

OUR FAIR CAROUSEL, INC.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
OCTOBER 2, 2008

Present: Peter Boehm, Arthur Curtze, Barbara Deneen, Bob Herskovitz, Lorraine Kenfield, Bob Marabella, Kerry McCartney, Mike Merrick, Ed Mishmash, Nancy Peterson, Muriel Poehler, John Willy. Guest: Tamara Beckley

The meeting came to order at 7:07 p.m.

Minutes of the meeting of April 24, 2008, were approved as mailed.

Finances. Boehm reported that as of Sept. 30, 2008, OFC had \$215,000 in cash in the bank, compared with \$165,000 on that date in 2007. Boehm said earlier in the day he had bought a one-year certificate of deposit in the amount of \$25,000, as had been recommended by OFC treasurer Jim Weichert. Boehm noted that there would be some big expenses from October through December, such as insurance and the annual payment to the City, but if the cash position warranted it after making those payments, he would purchase another CD. He said there should still be plenty in cash to begin the next season.

Boehm pointed out that he had budgeted \$170,000 in income for the fiscal year that ended September 30, 2008, and our actual income was \$168,000. He budgeted \$169,000 in expenses and actual was \$163,000. Ticket sales were up for the season, but gift sales were down. We had budgeted for sales of 34 cents per ticket sold and had actual sales of 32 cents per ticket.

Volunteer committee. Kerry McCartney reported that the committee had received five suggestions recently. One was a suggestion that we set a minimum of \$5 for a charge transaction; the board was not in favor of this change. One was a suggestion that we turn off the band organ except when the ride is in motion; it was agreed that we need to explain to volunteers that we keep it playing because the music helps beckon riders. Another suggestion was that we publish monthly and yearly ridership counts for volunteers to see, which the board agreed was a good idea. Someone suggested that we make board minutes available, and Tammi has placed a year's worth on the volunteer desk.

There was also interest in a volunteer roster and more newsletters. A volunteer roster could include not only the name but the jobs each person does and the shifts he or she prefers, plus contact information (for those willing to share this information). That way a person who can't come in might be able to find a replacement instead of relying on Tammi to do so. McCartney said there are volunteers who seem eager to work on the roster and help with more frequent and informative communications. We have email addresses for more than half our volunteers, and could use those for notices.

To help fill weekend shifts, volunteers will earn double tickets. Those who don't want or need them personally could donate them to a nonprofit organization. Ed Mishmash will find a few groups that could use the tickets and we will make it convenient for volunteers to give the tickets.

Mishmash has placed an order for a 12 ounce hooded, zippered sweatshirt which we are purchasing for \$30 each and will sell to volunteers at cost. This transaction is not being handled through the gift shop.

Boehm thanked the committee for its work and commended that again this year, Tammi has done a good job of filling shifts. In addition, we have gotten people to do their volunteer jobs “by the book,” and only two people quit because of our strong insistence on procedure. People have been very focused and careful, and the quality of their performance is outstanding, Boehm said.

About 70 volunteers attended the appreciation event on Tuesday, September 30. In his comments at the event, Boehm invited volunteers to take on projects beyond the daily operation of the ride. He spoke of a longstanding desire to develop a curriculum for schools centering on the carousel; five teachers volunteered to work on it. In addition, six of the wooden shields were replaced with castings in 1990 but now need to be replaced with newly carved shields.

Gift shop. Beckley reported that water globes and music boxes were popular sellers this season, but not clothing. She is working on calculating the cash value of the year-end inventory.

Band organ. Mike Merrick reported that he reduced the organ’s air pressure but it had not made much difference in sound levels. He got a proposal to have a sound study that would recommend ways to make it easier to communicate in the gift shop and at the ticket window, for example. The estimate of \$4,550 seems appropriate, he said. Boehm commented that because the building is all concrete, steel, and glass, there is more vibration than the original wood building and dirt floor. Our goal is to abate the sound in the building in general, or in specific areas where people need to transact business. The board agreed that this is a worthwhile study.

Carousel. Arthur Curtze reported that the carousel is running great, as always. That said, we have had a strong vibration and are trying to understand the cause of that and of some wood cracking.

On August 10, a volunteer reported that a portion of the carousel platform had “jumped.” It turned out that the diagonal brass rods connecting the platform to the overhead sweeps had been overtightened. They help keep the platform moving when the ride starts up, but when the carousel is at rest they should be slack. Most of the time over the summer they functioned well enough, but periodically the stress from being taut would cause vibrations, and that is what the volunteer had noticed. Curtze and Mark Carlson adjusted the tension on the rods.

There had also been the sound of some wood creaking, in the A frame or in the sweeps just above it. Curtze and Carlson tightened some loose bolts and straightened the drive shaft, which was slightly out of alignment. This relieved some but not all of the creaking, which seems to be just slightly more pronounced than it was in the spring. Curtze had no ready explanation except that it had been a dry summer, which could affect the old wood.

Restoration. Bob Herskovitz reported that the right front leg of the pinto was broken at the same spot where it had been broken before. The glue gave way, and Herskovitz explained that in the repair process we had meant for the glue to break rather than the wood, should it come to that. Since the leg will likely be subject to strain on a continuing basis, he will do a stronger repair over the winter, cutting out some of the old wood and replacing it with fresh wood and new dowels. We have nothing more to report on replacing the black metal steps.

Fund-raising. Boehm reported that during the year we received \$31,363 in donations. That includes one \$25,000 new adoption and a \$5,000 pledge payment, and just over \$1,300 put into the donation horse.

Operations. Tammi Beckley distributed a report covering staffing, volunteer numbers, special events, incidents, and other administrative details. She reported 101 currently active volunteers, 14 of them new in 2008, and 3,848 volunteer hours to date for the 2008 season. There have been 17 unfilled shifts; the most difficult to fill are weekend and weekday afternoons. Five part-time staff members have done an excellent job of providing maintenance, brass polishing, gift shop management, and shift supervision.

The report noted that a new speed reducer was installed in April, a new water cooler was acquired for the volunteer area, and a new garden area was installed by Como Park staff at our request, and with us paying for the materials, to mask the rear of our building. The report also noted four incidents of riders falling, getting caught in the fence, or feeling ill. In addition to our monthly free days, we had one special day, June 19, when Macy's bought and distributed 800 tickets through a special promotion.

We have been contacted by the Como Foundation, which is having a "Sunset Affair" donor event and would like to include the carousel. Boehm asked Beckley to find out more about what they have in mind.

Boehm pointed out that although we had 17 unfilled shifts this year compared with 6 last year, this is still an excellent rate of performance, given that we have something like 1,330 shifts per season.

President's report. Boehm reported that he received two complaints filed with the city. One was a woman who claimed she fell and received no help. Volunteers did find a woman sitting on the ground that day; one helped her up and asked whether she was okay. She and a companion spent 15 minutes at the gift shop, and that volunteer also asked whether she was okay. Boehm wrote the woman asking for more information and has received no response.

The second was about a little girl who got her knee stuck in the fence. The child and mother both got hysterical, and someone trying to reassure them commented that "it happens all the time" and we are able to get the knees out with no damage. The mother complained that since we know it happens, we should have taken preventive measures. Boehm said our insurer has also noted that the fence around the carousel should have no openings that exceed four inches. Boehm and the insurer discussed possible solutions, including patterned sheet metal that would cover the openings, especially where people wait in line. Boehm is talking with companies about the cost and feasibility of such panels. A board member mentioned the possibility of scratch-resistant plexiglass and recommended checking with Crown Plastics of Minneapolis. He said he would look at both options.

We hosted three special events as fund-raisers for nonprofit groups. Rein In Sarcoma had a few corporate sponsors including Park Midway Bank, which included notices of the event in bank statements mailed to its customers (of which OFC is one). ARC and the Como Area Block Nurse program were the other nonprofit groups we hosted.

Mike Hahm reported that the brass railings in front of the Conservatory had been partially disassembled by would-be thieves, and he warned again about the copper on our building.

He also reported that Como staff will repair damaged concrete in the outdoor seating areas; they will grind the raised edges of the concrete and seal the cracks. City staff has begun work on new plantings at the back of our building.

OFC will loan several carousel horses to the Conservatory for its winter flower show. We will check with our insurer for permission, but Como and the City will provide insurance coverage while the horses are out of our building.

Bob Marabella suggested we purchase a leaf-blower to help keep the seating areas clear; Boehm said he should go ahead and buy one or tell Beckley what to buy.

Boehm reported on the new daily inspection process introduced this year in keeping with new state law and approved by our insurer. Every day before opening for business we run the ride without music. The shift supervisor walks once around the ride listening and feeling for vibrations or other anomalies and signs a form. Then the volunteer ride can begin.

Beckley is beginning to draft some procedures to be used in case of emergency. Beyond that, Mike Hahm will provide special training for staff and top volunteers. Boehm noted that this one of the most important steps we need to take.

Board elections will take place at the January 2009 meeting. Boehm invited members to let him know whether they are interested in serving another term, and whether they have recommendations for new members.

The next meeting is at 7 p.m. January 8, 2009, at the Como Streetcar Station.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy A. Peterson, board secretary