

VILLAGE RINGERS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

**Wednesday, May 15, 2024 - 10:00 am
17652 SE 82nd Woodlawn Avenue, The Villages, Florida**

MEMBERS ATTENDING – Bonnie Fisher, John Higbee, Ron Drozd, Emily Spann

MEMBER NOT IN ATTENDANCE – Amy Cornwall Robinson

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME

Bonnie called the meeting to order at 10:04 am, and welcomed members.

AGENDA/APPROVAL

Bonnie had emailed the agenda previously to members, and also provided copies in a packet to members. She asked if any items needed to be added to the agenda. John Higbee asked about charitable business plans. Bonnie agreed to add that item to the agenda. John made a motion to approve the agenda, with the additional item. Emily seconded and all voted to approve.

MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING/APPROVAL

Emily emailed the minutes to board members and provided copies, if needed. John moved to approve the minutes and Ron seconded the motion. All voted in favor and the minutes will be filed for review.

REPORTS

1. President's Report

a. Bonnie thought the spring concert went very well and commended the Village Ringers group that performed in the Spring Concert. She told board members that the members were enthusiastic, committed, and worked hard each week. She also commended the wonderful group of subs.

b. The Village Ringers had nice articles written about the group from the "Villages Friends" magazine, as well as a detailed article in The Daily Sun. Bonnie explained how valuable these types of communication are and she wrote formal thank you notes to encourage continued support. New for the coming year, The Daily Sun came to film the group at a rehearsal with the VNN (Villages News Network) crew. The crew put together a video, accompanied by an interview with Bonnie that was shown on the VNN (Channel 2) and YouTube.

John expressed his belief that the group received more exposure in these communication venues because the handbells are very different from other choral groups around The Villages.

Bonnie told the members that she has additional LIKES on the Village Ringers Facebook website.

c. Bonnie thanked Ron Drozd for collecting and compiling the surveys regarding directing performance.

d. John Higbee was thanked by Bonnie for continuing to keep the Village Ringers website so up-to-date and effective. For the Spring concert, John produced a remarkable video using parts of the performance, PowerPoint slides, and live video from the concert. Bonnie explained how much the

ringers LOVED the video and were so pleased to have access to the video to send to other friends and relatives! Bonnie told members that she has been using the video to promote the group and will definitely use in the fall.

All board members echoed the praise for John's hard work in putting sections of the Spring concert on the website in an easily-accessible manner. John told the board members that it was a joy to do this for the Village Ringers! He explained that learning new techniques is very important to him.

e. The Village Ringers Christmas season will begin on Monday, September 9, 2024, at 1:00 pm. Once again, an "informal" audition will be held at the first rehearsal of the season. Bonnie explained that four (4) of the current players from the spring concert will not be able to play in the Christmas concert. In order to find good ringers to fill these positions, the informal audition will definitely be important.

John asked Bonnie if any new material for the Christmas Concert needed to be added to the website. Bonnie could not think of anything, so John said he will check to make sure all current information includes the new September audition.

f. Bonnie told the board members that the group had all the equipment needed for now. She explained that several items had to be ordered during the year, including folders, stands, and new handles for the large bass bells. Bonnie told the members that she had priced the purchase of risers for the back row, but felt that the risers would be too expensive. \$750 would be needed for each of the seven (7) units needed. Bonnie explained that the risers are actually lightweight and fit into suitcases. The issue with purchasing risers may be not having enough storage room in the current storage closet at New Covenant United Methodist Church.

g. The 2025 Christmas Concert will be held on Friday, December 13, 2024. The concert will be a joint concert with the "Horns a-Plenty" group, which is a French horn ensemble. Bonnie told the group that she discussed this idea with the New Covenant United Methodist Church administrative staff and they approved the concert. Bonnie felt that the joint concert would expose different audiences to both groups! The "Horns a-Plenty" group is a smaller group and will play for one-half hour and then the Village Ringers will play for one-half hour. Approximately 10 minutes of the concert will have both groups playing together.

Bonnie is hopeful that by the time the concert is held, the newly remodeled church fellowship hall will be completed. Bonnie will work with the "Horns a-Plenty" director to write/adapt music for the combined groups.

John asked Bonnie if division of the money received from the concert had been discussed. Bonnie told the board that she would negotiate with the director, LesAnne VanSykle on the amounts each group should receive. Bonnie explained that the Village Ringers may not receive as much profit as usual, because the "Horns a-Plenty" group is not as large of a group.

John told Bonnie that he thought making sure to have some audience members come to the front and play an easy Christmas song or two would be a great transition time between the French horn and Village Ringers parts of the concert. Bonnie and all board members agreed with John's suggestion.

h. Bonnie requested feedback regarding the Spring 2024 Concert. She told the board members that the Spring Concert had less people than the Christmas concert with 254 in attendance. She proudly

told members that the Village Ringers group is the largest performing group in the New Covenant United Methodist Church fellowship hall.

Bonnie reminded the board members that plans are still in place to remodel the church fellowship hall. She explained that this would involve realigning the AV equipment and installing a full-scale back screen.

Feedback from the Spring Concert is listed below:

- The board members felt that the theme of “Put your Dancing Shoes On” was fun and appropriate.
- Discussion following regarding having the ringers on the floor of the fellowship hall and whether ringers on the back row could be seen. Bonnie hopes that the newly-remodeled fellowship hall will help with this issue for future concerts.
- Bonnie attended the Ring Sarasota handbell concert and after the concert, she sent the Spring 2024 video to the director of Ring Sarasota, Terri Chapman. Terri replied via email with very complimentary and helpful feedback. Excerpts from her feedback are included below:
 - * The videos of the dancers were a wonderful component to the performance and the live dancers definitely reinforced the music and were very entertaining.
 - * Bonnie showed how much she enjoyed the music while directing and many of the ringers had lovely expressions on their faces.
 - * The hand waving during the DooWop piece was very entertaining.
 - * Putting the lyrics on the screen during Lord of the Dance piece was a wonderful touch, as the audience was singing along.
 - * The opening number of the concert should “blow the audience out of their seats.” Consider using a piece like Dorian Dance as the lead off, instead of the Passacaglia piece to let the audience know what the group is made of up front!
 - * More visual unity among ringers in the areas of matching circles, shakes, and “walking the bells” on repeated notes is needed.
- As a suggestion for future concerts, John suggested that Bonnie consider incorporating more pronounced movement of players during the concert. Emily echoed that possibility, as she felt that the audience appreciates seeing more movement.
- The addition of slides on the screens around the fellowship hall were very effective, according to feedback from board members. John suggested putting slides on the screen highlighting the ringers faces during the next concert! Ron and Emily agreed with that idea. All members felt that this would be engaging to audience and provide exposure to individual ringers.
- Discussion was held regarding the dancers, the flutist, and the drummer. Bonnie explained to the board members that the dancers had specific requests that were somewhat difficult to fulfill. However, the dancers were very nice people and refused to take any honorarium for their performance. Board members stated that viewing of the dancers was difficult for some audience members, depending on the audience’s viewing angle in the room.

John was not sure the drummer actually added enough to the concert to warrant putting him and his assistant on the stage for the whole concert. He felt that the flutist played enough pieces for the stage. Emily agreed with John. Bonnie told the members that she would consider this in future concerts.

- Regarding having the concert on a Sunday afternoon rather than an evening, John felt that the afternoons would probably be preferred as many Villagers do not drive at night. He did not believe that days of the week mattered, as most of the Villagers are retired. Bonnie reminded the board members that the Christmas concert will be on a Friday evening, but the Spring 2025 concert still needs to be scheduled.

- John asked if the email mailing list sign-up sheet was utilized at the concert. Although Bonnie said that this was not done at this past concert, discussion followed regarding the benefits of increasing the email mailing list. Bonnie told the board that she will definitely ask ushers to help with the email list sign-up both before and after the next concerts.

- Discussion was held as to whether the one hour timeframe for the concert was worth the \$15 price. Board members felt that the \$15 ticket price was just right. The board concluded discussion by indicating that the projected 1 hour and 10 minute Christmas joint concert with "Horns a-Plenty" should be the right amount of time.

- Bonnie asked if she should continue to be the emcee person reading introductory remarks between pieces. Discussion followed. The consensus was that not having a separate emcee is more effective in connecting the director to the audience. Bonnie suggested to board members that asking some members of the Village Ringers to be the emcee for certain pieces could be effective, also. The board members agreed that exploring that suggestion would be a good idea.

i. The Village Ringers will again be performing for the Bonnyville Women's Club at the Churchill Recreation Center on Thursday, Dec. 19, 2024 (after the Christmas Concert is over). Bonnie stated that plans call for approximately 80 people to be in attendance.

j. Bonnie told the board members that she is exploring the possibility of the Village Ringers performing in a type of "mini tour." Discussion ensued with questions about the type of concert and the complications of physically moving and setting up of the bells in local churches or schools. Board members suggested that a Christmas concert would be difficult because of busy church and school schedules. The best possible concert would be around the Spring concert timeframe. The consensus of the members is exploring the possibility and definitely planning to start small...perhaps only 1 or 2 mini-concerts a year.

k. Bonnie's surgery is now planned for June 24, 2024. This would allow Bonnie to return for the September audition/first rehearsal, as planned.

l. Bonnie expressed her appreciation for the support of the board throughout the year and for staying in touch, even when there are long periods of time between meetings.

Emily moved that the President's report be approved and John seconded. All voted in favor.

2. Treasurer's Report

Although Amy was not in attendance, she had provided a spreadsheet report to members of the board. The Spring Concert totals were not yet available, but Bonnie estimated that the profit for the Spring Concert was \$1100. Amy's report indicated that we currently have \$4200 in the bank at this time.

Bonnie mentioned that she plans to reuse some older pieces, so she does not think she will spend as much money on purchasing new music pieces this new season.

Bonnie explained to the board that a breakdown of expenses and receipts is required for LLC and IRS required reports. Bonnie will work with Amy to add categories to Excel software in order to provide data for these required government reports.

Ron moved to approve the Treasurer's Report and John seconded, with all members voting in approval.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Bonnie told the board members that no one responded that they wished to serve on the board of directors for next year. Hearing this statement, John moved that the board approve the current slate of officers for 2024-2025. Ron seconded the motion and all voted in approval.

The officers for 2024-2025 will be:

Bonnie Fisher: President, Ron Drozd: Vice President, Amy Cornwall-Robinson: Treasurer, Emily Spann: Secretary, John Higbee: Member-at-Large

OLD BUSINESS

1. Bonnie asked for follow-up to John's resolution regarding the experimental informal audition this past fall. Bonnie explained that Emily and Amy, members of the board, were involved with the informal audition and one new ringer and two new subs were selected. Discussion ensued with John suggesting that Bonnie continue the informal auditions.
2. Ron Drozd presented the results of the Director Performance Surveys sent to Village Ringers earlier in the season. Although only a handful of surveys were returned to Ron via email, feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with only some viewing problems noted that are beyond the control of Village Ringers. Responses from the recent survey on Bonnie's performance were very positive. Some members personally expressed to Bonnie that they felt frustrated with not being able to sell our own tickets. In addition, people are buying tickets at the door, as they don't want to pay the required online fee. Bonnie said that the church requires the tickets to go through their online service.
3. The Village Ringers have a goal to participate in a charitable organization opportunity by donating a portion of the ticket profit to a local school music program. Discussion ensued as to whether to send money to a certain school music program or try to do something different for a school. Discussion was held on which school or schools in the area would benefit the most from a donation.

Bonnie mentioned that she had thought about starting a chime program in a local school. She has checked and found out that the price of a 3-octave set of chimes is approximately \$1,800.00. Discussion was held on the pros and cons of such an endeavor. As a whole, the board members were interested and asked Bonnie to check into this possibility at schools in the Sumter, Marion, and Lake County area and report at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Monday, September 9, 2024, at 1:00 pm will be the next informal audition and the first rehearsal of the Christmas season.
2. John suggested the possibility of developing a Village Ringers Charitable Organization Procedure. He explained to the board that raising money can be legally done to support a charitable organization. Discussion ensued with John explaining possibilities of people donating through a Charitable Designated Giving Account that could be set up of up to \$25,000 a year through the LLC/501C3 designation. The board members agreed that this could provide a method of people donating to provide chimes, risers, or other needs of the Village Ringers.

OTHER BUSINESS

Bonnie asked if funds could be utilized to pay for lunch for members of the board. John told the board that he did not think it would be a problem.

ADJOURNMENT/DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting will be determined at a later date. John made motion to adjourn the meeting and Ron seconded. Bonnie adjourned the meeting at 11:50 am.