

**Rotary Club of Swarthmore**

**Board Agenda**

**July 17, 2024**

**4:30 p.m. via Zoom**

**Present:** Ken Wright, Sarah Pita, Maria Zissimos, Jane Billings, Bryan Casey, Joe Lesniak, George Whitfield, Rosemary Fox, Joy Charlton, Lori Markusfeld, Hillard Pouncy, Elizabeth Church

**Excused:** Lisa O'Mahoney, Josh Twersky, Carr Everbach

The meeting was called to order by Jane Billings, President

Opening Remarks by Jane Billings, President

**Secretary's Report:** Minutes for May 15, 2024 were approved (no meeting in June)

**Treasurer's Report:**

- Joe reported that as of 7/17/2024 the balance of Club accounts is \$27,000. Report was accepted.
- Joe and Jane presented the 2024-2025 budget, noting that this is typically as task for the president-elect but that a president-elect has not been selected yet.

**Committee Reports:**

**Club Programs** – Hillard reports that August speakers are booked and that requests are being entertained for the fall. Notes that it is Rotary tradition to avoid politics during election season, so there will be no political guests from September through the election.

**Membership/Fun Fair** – Carr was absent. There are two new proposed members in DACdb.

**Rotary Arts Conversation** – Ken reported that speakers have been booked for September, October, and November in what appears to be a wonderful lineup.

**Rotary Foundation** – Elizabeth reports that 100% of Swarthmore Rotary members donated to the Rotary Foundation for the past year. The only exceptions were two very new members—so new, they were not requested to give this time. She plans to start campaigning earlier in the coming year. She also reports that she has some Paul Harris pins to disburse.

**Service Projects** – Lisa was absent. Sarah had no report.

**Youth/Interact** – Marc Berneski (not present). General discussion of the high level of enthusiasm around the new Interact club at SHHS. The club is certified and they have some good projects in the works.

**Public Image** – Rosemary is building Swarthmore Rotary's followings on Instagram and Facebook, planning to post 2x/week, and is working on setting up a LinkedIn page as well. A recent front-page article in the *Swarthmorean* was noted by the group.

**Grants for Swarthmore Rotary Foundation**—Maria presented Mary Laxton's application for support for a \$500 grant to help defray costs for a medical trip to Kenya. There was discussion of whether it would be appropriate to award a grant to an individual for travel costs, and whether it was setting a precedent of awarding foundation money to any member taking a trip. At the same time, most felt strongly that Mary's medical mission was a selfless, Rotarian act of service and deserving of club support. Gathering more information or deliberating past this meeting was impractical because Mary's trip is in early August. Ultimately, the Board voted to award Mary funding out of club (not Foundation) funds.

The Foundation has \$12K for grants this year. Applications are first screened by the club grant committee, and then are brought to the Board for approval. The President's allocation is the amount of grant funding available in that President's year of leadership—not a discretionary fund for the president.

**New Business:**

Joy Charlton spoke in support of Rotary Peace Fellow Mohammed Fakhry, who was nominated for his Fellowship by Swarthmore Rotary and also supported by our district. Mohammed will be starting at the Duke University program in Public Health in the fall.

Peace Fellowships provide financial support only for the Fellow, and not for family members. Mohammed has a wife and two small daughters whom he is currently getting ready to leave behind in war-torn Yemen because they have no resources available to come to the US. There are no additional funds available from Rotary International or from Duke to cover Mohammed's family for two years. The Club does not want to see Mohammed separated from his family for 2 years.

Joy requests that, as an initial step, the Swarthmore Rotary Trust supply a letter vouching to provide a required \$20K in financial support for Mohammed's wife and daughters so that they may join him in the US. This letter is a US visa application requirement. \$20K is not likely to cover all of their needs. Joy further requests that, between Swarthmore Rotary and our district, we fundraise to raise some or all of that money. It was pointed out that the actual amount needed might be closer to \$40K over 2 years, and that this letter amounted to a financial commitment if no further fundraising occurred.

George ultimately moved that the Board should produce and sign the letter, so that Mohammed's family could begin the process of applying for their US visas. The Board would approach the Trust for the required \$20K guarantee. The Board would commit to actively fundraising, including working with donors identified by Peter Mardinly in the District, to raise the amount actually needed by Mohammed and his family in order to live in the US during Mohammed's fellowship. The Board approved this motion.

There was discussion of sharing approved Board minutes and financials with full membership at Thursday breakfast meetings

President Jane will send around a Doodle poll to ascertain best Board meeting times

Brian Casey expressed strong concern over the lack of a President-Elect at this late date

Adjourned at 6:10 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Sarah Pita, Secretary