

Corporation for National and Community Service
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting
September 16, 2009
1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., EST

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

Alan Solomont, Chair
Stephen Goldsmith, Vice Chair
Mark Gearan
Hyepin Im

Stan Soloway
Eric Tanenblatt
Laysha Ward

OFFICIAL ACTIONS

The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held May 20, 2009. (Transcript, 21).

The Board passed a resolution honoring the legacy of Senator Edward M. Kennedy. (Transcript, 18).

Chairman's Opening Remarks

Board Chair Alan Solomont opened the meeting by reflecting on the heightened ethic of civic participation across America, evidenced by more than twice as many applicants for AmeriCorps this year as in the previous year, and the role the Corporation plays as a leader in this sector, as acknowledged by Congress through the passage of the Serve America Act and by the President in his request for a significant increase in funding for the Corporation and its programs. Mr. Solomont noted that the Corporation and its stakeholders are now presented with a challenge in fulfilling their roles as leaders in this sector, and must capitalize on the opportunity presented to promote change in the civic culture of America by encouraging Americans to make service a part of their lives.

Mr. Solomont gave an overview of major activities and accomplishments since the last public meeting in May. In the first stage of implementing the Serve America Act, the Corporation held a series of listening sessions and provided other opportunities for feedback from stakeholders, and is beginning to analyze this input as it moves into the next steps in implementation. The National Conference, held in San Francisco in June, had unprecedented attendance and got overwhelmingly positive feedback. Almost all members of the Board were able to attend the conference and actively participate both in a learning and leadership capacity. The Volunteering in America Report based on 2008 statistics was recently released, igniting a number of conversations about the renewed spirit of volunteerism, and attracting media attention for the Corporation and for service, generally. United We Serve's initiative to boost service during the summer months engaged 400 national service partners and thousands of local non-profits and faith-based partners, including over 120 organizations whose involvement with United We Serve was their first interaction with the Corporation. The first September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance was a significant success.

Mr. Solomont reported that the Board has restructured its committees and rearranged committee leadership. The new Program, Budget, and Evaluation Committee is chaired by Stan Soloway and includes Steve Goldsmith and Mark Gearan. The Oversight, Governance, and Audit Committee, replacing the former Management, Audit, and Governance Committee, is chaired by Eric Tanenblatt and includes Jim Palmer. Finally, the External Relations Committee is chaired by Laysha Ward and includes Hyepin Im and Julie Fisher Cummings.

Mr. Solomont went over the Board's topics of discussions during the Board's retreat, including discussions on the Corporation's vision, initial thoughts on the next five-year Strategic Plan for 2011-2015, new initiatives such as the Social Innovation Fund, All for Good and Serve.gov, the United We Serve initiative, implementation of the Serve America Act and increased funding for new and existing programs, management structure and staffing, transition in Corporation leadership, and the Board's role at the Corporation. During the retreat the Board received briefings from Acting Inspector General Ken Bach and Kelly Daly, president of the union.

Mr. Solomont acknowledged the Board and the Corporation's staff and leadership for their time and hard work. He took several moments to reflect on the recent passing of Senator Edward Kennedy, crediting him as a leader in national service and an essential player in the creation and development of the Corporation. He recognized several members of Kennedy's staff, including

Robin Juliano, Sarah Whitton, and Kimber Colton. He offered a resolution honoring the legacy of Senator Kennedy. (Resolution 2009-08). The resolution was approved by acclamation.

The Board recently created a new ad-hoc Awards Committee led by Jim Palmer, which has begun discussions about ways to honor the Senator's legacy.

Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

Mr. Solomont moved to adopt the minutes of the May 20, 2009 Board meeting. The minutes were approved by voice vote.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

Acting CEO Nicola Goren provided an overview of the Corporation's activities over the prior year. The Corporation and its programs engaged over four million Americans in service as national service participants and as leveraged volunteers, including: more than 470,000 Senior Corps participants; 1.2 million students, 43,000 educators and 22,000 community partners participating through Learn and Serve programs, resulting in more than 20 million service hours; over 60,000 AmeriCorps State and National members, who in turn mobilized over 1.2 million volunteers; and more than 7,500 VISTAs working with nearly 1,000 non-profits to recruit a million community volunteers and raise close to \$200 million in private sector support for local initiatives. In addition to opening a fifth campus in Vicksburg, MS, AmeriCorps NCCC members completed 430 projects and leveraged an estimated 45,000 volunteers.

With supplemental Recovery Act funds, the Corporation engaged an additional 15,000 members through AmeriCorps State and National and VISTA to address community needs related to the economic crisis. Ms. Goren also highlighted the Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service, 2009, as the largest in history, the United We Serve campaign, and the 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance.

Ms. Goren addressed the Corporation's ongoing interest in focusing on the impact national service makes in communities, defining impact in a measurable way, and balancing these interests with the Corporation's goal of not over-burdening grantees. In the coming months, the Corporation will collaborate with experts and stakeholders to identify appropriate measures, and develop systems to capture results that are not overly burdensome.

Ms. Goren reported on the Corporation's plans for the coming year, including further implementation of the Serve America Act and development of programs authorized under that Act such as the Social Innovation Fund, identifying performance measures and indicators, securing the Corporation's 2010 budget, working with the White House to finalize the budget request for 2011, developing the Corporation's next five-year strategic plan, working with a management consultant to increase efficiency in the way the Corporation does business, preparing to bring on a new CEO and new Board members, and ensuring staff are equipped with the necessary resources to do their jobs.

Ms. Goren thanked the Board for their continued support of the agency and national service, Corporation staff, and the field for their valuable input regarding implementation of the Serve America Act. Ms. Goren and Steve Goldsmith recognized Board Chair Alan Solomont for his commitment and leadership during a transitional year and through the passage and implementation of the Serve America Act, and congratulated him on his nomination to be the U.S. Ambassador to Spain and Andorra.

Committee Reports

Oversight, Governance, and Audit Committee

The Oversight, Governance, and Audit (OGA) Committee is a new committee assuming many of the responsibilities of the former Management, Audit, and Governance Committee. Eric Tanenblatt, Committee Chair, reported that in the Committee's most recent meeting they discussed Board leadership succession in light of Board Chair Alan Solomont's recent nomination to be U.S. Ambassador to Spain and Andorra. According to the Board's bylaws, the Vice Chair, Steve Goldsmith, would assume the role as interim Chair in the case of Mr. Solomont's resignation. The Committee also discussed the need for ensuring appropriate orientation and ongoing support for individual members of the Board.

Under the Serve America Act, the Board has a new requirement to annually review the performance of the CEO. The Committee is gathering information on best practices for CEO reviews and plans to share a draft with the full Board in February.

Mr. Tanenblatt reported that the Committee was briefed on the agency's transition plans, and discussed the fact that the positions of CEO and Program Directors are currently held by staff in acting roles and will likely be filled in the coming months with new individuals. The Corporation has secured an outside contractor to review the agency's management structure, operations and systems to position the agency for expansion. Mr. Tanenblatt and Mr. Goldsmith attended the initial meeting with the contractor to discuss next steps.

Mr. Tanenblatt gave an overview of the Committee's discussions on ongoing and completed audits of the Corporation. The annual information security audit is currently underway; no issues have arisen to date. The agency has completed corrective actions responding to issues raised in last year's financial statement audit. This year's financial statement audit is underway and appears to be on track. The Corporation received a clean opinion in an August, 2008 OIG audit of the National Service Trust. The OIG conducted an evaluation of several issues around the Corporation's 2008 budget execution at the request of the House Appropriations Subcommittee staff. Corporation management has made significant progress in addressing the findings through a detailed management action plan. Mr. Tanenblatt reported that he had spoken with staff from both the House and the Senate about the IG's report and the Board's commitment to making sure the agency has the management tools to handle the expansion envisioned under the Serve America Act. The Committee reviewed and discussed the materials related to the Corporation's financial metrics.

Regarding information technology, the agency has awarded a managed data services contract to protect the IT infrastructure from interruption due to power outages at Corporation headquarters. The Corporation's new Chief Information Officer, Mary Cadagin, briefed the Committee on her strategy for obtaining independent review of progress reports provided by the management services data contractor. Ms. Cadagin is also working on an IT strategic plan, which the Committee anticipates will be a critical part of preparing for expansion of the agency's programs.

Mr. Tanenblatt congratulated the agency on behalf of the Committee for securing a new three-year interchange agreement with the Office of Personnel Management. This agreement follows a thorough review of the agency's personnel system and promotes greater movement between the Corporation and other federal agencies. The Committee has been briefed on the agency's preparations for a possible flu outbreak.

Program, Budget, and Evaluation Committee

The Program, Budget, and Evaluation Committee is a new committee assuming many responsibilities of the former Program and Evaluation Committee. Committee Chair Stan Soloway reported that the Committee has been engaged in three principal areas since the last Board meeting. First, the Committee has been focused on preparation of the 2011 President's budget request for the agency and developing the method for Board involvement in that process as required under the Serve America Act

Secondly, the Committee has engaged in discussions of policy issues that have arisen during implementation of the Serve America Act, including: developing effective outreach to stakeholders for the purpose of implementing the new Senior Corps evaluation requirements; eligibility criteria and grant size for LSA summer of service grants; the focus in LSA Higher Education on educating teachers on include service-learning, STEM programs, and institutions that use service-learning to address the dropout crisis; developing, in collaboration with the field, metrics to demonstrate the impact of national service programs that do not impose unnecessary burden on grantees; and developing definitions and structures for the first year of the Social Innovation Fund grants.

Finally, the Board is leading the planning process for the Corporation's 2011-2015 Strategic Plan. The Committee is currently discussing agency goals for the future, and crafting the mission statement, guiding principles, and key objectives, and will engage the full Board in reviewing this work at the February retreat.

In addition to these major focus areas, the Committee continues to receive briefings on Corporation programs, including NCCC's plans for efficiency. Mark Gearan remarked on the substantive conversations surrounding service-learning at the National Conference.

External Relations Committee

The External Relations Committee is a new committee assuming many of the responsibilities of

the former Strategic Partnerships Committee. Committee Chair Laysha Ward reported that the mission of the ER Committee is four-fold: (1) to build and manage stakeholder relationships in the government and across multiple sectors; (2) to develop resources through foundations, corporate contacts, strategic partnerships, and other key stakeholder groups; (3) to enhance communication efforts through branding and marketing and the dissemination of information; and (4) to promote strategic initiatives identified for emphasis in the Corporation's strategic plan.

Ms. Ward reported on the background and recent successes of the United We Serve (UWS) initiative. UWS is an initiative led by the Corporation to help Americans answer President Obama's call to service. The first phase of UWS was an 81 day summer Call to Service Campaign, starting at the National Conference and concluding on the Sept. 11 National Day of Service and Remembrance, but will continue to grow as a collaborative effort to promote service as a way of life for Americans. UWS has effectively used internet tools and social media on its own site, Serve.gov, and other sites to connect Americans to service opportunities, including through featuring a keyword and zip code searchable database of service opportunities powered by All For Good, providing toolkits for individuals to develop their own service activities, offering a virtual space for people to demonstrate the qualitative impact of volunteering by sharing stories of service, and creating a Facebook 'cause'. Over the summer, UWS engaged nearly 400 national partners and thousands of local and nonprofit groups, the All For Good service opportunity database accumulated nearly 250,000 opportunities, over 2,200 individuals posted their own self-directed service projects on Serve.gov, nearly 2,000 stories of service were shared on Serve.gov, and nearly 90,000 people joined the Facebook cause. The Board and Committee continue to discuss how they envision UWS in the future.

In addition to online outlets, the UWS campaign was promoted by a variety of athletes, entertainers, and groups such as MTV, Major League Baseball, NASCAR, the National Football League, and the National Basketball Association. The Entertainment Industry Foundation is also working to mobilize the entertainment community around a multi-year campaign called iParticipate, which launched last week in New York. EIF has been working to put together a centerpiece week, October 19-25, during which all four major television networks will be integrating service into their shows.

Ms. Ward reviewed some of the successes of the first September 11th day of Service, formally recognized in the Serve America Act, including participation in service activities by the President and First Lady, members of the President's Cabinet, and members of the Board of Directors. The Committee will continue discussions on promoting this event in the future. Ms. Ward remarked on the success of the National Conference in June.

Hyepin Im spoke about her experiences engaging with United We Serve from her perspective as the President of Korean Churches for Community Development, a non-profit organization in California, during the "community renewal" week of the summer campaign. Their service event was well attended by members of the community as well as community leaders. Ms. Im reported that during the summer she was able to participate on an outreach call for UWS to the Asian American community along with Kal Penn, Associate Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement, and Fred Wong from the Corporation.

Ms. Ward introduced three Corporation grantees: Paula Kaiser VanDam, Executive Director of the Michigan Community Service Commission, Dr. Kyshun Webster, Founder and CEO of Operation Reach, and Chandler Arnold, Executive President of First Book. Ms. VanDam, Mr. Webster, and Mr. Arnold each shared accounts of engaging Americans in service over the summer through the UWS summer initiative, including connecting local actions to national service themes, collaborating with other groups, engaging leaders to participate in and promote service, and rewarding exemplary service, and made recommendations on how such a campaign could be improved in the future, including through improving mechanisms to capture data on the impact of the service activities, better identifying local interests, coordinating visits from high level surrogates to localize messaging, generating a campaign mantra, and sustaining relationships built during the campaign.

Public Comment

Nelda Brown, Executive Director of the National Service Learning Partnership, spoke in favor of the enhancements to Learn & Serve America under the Serve America Act, and encouraged the Corporation to ensure the functions of the National Service Learning Clearinghouse are maintained, and the Board to actively engage with the service learning community.

Wendy Spencer, Executive Director of Volunteer Florida, thanked Acting CEO Nicola Goren for her continued leadership through the transition. She encouraged the Board and the Corporation to focus on strategically leveraging interest in national service from the philanthropic community. Laysha Ward responded that the External Relations Committee is focused on leveraging and maintaining relationships with philanthropic groups, noting that more philanthropic groups were in attendance at this year's National Conference.

Frank Slobig, representing Senior Service America, spoke about the Senior Community Service Employment Program, and encouraged other organizations and State Commissions present to connect and collaborate with their local Senior Community Service Employment Program, which can be found through the local State Agency on Aging.

Karen Baker, Secretary of Service and Volunteering in California, noted that State Commissions would benefit from having a list of all federal funding sources or state funding sources. Mr. Solomont responded by encouraging collaborations with programs funded by other agencies.

Adjournment

Mr. Solomont adjourned the meeting at 2:18 p.m.