

LAPTOPS TO LESOTHO

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

February 3, 2012

A meeting of the Board of Directors of Laptops to Lesotho was held on February 3, 2012 at 5:30 PM Eastern Standard Time via conference call.

Board Members Present:

Janissa Balcomb, President and Acting Treasurer

Sarah Gardner, Secretary

Andrew Dernovsek, Member

Sherrie Howey, Member

Call to Order

Janissa Balcomb called the meeting to order at 5:27 PM Eastern Standard Time and Sarah Gardner recorded the minutes. All board members were present.

Welcome New Board Member

All board members officially welcomed Sherrie Howey to the board of directors.

Report from Trip to Lesotho

Janissa reported that on arriving in Ketane, she discovered that the laptops were not being used as often as we had thought. The 7th grade class (taught by Mapesh) had used them only a few times over the year, 5th and 6th grade classes used them a couple times a week, and the lower grades had used them only a few times over the year. Some of the reasons for this is difficulty in coming up with lessons that utilize the laptops, the teachers lost some of their computer skills over the course of the year and are generally timid with new things – if they didn't know a step for using the laptop they would stop. The teachers and especially students are still excited about using the laptops but the teachers need to become more comfortable with them and need help incorporating them into lessons. Janissa requested that a log be kept of computer use so we will know exactly how often they are being used. Matlabe also plans to schedule computer times for each class. Delia will help with the logs and schedule.

Janissa put in extra wiring to charge up to 40 laptops at a time (enough for one classroom) and discovered that when the solar panels were installed on the school, they were in the shade of a huge tree so it's hard to charge all the laptops to full power. She has asked Ivan to move the panels to a position with full sun and repair a hole in the roof from the first installation. There have been no security issues with the laptops and they are being maintained well. Even though they aren't being used in the classroom as often as we had hoped, kids are taking them home regularly and teaching their siblings and parents how to use them. The parents are excited about it. Janissa upgraded all 86 laptops and added some software, including a math program that the teachers and kids love.

There have been some changes with the teachers and communication problems. Mochochoko is back at work teaching 7th grade, not sure where Mapesh will be now. Matlabe has applied for funding for an additional

teacher due to increased enrollment, that would allow Mapesh to continue teaching at Nohana. Mapesh is going through a hard time and had serious communication problems with us, other teachers, and Matlabe. Matlabe has been unsure how to treat Mapesh and Mapesh reacted badly (forged a letter, skipped classes, didn't do assignments). Mapesh has resigned as an official leader of our project but wants to stay involved. Other teachers also expressed frustration with Matlabe because he had not communicated his expectations to them. Janissa spent a lot of time working with Matlabe on communication skills and he is excited about possibly going to a Project Leader Management training in Maseru. Janissa also taught Matlabe how to use her internet phone to help with email communication (weekly/biweekly including computer logs). His old internet phone will go to Alice at Kokobe school. Delia wants to be more actively involved and will help Matlabe and the teachers with communication and grant writing through the end of her stay in August. She and Matlabe are also working with Peace Corps to get a dedicated PCV for our project after she leaves, they are receptive to the idea. The teachers were not as dedicated to the training this year – they lost a lot of computer and teaching skills over the course of the year. Fortunate volunteered to help with training and did a great job with demo lessons. Delia will try to be in the classroom to help teachers retain computer knowledge. Janissa could not judge impact of computers on student achievement because 7th grade did not use them very much over the past year.

The Kokobe expansion was well under way when Janissa arrived. Matlabe had already chosen the school and put a lot of work and consideration into the choice of school. He had talked to teachers and the community and made arrangements for a ceremonial start for the project. Janissa went with several teachers from Nohana and took two laptops and solar panels to Kokobe. The teachers and students were very excited and the Nohana teachers talked about how the laptops could be used and how it worked to have students take them home. Janissa was very impressed by Matlabe's initiative with the expansion. Kokobe is grades 1-7 and half the size of Nohana with 200 students enrolled and three teachers. Matlabe will be visiting with them and starting the process of rules and regulations with them – he is handling the whole process!

Janissa also started a read aloud program while she was there. She did a read aloud in the morning before breakfast which was a huge success, even with parents. Janissa downloaded a lot of stories for the laptops and Mapesh reinforced the reading by having students read him a page from a book before they could take a laptop during lunch hour. The donations that Janissa delivered (posters, sports equipment, clothing, games, and scholarships) were all well received and presented at graduation. Janissa also worked with the teachers to repair the chalkboards at the school and they are now mostly fixed.

There were many tasks that did not get completed – it was hard for Janissa to accomplish many tasks working alone. There were problems setting up the network server, Andre and Pieter will go back in February or March to get it working. We received a donated internet antenna, but it cannot be installed until the server is working. The wiring in the classroom was not completed, but Janissa trained Mapesh and two boys to finish it. Mapesh will also finish working on shelving that was not completed. Matlabe has applied for funds to build on to the school for a library/computer room. This is not high priority for us, but teachers are interested in getting the room and additional desks.

Approval of Mission Statement

The board reviewed our current mission statement. Board members unanimously agreed that our original mission statement was still in line with our vision for the organization.

Review of Responsibilities

Board members reviewed which responsibilities each board member is currently handling. Sarah Gardner is updating and maintaining all online information in addition to secretary duties. Andrew Dernovsek is arranging and overseeing an agreement with Pueblo West for donated (non XO) laptops and soliciting student funding. He is unable to handle any other volunteer tasks until at least March due to school demands. Sherrie Howey does not currently have any responsibilities as a new member. She mentioned that she is most passionate about the teaching and learning aspects of our project, but may be willing to serve as treasurer. Janissa Balcomb is handling all other responsibilities, but will be handing off many of those responsibilities to other board members for the coming year. Janissa instructed board members to come up with one possible person to serve as a board member and/or treasurer by the next board meeting.

Review of Reports of Records

Janissa noted that end of year reports were filed with the Idaho Secretary of State and IRS. Periodic and annual reports are due in addition to funder reports, Janissa is currently working on these. Sarah volunteered to assist with future reports in 2012.

Treasurer Report

Janissa reported that the remainder of our bill to Bethel for solar power installation has been paid. We received approximately \$1375 in private donations from December 2010 to January 2012. This amount is similar to the previous year and includes several repeat donors. We have \$14,600 in our account. Of that amount, \$9200 is dedicated to buying XO laptops for Kokobe (from the Solon foundation) and a small amount is dedicated to buying a projector for the school (from the Friends of Lesotho). We have about \$5000 remaining in discretionary funds. Janissa has committed to getting the books caught up, but wants to find another board member to serve as treasurer permanently.

Financial Planning

Board members discussed if an audit was necessary or would be beneficial. Sherrie said her organizations have never done them in the past. Andrew explained that UCE has been looking into them and they are very expensive, but with an audit you can apply for different grants. Board members unanimously agreed that as long as donors are happy we do not need an audit. The board agreed to set up a donor database for future reference. The board also discussed establishing a bank account in Lesotho at FNB. Janissa noticed during her trip that FNB is offering accounts with access through internet phones and paypal, which would be useful. Andrew remembered from his experience that there were a lot of requirements for bank accounts in Lesotho. Janissa will investigate what is required to set up a bank account at FNB.

Board members also reviewed and revised spending priorities for 2012. The previous priorities had been 2011 travel expenses, expanding the project, and XO laptops for Nohana Primary. 2011 travel expenses have been covered, the expansion is in progress, and the board members agreed that the 86 laptops at Nohana Primary are currently enough for the school. The board unanimously agreed that spending \$4000-5000 on 2012 travel for training was high priority. Some of the expenses related to the expansion to Kokobe have already been covered or are minimal – the Solon grant provides 46 XO laptops for Kokobe and shipping expenses should be minimal with volunteers hand carrying them. Board members agreed that funding a school based power system at Kokobe is also high priority, with individual solar panels also being provided as funds allowed. We will apply for a grant from Friends of Lesotho to help cover the power system. Other expenses related to the Kokobe expansion are \$300 for wiring the classrooms, which will come from discretionary funds, and \$300 for security,

which will come from leftover funds in Nohana's school account. Solon Foundation has requested that we insure the equipment they have paid for – Sherrie will investigate how much this will cost. Teachers at Nohana requested adult sized XO laptop keyboards, which we will buy, and additional desks, which board members agreed fell outside the scope of our project, although we are willing to help them find ways to make desks. Funding to refurbish, ship, and power laptops from Pueblo West was put off until 2013 because their status is unclear.

Janissa also reviewed our income sources. Our most recent funders are Solon Foundation, Friends of Lesotho, Maseru Rotary Club, Pueblo West High School, and FIPE. Sarah and Sherrie volunteered to request funds from Friends of Lesotho for solar power at Kokobe Primary School. Janissa also discussed actively soliciting donations from friends, family, and the general public through requests, presentations, and fundraising events.

Annual Planning

Board members approved the following plans for 2012 and assigned responsibility for tasks.

Kokobe Expansion

Janissa will be in charge of program development. Janissa will mentor Alice, the principal of Kokobe. Andrew may help mentor as well. Janissa will also take charge of supplying laptops, power, storage, and security.

Pueblo West Computers

Andrew will continue to work on our agreement with Pueblo West High School.

Training

Delia and Craig will take the lead on communicating with Matlabe, Alice, and Mapesh. Janissa and trip volunteers will train teachers on computer and teaching skills.

Partnership with BLOOM Africa

BLOOM Africa will no longer be funding projects. Instead they will be creating their own Community Learning Centers. We will no longer get funding from them, but we could coordinate tasks, such as facilities for training, disseminating HIV info, etc. We have a shared goal of improving life in the village through education – we are focusing on computers and they are focusing on job training. Andrew Steele is very excited about our work. Janissa suggested they consider Nohana Primary School for their first site. Two BLOOM members offered to carry supplies to Lesotho for us. They are also interested in visiting Nohana Primary School.

Additional Educational Software

We will work to locate and develop more educational LINUX software for the XO laptops. Janissa has some software from Mindset but has been unable to load it to the network server. Sherrie's son may be able to provide technical troubleshooting for those problems. Sarah will meet with Janissa in June to become more familiar with the XO laptops so she can look for and create lesson plans to support classroom curriculum.

Documentation

Matlabe will keep logs of how often laptops are being used in classrooms. He will also send regular reports of how things are going. Sherrie will follow up with Matlabe on the logs and reports.

Project Evaluation

Board members decided to discuss evaluating the project further at the next board meeting.

Publicity

All board members will be responsible for making presentations and will try to find a US rotary club because funds will be doubled through their international matching fund. Sherrie has some leads to follow and Sarah will check around Bloomington and Indiana University. Sarah will update the brochure and websites, with help from Craig and Janissa.

Next trip to Lesotho: December 2012 – February 2013

Janissa and Craig are definitely going to Lesotho for the deployment. Sherrie, Fortunate, and Jennifer are also likely to go. There are at least seven other volunteers who are also interested in going. Janissa will send out a list of various projects to volunteers who are committed to the trip to help decide how to best utilize volunteers.

Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:07 PM Eastern Standard Time. Andrew left the meeting early at 7:30, shortly after Annual Planning began.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sarah Gardner, Recording Secretary