

Minutes – June 3, 2020 [ZOOM Format]
Friends of South Carolina Libraries (FOSCL) Board Meeting
10:00 a.m.

Present: Marlena White, President; Maurice Cherry, Paul Dove, Jonathan Haupt, Libby Law, Sarah McMaster; Kitty Spires; Donna Lolos (State Library Liaison)

Invited Guests: Dan Aldridge, President of the Friends of Georgia Libraries
Judy Hills, President of the Friends of North Carolina Public Libraries

Absent: Mary Ellen Ham, Dennis Harkins, Valinda Miller, Helen Ann Rawlinson

Call to Order:

President White called the special Zoom meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. She asked Board members to introduce themselves and welcomed the guests who had been invited to assist us with our focus on the creation of an award to recognize an Outstanding Friends Group: **Dan Aldridge, President of the Friends of Georgia Libraries, and Judy Hills, President of the Friends of North Carolina Public Libraries.**

Marlena explained that we have four established FOSCL awards to honor the contribution of individuals. We have on occasion recognized special efforts by various Friends groups, but we have never designated an award specifically for that purpose. She invited Dan and Judy to share with us their experiences with awards in Georgia and North Carolina respectively.

Judy explained that the **North Carolina Friends' award** bears the name of a stalwart supporter of libraries and that in reality there are *five different awards*, one for a Friends group in each of the five districts in the state, including a check for \$200, presumably one for the winner in each district. Groups submit a two-page application—the first providing basic information about the group—location, membership figures, officers, etc., and the second a brief narrative outlining the justification for an award. Judy mentioned that the maximum length of the narrative was recently reduced, a change not supported by all of those selecting the winner. She added that because the number of applicants for the awards has been disappointing recently, a committee has been formed to study the lack of interest. Paul asked if we might see N. C. application form, and Judy agreed to send it to Marlena.

Sarah asked about membership in North Carolina, and Judy responded that there are probably 90-100 members currently, although the Coronavirus epidemic has made it is hard to know because some people have let their membership lapse temporarily. Judy said that Friends membership is required for all of those submitting awards applications.

In response to Judy's request for information about FOSCL, Marlena explained that we provide both an annual conference and occasional regional meetings, as well as our newsletter. She then asked Kitty to describe how we are attempting to revamp our annual meeting. Kitty stated that we will provide breakout sessions to create a more interesting interactive format that will allow those from each FOL to learn from what other FOLs are doing.

Judy responded that the N.C. Friends have decided that instead of hosting an annual meeting, they will opt for a Board Retreat. Traditionally North Carolina has had an annual meeting and five regional meetings, one in each area of the state.

Marlena suggested that what we are doing now, that is the ZOOM meeting format, may prove advantageous in that we are required to look at what we do in a different light. Judy added that most of the topics we deal with are generic, and the issues that concern a local group here are probably no different from those faced by FOL groups in another region of the country.

Dan then described the **awards structure in Georgia**, where there are **three opportunities for recognition each year--two awards and a grant**:

The “Fabulous Friends Award” *recognizes a group* for outstanding advocacy and support for their library. This award has been in place for a long time and has proven to be an excellent way to publicize the winning group’s achievements. The application requires basic contact information and a one-page narrative describing why the group feels that it is worthy of the award, which consists of a wood-mounted crystal plaque, but no cash.

The “Best Friend Award” *recognizes one individual*; and the **Grant** is a \$500 award that *enables a group to provide an honorarium to a Georgia author* who will speak at one of their meetings. Dan notes that this has proven to be a very popular award.

Georgia holds an annual workshop in different parts of the state, and often groups that have made applications for one or more of the awards have shown up at an annual meeting in an entirely different part of the state. Dan mentions that much of the work of the Georgia Friends Board has been devoted to visiting FOL groups in diverse parts of the state to address their specific concerns. He routinely gives a few general remarks and then opens the floor to answer their questions and assist with issues of real importance to them.

General Discussion:

We learned that there are common threads running through Friends organizations in all three states—NC, SC, and GA. They show the same degrees of diversity—some with individual service outlets, some with library systems (city, county), and others for regions. Some libraries have no Friends groups, and others have made it clear that they do not want Friends groups!

Partnerships with Other Organizations:

Georgia partners with the Georgia Library Association, which appoints a non-voting member to the Friends of NC Libraries Board. They jointly attend and participate in the National Legislative Day in Washington, DC. Efforts to merge organizations have been unsuccessful.

The **North Carolina Friends of the Library** used to give money to the North Carolina Library Association for advocacy. They got little in return; however, they are now receiving information about legislative issues that will enable them to work together.

Use of Funds: There are discrepancies in the ways that various Friends groups use funds. Some are sitting on large amounts of cash, yet find that the libraries they wish to support are unable to identify specific “needs.” Judy pointed out that sometimes libraries use FOL contributions to *supplant* budget lines rather than to *supplement* them. Don added that there are FOLs that raise money, yet do not want to spend it. Judy suggests that the critical concern for awarding a grant should be its “impact.”

Upcoming Awards Discussions:

We need to discuss both the **purpose and the criteria for each award**. We should perhaps include a list of *items that we do not plan to fund*, such as the perennial Summer Reading Program, a “given” for many libraries.

Should our criteria address the different sizes of the competing Friends groups, their financial status, etc.? Perhaps we should look at the percentages and not just the number of members, bank accounts, etc.? Libby suggests that we see how many people will really be involved in the project and analyze as best we can what might be described as a “ratio,” that is, the size of the award as it relates to the group’s annual budget.

We might also like to determine whether our goal is to focus more on the award as a *recognition of truly outstanding achievement over the past year or two* or for *recognition of drawing attention to a group that has performed consistently well over a long period of time*.

Kitty mentioned that her Friends group awards a scholarship to a high school graduate who has made or will make contributions to the library.

Collective Assignment

We all need to look at each of our current awards, its stated purpose, and the appropriate criteria for determining the award.

Respectfully submitted by
Maurice Cherry, FOSCL Secretary; with significant assistance from Libby Law

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Upcoming Meetings:

- June 10, 2020 10:00 a.m. [Zoom format] special meeting**
- June 12, 2020 1:30 p.m. [Zoom Format] regular quarterly Board Meeting**
- Oct. 9, 2020 Board Meeting (11:30 a.m.) S. C. State Library, Columbia (?)**
- Jan. 8, 2021 Board Meeting (11:30 a.m.) S. C. State Library, Columbia (?)**