

Corporation for National and Community Service
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting
May 20, 2009
12:30 p.m. – 1:15 p.m., EST

The Board of Directors convened in Washington, D.C. The following members of the Board were present:

Alan Solomont, Chair
Julie Fisher Cummings
Hyepin Im
Jim Palmer

Stan Soloway
Eric Tanenblatt
Laysha Ward

Donna Williams participated by phone.

OFFICIAL ACTIONS

The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held Feb. 4, 2009. (Transcript, 12).

The Board passed a resolution honoring departing Board member Donna Williams. (Transcript, 15).

The Board passed a resolution on the value of public input in implementing the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and in developing the Corporation's next Strategic Plan. (Transcript, 38).

Chairman's Opening Remarks

Board Chair Alan Solomont opened the meeting by announcing that immediately following the public meeting the Board would hold a listening session on the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act (Serve America Act). Mr. Solomont remarked on the enhanced appreciation of and interest in the Corporation, its programs, and national service generally, as demonstrated by the largest Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service ever, the strong role national service continues to play in addressing the nation's economic crisis – a role recognized by Congress as demonstrated in the Corporation's receipt of over \$200 million in the Recovery Act stimulus package, and three times as many applications for AmeriCorps positions this March than the prior year. He noted that the current Administration has demonstrated a high level of engagement and support, including regular participation in service activities, an address by the First Lady to the Corporation's staff, and the President's Budget request for nearly 30% more funds than the 2009 enacted level. Most significantly, in April, President Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. This Act, which had historically broad bi-partisan support, reauthorizes the Corporation and its programs and is the largest expansion of service programs since the creation of the Corporation. Mr. Solomont noted that beyond increased political support, the momentum around national service represents a shift in civic values on the part of Americans, a shift that is supported by the President and First Lady who are calling on Americans to serve. The Corporation will be challenged in capitalizing on this momentum, particularly in the midst of an economic crisis, and managing the anticipated expansion in a responsible way.

Mr. Solomont acknowledged Corporation staff for managing an increased workload during a period of transition in leadership, and gave particular thanks to Nicola Goren for her ongoing leadership as Acting CEO.

Mr. Solomont remarked upon the increased level of involvement of the Board, and noted that the Board's bi-partisan nature provides a unique benefit. During the Board's retreat, Board members discussed Board governance and Committee structure to better align the Committee work with the work of the Corporation.

Mr. Solomont gave an overview of the Board's discussions during the Board's retreat, including the opportunities and challenges of implementing the Serve America Act, the Corporation's staffing and management structure, external relationships, the White House summer of service initiative, the roll out of a new technology tool – AllForGood.org, the 2009 National Conference in San Francisco, program evaluations and performance measurement, the 2009 appropriations bill, the President's 2010 Budget request, and implications for the 2011 budget presented by the new legislation. The Board met with Michelle Jolin from the White House Office of Social Innovation to discuss the Social Innovation Fund, created in the Serve America Act. The Board also received updates from Kelly Daly, President of the Union, and from Inspector General Gerald Walpin.

Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

Mr. Solomont moved to adopt the minutes of the February 4, 2009 Board meeting. The minutes were approved by voice vote.

Honoring Departing Board Member

Mr. Solomont offered a resolution recognizing the contributions of departing Board member Donna Williams (Resolution 2009-06). The resolution was approved by acclamation.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

Acting CEO Nicola Goren provided an overview of the Corporation's activities since the February Board meeting, including the signing of the Serve America Act, announcing the largest budget in the Corporation's history, approving and awarding \$85 million in Recovery Act funds to AmeriCorps State and National programs, swearing in the first several hundred of 3,000 Recovery Act VISTAs, and a visit from First Lady Michelle Obama.

The Corporation recently celebrated AmeriCorps week, and has reviewed \$140 million worth of new and recompete grant requests for AmeriCorps State and National for the regular 2009 competition. The Corporation has also begun review of nearly \$35 million in grant requests for Learn and Serve America grants. NCCC has witnessed the graduation of the inaugural class from the Vinton, IA campus, and has opened the new campus in Vicksburg, MS. Senior Corps has been working on developing collaboration plans with the Department of Labor to highlight grantee partnership opportunities. The Corporation has finalized plans for the upcoming National Conference on Service and Volunteering in San Francisco.

In regards to internal operations, Ms. Goren reported that the Corporation has welcomed four new members to its Executive Team: Mary Cadigan, CIO; Ranit Schmelzer, Director of Public Affairs; Peachy Myers, White House Liaison; and John Kelly, Strategic Advisor on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. She noted that the Corporation is beginning to review managed data services proposals in order to further stabilize its technology systems, and anticipates migrating its technology systems to a more stable environment in the next six months. Ms. Goren reported that the Corporation continues to focus on external relations with the White House, the Hill, and other stakeholders. The Corporation is examining how the agency is organized to ensure an optimal structure to handle program expansions, and will seek input internally, externally, and from experts in organizational development. She thanked the Board and the Corporation staff – particularly those in acting roles, for their hard work through the transition.

In the coming months, the Corporation will continue to focus on implementing the Recovery Act and the Serve America Act, developing the next Strategic Plan, working with appropriators on the Corporation's 2010 Budget, and building a budget for 2011. As a first step in implementing the Serve America Act and preparing the next Strategic Plan, the Corporation has launched a nation-wide listening session tour. Ms. Goren thanked the field for the invaluable input they have provided and will continue to provide to assist the Corporation in carrying out its mission.

Committee Reports

Program and Evaluation Committee

Jim Palmer gave an update on implementation of the Recovery Act, noting that the Corporation is on track to expend Recovery funds in a timely manner, that Recovery funds will support an estimated 10,000 new AmeriCorps members, and that the first hundred Recovery VISTAs have been inducted - with all Recovery VISTA placements to be made by September 30th. AmeriCorps announced Recovery competitive grants totaling \$55.8 million; State Commissions have received Recovery formula funds and formula programs with May start dates already have members in service. The Corporation is exploring partnerships with other federal agencies that will be using their Recovery funds towards efforts with a national service component, such as the Department of Energy and the Department of Labor's Youthbuild and Workforce Investment Act programs.

Mr. Palmer reported that several Members of Congress have expressed interest in promoting Veteran service in AmeriCorps, particularly through Veterans Corps programs, as authorized in the Serve America Act. Senator Warner of Virginia is hosting a meeting on June 11th to introduce the Corporation to several Veteran organizations. Representative Hare of Illinois has offered to put together a public service announcement for Veterans Corps programs in the future.

Regarding the Serve America Act, Mr. Palmer reported that the Corporation has taken a three-pronged approach to implementation: (1) Gathering input from the field, including through six listening sessions; (2) Identifying provisions in the Act that will need rulemaking and devising a rulemaking timeline; and (3) Potentially bringing in a consultant to help structure the implementation. In order to benefit from the Serve America planning process, the Board is delaying approval of the Annual Program and Grantmaking Plans until later in the summer.

Mr. Palmer reported that CNCS customer service surveys have steadily improved over the past four years, with scores in 2008 well above the federal average, despite recent funding and technology challenges. Although the scores for technology declined, scores for staff customer service increased, resulting in part from streamlining grant review and reporting requirements. CNCS will continue to address technology issues, including through the use of \$6 million from the Recovery Act to secure a managed data services contract.

The Serve America Act calls for an agency culture shift to focus on national impact and aggregated results. Mr. Palmer reported that the White House is particularly interested in issues where national service can make the most impact, and that the Committee has discussed how to identify those issues, as well as identifying performance measures. The Committee will continue to focus on whether performance measures should be of the engagement and sustained service of individuals, or the impact on the community.

Strategic Partnerships Committee

Stan Soloway reported that the Committee has met several times since the February meeting. These meetings have focused on both internal and external relationships to ensure the Corporation is able to provide the leadership, and support the collaborations and partnerships, that will be needed to carry out the agency's mission, particularly as it expands under the Serve America Act. Mr. Soloway reported that the Committee has identified a set of high-level goals,

but that development of the agency's next Strategic Plan will be delayed in order to benefit from the changes the agency will experience under new leadership and under the Serve America Act.

Mr. Soloway gave an overview of the Committee's discussions around the upcoming National Conference, to be held June 22-24 in San Francisco, including the importance of the Conference being held during this historic moment, the anticipated record attendance level, and special events and guests including California's First Lady Maria Shriver, Governor Schwarzenegger, and others. This will be the first time that all Board members are able to participate in the Conference. Mr. Soloway noted that the Board's attendance at the Conference demonstrates the Board's understanding of the importance of the Conference as an opportunity to reach out to and gather feedback from the Corporation's stakeholders at events such as the National Service Town Hall meeting and the listening session, as well as to benefit from discussions and deliberations with representatives from the White House, the Domestic Policy Council, the White House Office of Social Innovation, and others.

Management, Audit, and Governance Committee

Alan Solomont gave the MAG report on behalf of MAG Chair Eric Tanenblatt. The MAG Committee recently reviewed and discussed a report from Inspector General Gerald Walpin. The Corporation received its 2009 appropriation in March, with a \$33 million increase over 2008 enacted levels (the level at which the Corporation operated under the Continuing Resolution for the first half of FY 2009). The appropriation included an increase in the Salaries and Expenses budget, enabling the Corporation to begin hiring critically-needed new staff, provide pay adjustments and cash awards for work staff performed in 2008, provide necessary training, and, along with funds provided under the Recovery Act, award a managed services contract, and help cover the costs of the MyAmeriCorps portal. Mr. Solomont reported that the President's budget request for 2010 would provide nearly \$260 million more for the Corporation than the 2009 enacted levels.

Mr. Solomont reported that the Corporation is on track for implementing the Recovery Act, including having recently announced \$85 million in AmeriCorps State and National grants and placing Recovery Act-funded VISTAs in economically distressed areas of the country.

Mr. Solomont noted that stabilizing the Corporation's technology systems continues to be an important priority of senior leadership, including ensuring adequate resources, completing technology projects, and simplifying business practices. The Committee received a recent update on these systems, including that the Corporation has made progress on or resolved the technology issues identified in the Management Action Plan. The Committee discussed other action items on the Management Action Plan, such as the development of the IT Strategic Plan, performance measures, and strategic relationships.

The MAG Committee is in ongoing discussions regarding implementation of the Serve America Act, which has an effective date of October 1, 2009. For successful implementation, the Corporation must understand the operational impact of the law on the Corporation's programs. Mr. Solomont reported that the Corporation is considering engaging an outside consultant to examine the agency's business processes and help facilitate implementation of the Serve

America Act. Successful implementation also depends upon gathering input from a wide variety of stakeholders; the Corporation is conducting a listening session tour around the country, including sessions already held in Springfield, MO, Columbia, SC, and to be held in Salt Lake City, UT, New Orleans, LA, and following the public Board meeting today.

Resolution on Public Input

Mr. Solomont offered a resolution acknowledging the value of public participation in implementing the Serve America Act and developing the agency's next Strategic Plan (Resolution 2009-07). The resolution was approved by acclamation.

Adjournment

Mr. Solomont adjourned the meeting at 1:20 p.m.