

VILLAGE RINGERS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 9, 2025, 10 am

17652 SE 82nd Woodlawn Avenue, The Villages, Florida

MEMBERS ATTENDING: Bonnie Fisher, Amy Cornwall Robinson,
John Higbee, Ron Drozd, Donna Kagan

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME: Bonnie called the meeting to order at 10:05 am and welcomed everyone. Donna was introduced as the new board member in Emily's absence.

AGENDA/APPROVAL: Bonnie had emailed the agenda to everyone prior to the meeting and supplied paper copies at the meeting. She requested an addition to the agenda ... the possibility of starting another handbell choir. Amy moved to approve the agenda with the additional item. Donna seconded, and all voted to approve.

MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING/APPROVAL: Minutes were approved from the last meeting. All voted in favor and the minutes will be filed for review.

REPORTS

1. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

- a. Bonnie reported that the Christmas Concert was a success and commended the group of ringers that played. We had record attendance at the venue, the CLC at New Covenant United Methodist Church. Approximately 315 in attendance from 275 at our last concert. The Ringers enjoyed playing with Horns A 'Penty.
- b. Bonnie was grateful for a wonderful group of subs as attendance was a slight issue for the past term. She was very pleased with the articles written about our group in the 'Villages Friends' magazine, 'The

Villages' magazine and two detailed articles in the Daily Sun. This advertising is entirely free and gives us good exposure

- c. Bonnie clarified that the church gets 30% of the concert funds.
- d. Bonnie thanked John Higbee for continuing to keep our website current and producing a video of our Christmas concert showing our performance while incorporating the Power Point slides. The ringers are enjoying the video very much. All board members thanked John for his work on the video and his dedication to the group.
- e. Informal auditions were held a few days before on Monday, January 6, and 14 members (two new) were selected. Our upcoming concert is called 'COLORS' and will feature songs that have a color in their title. We hope to have our concert in the newly renovated Fellowship Hall.
- f. Bonnie reported on the Village Ringers performance at the Bonnyville Women's Club on Thursday, Dec 19th. The concert was a success and enjoyed by all.
- g. The group is in a good place as far as having all the equipment they need. Some items that have been discussed for the future are a lower octave of tone chimes and some stand lights. The
- h. Bonnie asked for feedback on the Christmas concert regarding the theme, line of vision on stage, content of program, variety, length, appropriateness of slides, the date not being as close to Christmas, etc. The feedback from the group was that the front row of ringers could be seen clearly while the back row were slightly obstructed due to the lack of space as the stage was shared with the brass players. The actual program was great. The brass players had some subs that day and a percussionist who sight read the program. The slides were very appropriate. Bonnie clarified on the slides that the Village Ringers are not part of the church, we just practice there. The stage decorations were a hit and added a splash of color. Having the date a little earlier than usual did not seem to be a problem. Several audience members said it started their Christmas season off for them.

The audience clearly enjoyed the ringers processing through the audience to enter the stage at the beginning. The sound was balanced. The non-folded paper programs were a hit and gave space for more information.

- i. Bonnie brought up the possibility of having a 'mini tour' after the spring concert and will explore this idea with the ringers. The board thought this would be an interesting idea and a good outreach plan.
- j. Discussion of reimbursing Bonnie. The board encourage Bonnie to request reimbursement for incidental items that she has been paying for, such as file folders, labels, etc.
- k. Bonnie thanked everyone for their support and for staying in touch throughout the year, even when there are long breaks between meetings.

John moved that the presidents report should be approved, and Amy seconded. All voted in favor.

2. TREASURERS REPORT

- a. Amy informed the board that we are in good standing financially. We currently have \$4,111.44 in the bank.

She had checks for \$100 and \$50 not deposited as yet. A few ringers had not yet paid their dues for this term.

Ron moved to accept the treasurer's report and Amy seconded. All members voted to approve.

3. OLD BUSINESS

- a. We discussed the **audition process** and the possibility of some changes. John wondered if the people who didn't make the audition cut could hear themselves playing. Donna suggested that having the auditions a day or two earlier than the first rehearsal might be beneficial as the ringers could be notified by email. This alleviates anyone feeling sad or embarrassed in front of the group. It was brought up that if Bonnie sent out the audition dates at the beginning of the year then interested ringers could clear a space on their calendar for them. Amy said that if the spring concert next year is in April then we could hold auditions on the first week of January, after the new year. It was agreed that it doesn't have to be a set date. Bonnie will give this some thought and get back to us. Bonnie wondered how the ringers felt about two board members being a part of the judging team. Amy had the same thought. Donna suggested that during auditions one board member at a time sits on the team, while the other plays in the group then they change places. Bonnie appreciated all the good suggestions made and quoted that "God so loved the world that he did not send a committee!"
- b. Bonnie asked that we move to the next item on our agenda, and we would visit this at a later time.

4. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Feedback From Our Christmas Concert:**

This was covered in our earlier discussion during the president's report.

- b. **Review of Auditions:**

This was covered in our earlier discussion during the president's report.

c. Set Next Board Meeting:

No date was set (at this time) for the next board meeting.

d. Discussion of Qualified Charitable Distribution: John Higbee

Bonnie said John had contacted her on August 28, 2024, about Charitable Distributions, and asked John to explain the benefits and non-benefits to the group. John said the prologue is that the group is in good financial standing, with money in the bank and a continuation of funds raised at every concert. The question of funding has not been an issue of significance. Part of what we haven't done as an organization is community outreach. We've talked about putting money into the community and music and how it can be done. One of the implicit elements of a 5013C group is community involvement and it's not as much a part of the legislation as it was historically, it's a concept that goes along with the tax-exempt status...that we'll be giving back to the community. Part of the reason he raised this was to see if we were going to get involved with more community outreach that would command spending money. For that we'd need other sources to raise it...either more concerts or donations. He informed us that this particular type of donation is the exact same law under which the original funding for this organization was given. It's not that it's an unknown, it's the same as people who have an IRA or any other legitimate savings account through the government that is tax deferred and are able to use 5013Cs and take money out of those accounts and give it tax free to the giver as well as the recipient. If you have legitimate funds in your retirement you can avoid the taxation on it, and it can be part of your RMD each year.

Depending on how you file your finances, you can lift that money out without tax liability. John suggested that if this group needs additional funding for bells, chimes, music, etc. this is a legitimate type of solicitation to make for those who are interested in donating or sponsoring the Village Ringers. This is a potential source of funding for whatever the organization might need. John said it would be a win-win situation for anyone involved. Bonnie asked how we would do that and asked if we should advertise this in our program. John affirmed that we can solicit money under the Florida law as we are a 5013C group. He also pointed out that some might donate money but list it as part of their charitable donations. He stressed that if you are taking money out of a tax deferred account then one can go to their financial advisor and ask them to write a check for the group. Bonnie asked if there was an application for that and how we would report that. John said that when we get our annual financial statement, it would show that it reduces the RMD for that year. It doesn't show up as gross revenue or a taxable item for the year on one's personal financial statement. John said this was a matter of awareness, and we should look at ways we have of leveraging this through our website. It's something to keep in mind at this point. Bonnie suggested we should work on the language of this and put it on our website and Face Book page. John said we should find something we actually need to buy before we put this paragraph out. Bonnie asked what our next step should be. John suggested we discuss this at our next meeting and find out what our needs might be. He said we could possibly buy risers or even rent a storage shed. Bonnie agreed that we continue discussing this at our next meeting. It was decided that we did not need a motion to close this subject. It will be 'follow up to the old business' at our next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Bonnie stated that In our bylaws (and dreams of forming this Organization) it states that we want to spread the love of handbells. Bonnie receives emails regularly from people who want to learn to play. After bringing this subject up to the ringers Kathy Bullock immediately volunteered to lead another group after the ringers finish each Monday. This group would be in charge of putting the remaining equipment away.

Lana called Bonnie and offered to start a beginner's group. This is great news. The group(s) could play at our concert in March. It is exciting that so many people want to learn to play. Bonnie said the Enrichment Facility was not an option for us due to our practicing and storing equipment at NCUMC.

If we get two different groups going how will this work schedule wise? Should we trade off weeks? Who will set up and take down? Amy suggested that perhaps Lana might consider teaching at her own church, St. Georges Episcopal. This would alleviate a problem schedule wise.

Bonnie said there might be a few expenses to consider. Kathy had said she might need some folders but thinks she has music at her church she could use. They are about \$40 a piece. Bonnie asked that if we work out the details, will the board be willing to support the two new groups. Amy asked about dues. We pay \$35 per concert. Donna suggested that people might invest more if they have dues to pay. It was suggested that \$20 was a good fee for each of the two groups.

It was pointed out that we can recruit from Kathy's group to move up to Village Ringers. Ron said he worked at a community college and it became a great recruitment well for future candidates. Bonnie said she would contact Michael Fortuna to write a story on the two new groups. This will be a good way of advertising. Different names were suggested for the groups, but none were decided on. Kathy and Lana should really have a say in this, too.

Bonnie made a motion at 11:52 am to close the meeting. Everyone seconded her motion.