

LAPTOPS TO LESOTHO INC.
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

2 August 2014

*9 a.m. Pacific / 10 a.m. Mountain / 12 noon Eastern / 6 p.m. South Africa times
Conference Call, via Skype*

Note-taker: Sarah Gardner

ATTENDEES

Janissa Balcomb, President
Sarah Gardner, Secretary
Vicki Panhuise, Treasurer
Henk Boshoff, Director
Sherrie Howe, Director
Kathy Plath, Director
Fortunate Gunzo, Volunteer

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at five minutes past the hour. Fortunate and Kathy joined the meeting a few minutes later due to technical difficulties.

INTRODUCTIONS

Newly-elected Board Members Vicki Panhuise, Henk Boshoff, and Kathy Plath were welcomed to the Board. Introductions were made all around, with everyone giving some background about themselves, how they got involved with Laptops to Lesotho, what their responsibilities are, and what they have done for the organization thus far.

GOALS

Short-term Goals

Janissa summarized what she understood to be a consensus on our short-term goals, as expressed during everyone's introductions, that we should stay focused for now on what we've been doing and make it stronger. This includes strengthening people's skills and creating a library of lessons.

Most board members expressed interest in changing the hardware and software we use, but it was decided that, for the time being, we will continue to work with the current hardware at the schools.

There is still interest in conducting a project evaluation as soon as possible, but this has to be put on hold until we can find sufficient funding.

Long-term Goals

We agreed that we will look into implementing a project at the primary school in Pela Tsoeu, in the Leribe District not far from the South African border. We selected this location because it has better access to technical support from South Africa, and it will be quicker and easier for volunteers and evaluators to reach it. We will use this site to work out some of the bugs in our existing program, and then we can export that experience back to remote sites in Ketane.

We will also try to use Pela Tsoeu to collect pre- and post-deployment evaluation data.

Whether we decide to use the XO laptops or switch to other hardware at Pela Tsoeu will be determined at a later date.

No date was set to initiate the project there, but we will start looking into acquiring funding for project implementation/evaluation.

STATUS REPORTS

Finances

Vicki introduced her 2014 financial report and gave an account of the current status of our finances. The accounts include expenses for volunteer allowance, travel, and solar power.

It was agreed that we need to put together a budget for the remainder of 2014 and for 2015. This can then be aligned with grant writing and fundraising efforts.

Janissa gave a report on the status of the New York Unadilla Rotary Club funding. We were given a grant of approximately \$7000 in 2013, but it came with some strings attached which we could not accept. So, we only accepted \$5000. The Rotary Club was supposed to pay us starting in mid-2013, but we only received \$2,000, in two \$1,000 payments in December 2013 and January 2014. We are continuing to pay Florence's stipend, travel, and expenses even though The Rotary Club has fallen behind on the funding.

Janissa gave a report on the status of older financial records. These records have not been fully organized and reported because of a lack of time.

Tasks

- Janissa will contact The Rotary Club to get the remainder of the promised funding.
- Janissa and Vicki will meet next week to organize the financial records and start developing a budget.

School Server

Henk gave a report on the status of his work with the school servers. Florence has visited Henk twice in Pretoria. The first time she brought the hardware to him. He struggled to get laptops connected to server and internet. The second time she visited, the servers were operational, but Henk couldn't find passwords to connect to the laptops to the servers. Henk said that the server software is based on Ubuntu, a common open-source software used by others.

When Florence was in Pretoria, Henk taught her how to set up a wireless network.

Janissa gave a bit of background on the existing school servers. Because there is no internet access at the schools, the purpose of the servers is to provide storage and access to lessons, software, and other information. Tony created what he calls "Internet in a Box" which has a multitude of offline resources, including Wikipedia, Maps, Books, Khan Academy and more. This is on both servers, but all the components are not fully operational yet.

Tony Anderson designed and set up the school servers to work with XO laptops, but there is no documentation and no one else seems to be able to use them. Tony has all the passwords. Janissa also explained that the schools have power for the servers and routers already. The laptops all have wi-fi capability, so they can access the server through the routers once the passwords are in place.

Tasks

- Henk will contact Tony to get the passwords and work on server connections and documentation.
- Henk will coordinate with Florence to get the servers hooked up and operational at the schools.

FIPE Scholarships

Sherrie gave a summary of the status of the FIPE student scholars. The results for most of the students have been disappointing. FIPE will reduce the number of scholarships and concentrate on supporting further education of the few good students. Sherrie said she has had absolutely no contact with Matlabe. Janissa said she has had email contact with Matlabe recently as well as messages relayed via Florence. Janissa reminded Sherrie that she should go through Florence to contact Matlabe because that usually gets quick results. Fortunate said she has contact with Matlabe and would work with Sherrie to get the information she needs.

Tasks

- Sherrie will contact Florence and Fortunate to set up a channel of communication with Matlabe and acquire reports and information from Matlabe.
- Fortunate will talk with Sherrie, then contact Matlabe.

PWHS Dell Laptops

Sherrie updated the Board on the status of the Dell laptops that PWHS donated. They are still in storage in the basements of Sherrie and Kathy's houses. FIPE is willing to pay shipping if Matlabe can provide some direction, but Sherrie has been having trouble communicating with him. Janissa suggested that it is not worth the money to ship them over as Nohana Primary does not have the electricity to run them. L2L has some funding from PWHS dedicated to shipping those laptops, just over \$1000, but this will cover only a portion of the laptops. The Board decided that Sherrie should ship what she can with the PWHS money and give the rest to a Colorado-based 4-H project that Kathy has been in touch with and that will be able use the laptops.

Tasks

- Sherrie will contact Matlabe, via Florence, regarding shipping the laptops. She will then ship as many laptops as Matlabe wants and can be sent with the PWHS money.
- Kathy will then contact the 4-H club and arrange transfer of the remaining laptops to them.

CURRENT NEEDS

Fundraising

There was a discussion about the need for more fundraising. It was agreed that we need to recruit more people who can focus on fundraising and grant writing. It was suggested that our funding requests should be targeted and project-based, as most of our fundraising has been in the past.

Tasks

- Janissa will try to recruit someone to focus on grant research, grant writing, and other fundraising efforts.
- Henk will discuss South Africa tax laws with his company's accountant regarding donations from South Africa businesses under the Black Economic Empowerment program.
- Vicki will coordinate with Henk on drafting a plan for the project expansion and evaluation.

- Janissa will send Vicki and Henk background information on the project philosophy and approach for use in the search for funds to cover project implementation at our next school.
- Fortunate will help with grant writing.
- All Board Members will think about ways they can help raise funds, to discuss at the next meeting.

Publicity

It was mentioned by several members that fundraising should go hand-in-hand with publicity. Henk suggested that we use NGO Pulse to show off our work and increase our visibility with corporate and industry funders.

Janissa stated that the L2L blog gets far more hits than any of our other social media sites, with over 30,000 hits since its inception, and it has a worldwide audience. However, the websites generate virtually no income. Janissa suggested that time spent on developing and updating these websites is not beneficial for fundraising purposes.

Tasks

- Henk will create a LinkedIn page for L2L.
- Henk will investigate NGO Pulse.
- Kathy and Sarah will update the L2L Facebook page, especially posting photos from the most recent trip to Lesotho.
- Kathy will submit more frequent posts to the L2L blog.
- Sarah will update the official L2L website.

Liaison

Janissa suggested that we need to recruit someone to act as a liaison with our Basotho participants. We continue to have problems with communications with them, especially getting updates of their progress. Janissa knows several people who have either previously expressed interest or might be interested in this role.

Tasks

- Janissa will try to recruit someone for that role.

Lessons

Sarah gave a report on the lessons that she has been creating over the summer. She reiterated that, when we started, the Basotho students at Kokobe had minimal to no computer skills, not even how to use a mouse or keyboard, so it critical that we make lessons that are easy for students to use.

There was a discussion about the continuing need to acquire better educational materials for the XO laptops. Most software on the laptops is not sufficient for classroom use and/or is not easy for the teachers to use. We need to get more lessons in a format that is easy for the teachers to use and doesn't require additional time investment from them. We also need lessons that students can use on their own. Henk mentioned that Edubuntu could be investigated as a possible platform.

Tasks

- Sarah, Janissa, and Fortunate will continue to develop lessons.

- Fortunate will act as liaison with teachers regarding what they want and need for lessons, what is working, what isn't.
- Fortunate will get the current schemes-of-work from all the teachers at Nohana and Kokobe Primary Schools.
- Fortunate will keep up-to-date with changes to the national primary school curriculum and textbooks.

Recruitment

Tasks

- All Board Members were asked to think about people who might be interested in our work and could be recruited to help as volunteers or serve on the Board. This will be discussed at the next board meeting.

Training

We decided to delay discussing the option of a trip to Lesotho for training in 2015 until the next board meeting. Fortunate volunteered to help train the teachers if she is available for the training dates.

NEXT SCHEDULED BOARD MEETING

Saturday, October 11, 2014

9 a.m. Pacific / 10 a.m. Mountain / 12 noon Eastern / 6 p.m. South Africa times

Conference Call, via Skype

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 1 hour 38 minutes.

Report submitted by Janissa Balcomb, 9 August 2014