things have been moving so quickly that emails that were ready to be sent out to the membership, often required multiple revisions in an attempt to keep up with external events ... and then everything would change again. He promised to try and improve communications with the Club on this issue in 2021.

Simon said he recently read where Rachel Williams, an authority on Equity, Inclusion and Diversity, suggested that we should "design from the edges for those in our organization who are least represented" She talks about the idea of universal design - rather than designing for those with the largest numbers, or most power - that the design for those "on the edges" is actually likely to benefit everyone. In the case of the South End that "design" is that welcoming and inclusive place ... we need to look first to who is on the edges of that experience and what policies and practices - formal or informal - might need some redesign.

Thanks to all who are supportive of this work. We have a lot to do but happily we have started the process. Please become involved if you can.

Conclusion

Simon thanked everybody for their patience in working through the evening's packed agenda. He expressed regret that the agenda didn't allow for more time for discussion but invited people who still have things to discuss to reach out to him at president@serc.com.

The 2020 Membership Meeting adjourned.