

**April 10, 2024**  
**South End Rowing Club**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**

**Roll Call**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Present</b>		<b>Member</b>	<b>Present</b>
J. Sale	X		C. Lovazzano	X
C. Bump	X		A. Diaz	X
E. Gliebe	X		L. Hovden	X
V. Blyth Marlin	X		M. Miller	
V. Cornwell	X		E. Gable	X
J. Li	X		K. Hutchins	X
G. Lazaneo	X		S. Phillipow	X
F. Hegeler	X		D. Flatow	
J. Sellers				
T. Yarish			S. Wintersteen	

**Approval of Minutes**

The March 2024 Board minutes were approved (12- 0 - 2).

**President's Remarks**

Josh asked for a quick introduction of Board members and members attending. Josh talked about the SFMTA Quick Build project and noted that they retreated on the bike path. There were some questions in the google group as we had some bikers who were in favor of bike lanes. Josh noted that the Club did not provide any point of view on this topic but rather distributed the survey so that members could submit their personal feedback directly. Also, on the subject of parking, Aaron Peskin, President of the Board of Supervisors, went to bat for us to get the parking across from the Argonaut to open up; eventually there will be a change in signage.

Fran has been working with NPS to get access to parking on Jefferson Street. The south side of Jefferson is run by the Park Service and likely in May, they are going to open up that parking all the time. Another opportunity for more parking close to the club.

Josh congratulated Cathy Bump and Karl, who won a gold medal at the State Fair for their olive oil! Woo Hoo!

Adan and his partner won the St. Patrick's Day tournament. Congratulations!

Today was the Old Timer's luncheon. Hats off to Kim Pross for pulling this off for the past 5-10 years. And thank you to Al Jaurique and Ellen Boyle for cooking a wonderful lunch!

Then we sang Happy Birthday to Vanessa Marlin.

Fran shared exciting news about Rudy Stadlberger. We celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday back in February. He was an avid handballer and even became a swimmer, swimming the Golden Gate Bridge when there was a threat to close the club down. He presented a gift to the club, his gavel from 1970!

### **Members Moment**

None.

### **6:45 pm- Agenda Items**

#### **A. Capacity opening discussion (Josh, 5 minutes, not deferrable)**

Josh teed up the discussion. There is a certain amount of passion in the club about this topic. And he notes that there is not a right or a wrong answer to this question about the club capacity. We all are coming from an equally good place. We should not allow our passions to cause us to be disrespectful to one other as we discuss this topic. Josh would like to remind people who have not attended previous board meetings that capacity has been a topic for years. Josh had previously defined capacity as a key topic for 2024 and Vanessa volunteered to lead the process. We thought we had a lot more time, but our steep trajectory of new members, plus the Dolphins imposing a membership cap, has imposed more urgency.

The Dolphin cap is 2100 and they are at 2075 currently. They will have imposed a 10-members per-month limit. For all intents and purposes, they will be capped out shortly.

The agenda includes some information to inform the discussion. We will allow members in attendance to speak and allow each person to speak once. Then we will bring it back to the Board, which will discuss the capacity topic and there may be a desire to put forth a motion and vote.

**B. Total membership by type and rate of growth for capacity discussion (Catherine, 5 minutes, not deferrable)**

Catherine offered a snapshot of where we are today (April, 2024).

2,041 total members

1,743 regular members (inclusive of 158 new members)

198 out of town members

98 life members

Assuming no change, we can anticipate at least 600 more new members; in 2023 we had 611 new members, with a 40% attrition rate (245 members did not renew in 2024)

Catherine recapped where we ended 2023.

2,184 total members 1573 renewals, 611 new members

The two key questions from the survey were "Should the board look at a cap" and "Should SERC have a cap".

The results of the survey are as follows:

"Should the board look at a cap" – 83.5% in favor, 11% not in favor, 5.5% undecided.

"Should SERC have a cap" – 59.6% in favor, 24.9% not in favor, 15.5% undecided.

A lot of open-ended responses to the survey were very valuable to the Board to read through.

We don't have a lot of robust data and don't really have a sense of how many members are in the Club at any given time. PDK, which checks our door, only provides data for the last 30 days, so we can't go back and compare year over year or month over month.

**C. Recap of Capacity Survey results (Erika, 5 minutes, not deferrable)**

The capacity survey was turned off on Sunday April 7<sup>th</sup> to allow time for the Board to read through the comments from our membership. We had a healthy turnout of 404 responses. A few emails were also circulated to the board from members who were unable to participate in the survey.

Erika reported the survey results as follows:

Should the Board be looking at member capacity?

- Yes: 83.5%
- No: 11%
- I don't know: 5.5%

Do you favor a cap on membership?

- Yes: 59.6%
- No: 24.9%
- I don't know: 15.5%

A few things of note, our membership has more than doubled since 2013 to 2023 from 998 to 2113. And our new members in Q1 of 2024 vs. Q1 of 2023 are up 40%. Last year we had 611 new members. Based on the Q1 trajectory of 2024, this means we could see close to 850 new members or more in 2024.

**D. Membership capacity comments – Poll for how many (Members, up to 90 minutes, not deferrable)**

Summary of sentiments shared by members:

Number of members who attended and hoped to share their sentiments- 10 total. Josh allocated 3 minutes per member to share their thoughts.

- In contrast to the survey respondents, the members who spoke were generally against a cap. We need to understand how the club is being used and we need to seek other solutions before we cap, such as expanding our facilities all while keeping our doors open. We need to double click on a lot of data and

understand the problem. One suggested that without data, our decision is premature. One noted they would like to see an era of trial and error and not a “nuclear option” of capping membership. Another noted that the South End is a place where people are brave, and that we should “do the harder thing by saying no to a capacity limit”.

- Others felt we needed to cap as we do not have unlimited capacity and if we wait to cap, we will be looking at a membership that outgrows our capacity. A temporary pause was recommended. Others worried about the locker rooms and how busy they are. We want to be a club with no rules or limits, but even Yosemite has a daily cap. The cap needs to be looked at as it could be worrisome as time goes on.
- Some noted that capping has many implications, including financial, diversity impacts, and age of members.
- If we are to institute a cap, it needs to be transparent and fair.
- A key concern shared by members was in regard to the progress made in supporting a more diverse membership and concern that capping could prevent us from continuing those efforts.
- It was asserted that swimmers represent 70% of members and a large percentage of survey respondents, and do not represent the view of the rowers. Swimming is the pinch point, and we need to seek solutions for swimming. The rowers present wanted more rowers and the handballers want more handballers.
- Many comments from members about our community, our connections, how our members are kind of crazy in a good way, that we are welcoming. Many have formed their best connections here at the Club. One noted it was a magical community.
- We must remember we are a 100% volunteer-led club. We have a lot of new members who don't know basic membership information. There are members who bring people in without signing in. We have people sneaking in. One member expressed concern about liability issues. We need an orientation/onboarding program for new members.

#### **E. Capacity deliberation and vote -Board only (Josh, 20 minutes, not deferrable)**

Josh noted that some Board members had hoped to vote by proxy. Club policy is silent on that but it hasn't been done in the last 6 years. Josh shared that he comes to Board meetings with some thoughts but also with an open mind – and that the in-person discussions, with Board members being open to persuasion, is an important part of the process. Voting by proxy denies Board members this benefit. This is the best board he has served with, and he supports the collective decision of the Board.

Josh then asked for comments from each Board member:

- George- DAL, Former building Commissioner. We are already over capacity. We are going to be discussing what we can and cannot do. No one is denied access. Both clubs must allow public access. There is good data (membership) and junk data (door scans). In his mind's eye, with conditions, he would support a cap on membership. If you are a member of the Club, your membership means something. No one is denied access to the Club. We need better data. And it is going to take more than one night to solve the capacity challenge and solution.
- Van –DAL. Thanked all who talked. Some of us are still thinking through our perspective. He believes there is a point when we will have a capacity issue. We know our membership, but we don't know our usage. Swims have sold out for years and not much has changed. It makes it super challenging to parse this out. He is not in favor of a pause. We are deciding based on a Dolphin Club decision and he does not feel that is right and we need more time.
- Cathy- Vice President. Everyone values how open this Club has been, how diverse, how welcoming but we are in a tough situation. Our overriding obligation is to our membership and our Club. It is a sad thing to limit our membership, but she personally feels those connections that we so value may become threatened by the sheer size of the club. She feels we need some breathing room to properly assess the situation and our membership trajectory. Given what we foresee, we need to create breathing room and employ something in the interim. It would be of interest to have more data, but even if we had it, the more important point is the feeling and overall cohesiveness of the Club, which she fears could become threatened by the current steep trajectory of new memberships. It has become difficult to orient new members as we would like to. When you look at our sports, we need breathing room to

experiment with different ways to accommodate the growing numbers. This is certainly true for swimming; we can't cap our way out of the capacity issues there, but we can experiment with different options. There are benefits on the rowing side as well, to taking a breath to allow for more training of rowers with regard to safety and caring for the boats. Concerns have been raised about a cap's impact on diversity. While the City will not allow us to exercise admissions preferences, one option is that we simply exempt MAX\_415 members and other relationship organizations from any cap.

- Vanessa – DAL, previous Rowing Commissioner- She is so heartened by the rowers in the room and how passionate they are. The Club also saved her life, literally. Her gut reaction was that capping membership would be the nuclear option. The reason why we have our regular Sunday Row-dee-Rows is because the old timers love to mentor new members. When she looks at the rowing program, we do have issues. We don't have a standard of getting people cleared to row. We have priceless boats that need to be cared for and properly put away. We need to implement some rowing standards. We are going to need all of our volunteers to pitch in. We have gotten by for the last two years as we have such strong mentor-mentee relationships. We have a lot of work to do. As far as a cap goes, it a nuclear option but the more she thinks about it there are problems that we may not anticipate now. We need to look very closely, and it is going to take time. We don't want to waste time looking at things and we may have to make some hard decisions. She is not in favor of capping, but she is in favor of a pause and a time to breath so we can handle the influx of people in the future. And she is going to rally her community to volunteer to help put more rowing standards in place.
- Catherine – Membership Commissioner. At the members meeting in 2022 there was a question about diversity. It is super important that we think about our community, but we really don't have any data and most of it is anecdotal. We have talked about putting together a member survey so we can understand our membership better.
- Jing- DAL- Diversity is really important to her and why she joined the club. Thank you to everyone who came, and she appreciates their passion. The survey generated a lot of great comments. She does not want fear to drive our

decisions. She wants our decisions to be informed by data. She is in favor of an evaluation phase with a temporary cap. She doesn't think it's fair to compare ourselves only to the Dolphin Club and we should look at other facilities, too.

- Erika- I wish our space was infinite but sadly it is not. I love this Club and I would love to have all join who want to, to be able to share in this special community but the reality is we don't have space for limitless capacity. I also don't feel that we have the Club usage data necessary as I witness tailgating regularly at the door. Someone said it is about the feel of the Club and I agree, so it's not about the data and I think we could spend a ton of time assessing it and never have a good idea. It's about if I come to the shower after a swim can I get a shower and I have encountered times when no shower is available, and the sauna is overflowing. This is a safety issue for those who could be on the brink of hypothermia. Also, we have events selling out in less than an hour. I also feel for rowers and handballers as I know they want to continue to build their community. But we do have over 2000 existing members from which they can continue to build their community from.
- Emily- Running Commissioner. She thanked those members who spoke and those who commented in the survey. There is membership and there is usage. She appreciates the safety issue. When she is here at midday, she does not see the crowds. She agrees there are unintended consequences to a cap, such as impacting diversity. "More members are an opportunity vs. a problem" resonates with her. There are ways we can look at other solutions. We need to carefully explore this.
- Steve- Building commissioner. He is not in favor of a cap but we need to throttle back how many people are entering the club at any given time so we can properly orient new members. This will allow us time to think about capacity solutions. Given the number of people, we have gotten to a point where it's insufficient to have the Building Commissioner be a volunteer position. We should consider hiring a Building Commissioner. And we need new members to understand that we are a volunteer organization.
- Kristin – Swim Commissioner. She is a "member" of the South End Rowing Club. She is a "member" who chooses to swim. She happens to be a "member" who is the Swim Commissioner. We are all members of the South End as a whole, not



just participants in individual sports. She has heard the passion. And some things that concerned her. Access to swims is an issue and she is on it! We are trying to increase the supply. The Kiel swim sold out in 25 minutes. So those techniques alone will not be enough. There is wear and tear on our facilities. Most importantly, there is a fraying of the club culture. Getting people to understand that this is your home and should be treated like that. Clean up after yourself. She has been a member for 15-16 years. She has been disheartened to see a splitting of swimmers from rowers, or sport vs. other sport. A “They do this” mentality. We are all members of the Club. Our new memberships are on a hockey stick trajectory, and we need time to breathe. We need to study it. She is in favor of a pause so we can study it. To do this thoughtfully, we need time to work on the right solution.

- Laura- Treasurer. The things I am hearing are the same things, like Club swims and a lack of locker room space. There are some very specific issues that we could address. A lot of times it's not busy and other times it is. We can look at better solutions before we say nobody else. She met 4 new people today and she would not want them not to be here. That's why she loves coming here.
- Fran- Past President. She came here tonight with some pretty well-formed opinions. Does she think there such is a thing of capacity? Yes, she agrees that there are days you cannot get a shower or space in the sauna. She is here at the busiest times. She gets angry emails from people for not getting into an event or a party. We have not gotten into capacity vs. usage and we have not looked at that. What she sees is that we have a problem. What is a reasonable expectation of a member? Ideal vs. the practical. A member wants to get into a swim. A member wants to have access to the showers and sauna. She doesn't know what our capacity is but she does feel like we are at a tipping point. And the Dolphins have pushed us to a point where we have to take action. Our membership is on a hockey stick trajectory. Guessing we will have 800 new members but with the DC club capping, our new members may explode—to where we cannot have a volunteer club that fosters connections and keeps us safe. What we do has risks from swimming to the dock to rowing. It is all a very delicate balance. We need a pause. We need breathing room.

- Josh- President. He thinks we have challenges at multiple levels. Some are at the sport level, like swim capacity and rowing standards. Within limits, there are opportunities to expand and create more capacity. But those opportunities are not limitless. People say they want to volunteer, but they may not. He would like to see who volunteers. He feels there is a small group of volunteers who shoulder the lion's share of the burden. The thing that is most concerning is preserving the sense of community and our interrelationships. That is what makes this place special. He is not convinced that "community" scales. He is not in favor of a permanent cap, but we need to figure out a way to better onboard new members.

**MOTION:**

Motion offered by Cathy Bump:

*In order to allow the Club the opportunity to thoughtfully and methodically assess and address the question of capacity, we hereby provisionally limit the number of new members to twenty (20) per month, effective immediately. This provisional limit shall remain in effect for twelve (12) months, with the understanding that the Board may, based on its further assessment, decide at any time to remove or adjust the cap.*

*To the extent relevant, Life, Out-of-Town, and Honorary Members shall be exempt from this restriction. Members renewing for the year following their last membership shall also be exempt. Members that derive from organizations that the Board has*

*chosen to affiliate with, including the Bondi Icebergs, the Kiel Sister City relationship, MAX\_415, and Pathstar, shall also be exempt.*

*Individuals who are not granted immediate Club membership because the monthly limit has been reached shall be placed on a waitlist as described in the Club's Procedures. As space allows, individuals on the waitlist shall be invited to join the Club in the order that they were added to the waitlist.*

Motion seconded by Fran Hegeler.

The motion was approved by the Board (11- 3 - 0).

**F. Proposed schedule of funded (and possibly unfunded) major projects (Steve, 10 minutes, not deferrable)**

- April 22<sup>nd</sup>- Women's locker room will have work done on the showers and sauna so they will be off limits for about 5 days. We will have access to the dolphin Club women's locker room during that time.
- The additional new lockers, 16 of them, will be installed in the mezzanine above the bar. Our two Locker Managers will figure out men vs. women and the fees for the new lockers.
- Steve also needs someone to manage the project of replacing the old handball lockers (currently 20) with new usable lockers. The intent is to study replacement which will include total number of new lockers and mix of day use vs. personal lockers.
- We are getting new fire doors in the upper boathouse. There will be a small slit to allow more light. Steve's intention is to paint those doors white.
- Suzanne Greva is driving the security camera assessment and has some recommendations to be presented to the Board in the **June** Board meeting.
- Men's locker room floor is expected to be replaced June or October and would cause the close of the locker room for 5 days.
- He is looking at resurfacing the cookshack floor in August, with commercial grade in the core kitchen area; the dining area floor will be ground down, sealed and resurfaced. The floor will be white or gray in the kitchen and red in the dining area. It is a big project and will entail moving everything out and will likely take 5 days. We will need a lot of volunteers to support. **Steve needs a project manager for the resurfacing of the floors in the bar and the upper boathouse.**
- He expects the hot water tank to be replaced in November or December, which would cause a period of us not having hot water in the locker rooms. Erika raised her hand to project manage to see if we can move this transition up so as not to be without hot water in November or December.
- Rust on the underside of the gym deck will be addressed on a weekend so Steve needs to work with swimming, rowing, and pilots to find a date.

- Chris Albon will be taking over the Day of Service management.

**G. Marty Maricle Feral 100 – named in honor of one the Club's greatest runners! (Emily, 5 minutes, not deferrable)**

We had a150K last year for our 150<sup>th</sup>. We are doing it again on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024. We all love Marty Maricle and the runners decided to name the run after her.

The runners will have a dinner the night before on April 19th to honor Marty.

**Adjourned to dinner provided by Emily.**

**Next Board Meeting May 8th, 2024 at 6:30pm**

DRAFT