



FINGER LAKES RUNNERS CLUB
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

December 11, 2019 5:30 pm
170 Roberts Hall , Cornell University

In attendance:

Board members: Sue Aigen, Mike Allinger, Peter Dady, Adam Engst, Tonya Engst, Charlie Fay, Emily Funk, Jullien Flynn, Nancy Kleinrock, Pete Kresock, Mickie Saunders-Jauquet, Steve Shaum, Gerrit Van Loon, Bill Watson

Club members and guests: Heather Wilson

(5:31) Welcome of Board

(5:32) Review of Meeting Materials; Revisions to the Agenda

(5:33) Approval of the November Meeting Minutes

- Charlie moves to accept the November 2019 minutes as submitted. Seconded; 9 approve (with 3 abstentions).

New Business (5:35)

- Upgrade FLRC Communications System—Adam (material below copied from Adam's prior message to the board email list)
 - The Tech Team would like to propose that FLRC upgrade its communications system from a decade-old mailing list setup run through Mailman to a modern Web-based discussion forum using the open-source Discourse system. Although it is Web-based, Discourse provides full support for both reading and posting via email for those who prefer that approach.
 - Current issues that this upgrade will address include:
 - Fragmented messaging on our part: Right now, communication about cross-country meets needs to go to the FLRC list, the High Noon list, a separate High Noon XC list I set up, and a manually maintained list that Tonya runs for the women. Local runners also communicate with one another through other random channels that bypass FLRC, such as the Ithaca Runners Facebook group. The new system will provide a single, public, centralized location for runners in the area to converse online, coordinate workouts, and more. It won't replace targeted communication to club members through RunSignUp or to race participants through Webscorer.
 - Overly general communication: Some people may ignore the FLRC list or unsubscribe because the posts range widely in topic. If you're not interested in cross-country, for instance, you may not want to see such posts. The new system can have forums for different topics (injuries, workouts, gear, etc) or groups and people can follow just those they want. Forums can be public, or in the case of forums for the board and the RDs, private.
 - Low reliability and impermanence of email: Several people almost missed the RD dinner due to having messages to the RD list filtered as spam. With this Web-based system, users can check the site at any time for new messages. (Technically speaking, there are archives of our mailing lists, but I doubt hardly anyone knows about them.) Plus, the new system will be entirely searchable, so people can easily find previous posts. We can also create forums for board committees and teams to focus discussions and provide searchable archives.
 - Email overload: Many people receive so much email that they don't read it all. By providing a Web presence for announcements and discussion, we can make it easier for people to

- check in when they have time. I regularly hear from runners who have completely missed email to the list and are therefore confused or out of the loop on FLRC events.
 - Reduced engagement on our mailing lists: Over the years, the number of people posting or engaging in discussion on the FLRC list has dropped. There's less of a sense of belonging to a group than there used to be. Increased engagement online will lead to increased engagement offline.
 - Failing to attract a younger demographic: Young people simply don't subscribe to mailing lists and use email only under duress. Younger runners are more likely to use a modern system where they can get a sense of culture by reading past posts.
- New capabilities and benefits Discourse would provide include:
 - Statistics: We'll easily be able to see how many people view posts, click links, search for specific terms, and so on, which will give us a much better sense of how people use the new system compared to the old.
 - Pinned posts: For some topics, like what people need to know about the MITHACAL MILERS workout group or the Family Running Program, posts can be pinned (and edited by their owners) so they remain useful top-of-screen documentation for visitors.
 - Wiki posts: Any post in Discourse can be turned into a wiki, which means that anyone can edit it. That can be useful for certain kinds of informal documentation that would be overkill for a shared Google Doc.
 - Simple polls: For things such as group runs and board meetings, a head-count would often be useful, and Discourse's simple polls make it easy to collect Yes/No/Maybe numbers with less effort than something like Doodle.
 - Improved SEO: Online discussions do wonders for search engine optimization—people searching for running topics of any sort in Ithaca should be finding FLRC and that will happen more if we have a broader Web presence.
 - Smartphone app: Although the core of Discourse is a Web site and it allows for full interaction via email, it also provides a smartphone app with notifications of new messages in followed forums.
- The Tech Team has been playing with Discourse for a little while now and recommends it as a solution given its feature set, cost, and staff/developer familiarity. (I've run my business's TidBITS Talk forum in Discourse for 18 months now and am familiar with its capabilities and administration. It's astonishingly powerful and flexible software.)
- This proposed new system would cost about \$12 per month, plus maybe \$250 for our developer to set it up. It would likely be possible for him to set it up such that we could make the switch over the holiday break. In theory, we should be able to redirect the current email addresses so people can submit to a general forum using the same addresses as now. (Same with the board and RD forums.)
- There will be some training involved—it is different, and different is always tough for some people—but keeping the club's systems modern will help us fulfill our mission by engaging with more runners and with a younger audience. The Tech Team should be able to answer user questions, and I plan to create some basic documentation to help people get started.
- DISCUSSION:
 - Adam says Discourse is not similar to Slack, in that Discourse is intended for asynchronous messaging.
 - Adam touts the platform's security, more so than our current mailing list platform.
 - It is possible to import all current email lists without a need for resubscription.
 - Public and private groups are possible on Discourse; the board list, for instance, would be private.
 - The Chatter platform Steve uses at work is quite similar to Discourse, but over the years it has failed to gain traction with students, which was its intended purpose, whereas internal analytics demonstrate that email serves CALS's student services needs better.
 - Responding to concerns, Adam says that a user can perform all Discourse functions—receiving and sending messages—via email; however, sending a private email as a response to a Discourse message is not an option within the system, since replies to a Discourse message inherently go to the system; users need to already know another poster's email address to communicate personally with them.
 - All messages display in chronological order, within the category.

- Only the administrator(s) can create new categories (e.g., group runs/workouts; trail conditions); the board would have to discuss the need for any new category.
 - By default, the system will provide notifications; or a user can set it up to receive emails instead of notifications; or a user can go to the platform to view category(s) of interest; but the platform does not support the creation/delivery of a digest of posts.
 - Emails sent to the current email list's address(es) will forward directly to Discourse.
 - There would be a goal to enable a way to get to Discourse from the FLRC website.
 - Runsignup has an API that could be used to pair the membership list with Discourse.
 - Also there will be instructions for members or others to sign up manually.
 - The cost would be \$12/month (plus cost of initial setup (~\$250), instead of no cost for the current email list.
 - Adam moves that the tech team be tasked with setting up Discourse for our purposes and migrate the current email lists to it (by the end of the year). Seconded.
 - Discussion:
 - It is suggested to have a board/RD test period to trial the software before going all-in.
 - It is further suggested to broaden the scope of the trial to, for instance, include a “group run” category, i.e., have not only a test period, but also a test topic.
 - Adam modifies the motion to move to forward with setting up Discourse with Board, RD, and one or two additional categories for a test period (with no testing timeframe specified). Seconded. Approved.
- 2020 Budget—Mike
 - Mike discusses the proposed budget, which is as presented during the Nov 2019 board meeting, but with the addition of the following:
 - budgeting for club shirts (distributing cost and income across all races);
 - budgeting for trail series shirts (distributing cost and income across the six trail races (not including the FL 50s, which has its own shirt);
 - a change for the 2020 running of the Ithaca 5&10 would entail registration to be handled by Webscorer and Webscorer-based hand-timing of the event, instead of hiring Leone Timing;
 - purchase of music insurance (i.e., licensing rights for playing music at a race), to be distributed across all races instead of only the four races that use music;
 - Alex should inquire whether Albany Running Exchanging already charges the FL 50s for this coverage.
 - Pete moves to accept the budget as submitted. Seconded. Unanimously approved.
- Letter Writing Campaign to support NYS Trails—Sue
 - Text from Michael Ludgate, via Sue on the Board email list: “Timber Money to Trails—Sustainable timber harvests, like those at Hammond Hill are a normal part of NYS Forest management practices. The timber is sold to the highest bidders and the operations are supervised by NYS DEC. This produces millions of dollars for the NYS special revenue fund. Our Goal: We would like to see some of this money returned to the forests in support of recreational trails. Write to the Governor: he decides where the money goes. [Sample letter and directions on the blog please click in and read the whole article.](#)”
 - Sue recommends that the club modify the letter Michael submitted to submit to the governor by the Dec 15, 2019, deadline.
 - Sue moves that the board approve Sue to write and submit such a letter on behalf of the board. Seconded. Unanimously approved.

Current Events Reports & Business (6:46)

- Financial Report—Mike
 - No additional report until year-end.
 - Adam notes that the large contribution will likely be commencing in April 2020.
- Review “Free Entry” policy for exceptional volunteers & RD’s
 - This policy was introduced for 2019 on a provisional basis.

- The policy was used 67 times, with a cost for 2019 for \$921 were all board/RD registrants to have registered at club-member rates.
- Adam presents the following policy on free race entries for RDs, board members, and exceptional volunteers:
 - In acknowledgment of the work that exceptional volunteers perform in the advancement of FLRC's mission, the FLRC board grants said volunteers free entry to all FLRC races other than Finger Lakes 50s, due to its limited space. The volunteer categories that qualify for free race entry are:
 - members of the board of directors
 - race directors
 - members of distributed directorships, such as the Skunk and FL50s committees
 - the Hartshorne Memorial Volunteer of the Year
 - exceptional volunteers to be agreed upon by the board on an annual basis.
 - This recognition applies to the current year of service to the club.
- Bill moves to accept this free-race entry policy as written. Seconded. Unanimously approved.
- A discussion ensues about policies and collecting them; Lorrie plans to provide the upcoming club president with her famous binder.
- Lifetime Membership Nominees
 - The discussion of—and voting on—nominees took place during executive session, which the board voted itself into and out of unanimously (Steve made the motions both to enter and exit executive session, with appropriate seconds.)
 - Inductees will be announced at the 2020 annual meeting.
- Report on Square Terminal Test at Turkey Trot—Adam
 - Adam provided a detailed review via email on Dec 3, 2019, 6:22 pm.
 - The unit worked quite well. No issues were encountered during setup, when populating it with the items to be sold, nor during pretesting. At Turkey Trot, Adam sold 15 pairs of socks and took money via cash, credit card (swipe and chip), and NFC payment via Google Pay. Some observations:
 - Mickie plans to use it for Winter Chill.
 - Separately, it is necessary to consider how to track inventory for otherwise salable items that RDs give away to volunteers.

Vice-President's Reports & Business (6:21)

- **Trails**
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- **Road**
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- **Track**
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- Adam created a spreadsheet showing race attendance for all races over the past ten years; dark green/red means a significant increase/decrease over the prior year; light colors mean insignificant changes; the spreadsheet includes notes for special circumstances.
 - See <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1kZPMwRx-xKL0BrzTRrTYt4yTkTCirf89y7ZjwkMwdME/edit#gid=419260906>
 - Races with multiple reds in a row are races in danger zones, with race participation dropping consistency year over year.
 - Note that the day after the board meeting (12/12/2019) Steve massaged the data into graphs for trail, roads, track, and individual races, visible in additional tabs of the same Google Sheet.
 - Fleet Feet created a similar spreadsheet; Pete Dady will distribute it to the board electronically.
 - [Graphical improvements, viewable at the same URL, were made by Steve the day following this board meeting.]

Committee Reports & Business (7:21)

- **Membership**—Adam Engst
 - Total members, 631; membership units, 392.

- **Programming**—Gary McCheyne
 - Gary is beginning to coordinate plans for the annual meeting, which should take place early February 2020.
- **Marketing**—Tonya Engst
 - Tonya is currently focusing on the Print-and-Post team, initiating conversations regarding Winter Chill, Frosty Loomis, and Skunk Cabbage.
 - Tonya also is considering creating eye-catching, post-only flyers, rather than entry forms.
- **Equipment**—Gary McCheyne
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- **Volunteer**—Mickie Sanders-Jauquet
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- **Scholarship**—Jullien Flynn
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- **Website**—Pete Kresock
 - Pete has updated most of the 2020 webpages, as well as the Lifetime Members page, and the Library at Gerrit's office; Steve updated the Volunteer-of-the-Year page.
 - Gerrit requests a list of who is currently on which committees; this will be taken up in Jan 2020.

Good of the Order (7:36)

Pete K. moves to adjourn at 7:36 pm; seconded. Unanimously approved.

Future Board Meetings for 2020:

Jan 8, 2020
Feb 12, 2020
Mar 11, 2020
Apr 8, 2020
May 13, 2020
Jun 10, 2020
Jul 8, 2020
Aug 12, 2020
Sept 9, 2020
Oct 14, 2020
Nov 11, 2020
Dec 9, 2020