

**Project Grow Board Meeting**  
**August 13, 2009, 6:30-8:00 pm at Mathaei Botanical Gardens**

**Attending:** Devon Akmon (President), Melissa Kesterson (Executive Director), Leigh Ann Phillips-Knope (Assistant Director), Damaris Sufalko, Kirk Jones, Terre Fisher, Catherine Riseng, Royer Held, Joan Bulmer (Treasurer) James Frenza (guest).

Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm.

**Consent Agenda**

- July meeting minutes approved;
- Executive and Assistant Director Report reviewed and approved.

**Organizational Business**

Guest Jim Frenza, Organizational Development Consultant. Jim's background includes a life-long career in non-profits, including most recently 5 years as Executive Director of Hands-on Museum. He looks forward to volunteering as a consultant with Project Grow.

Jim reported on a preliminary assessment he conducted through observations, reviewing written materials and conversations with those affiliated with Project Grow.

Key observations to serve as a starting point:

- It is a timely opportunity to reevaluate and refocus Project Grow's mission. At this moment in history, where our basic purpose is more highly aligned with the public than ever in past, PG has the chance to expand our role and make a greater impact.
- He voiced concern that the current board does not represent the larger community and skills needed for organizational success. For proper functioning, the board needs additional representation from the private financial sector; legal, fundraising, marketing; academics/teachers; business functioning.
- Jim urged PG to consider its atmosphere and commitment to 501c3 status. How much more PG could do for members and the community; social programs, education, advocacy, making the gardens themselves more attractive.
- Understanding is needed among the board about what are the principal duties and responsibilities. All organizations need regular refreshers to recommit.
- A concrete plan for organizational growth and change is essential, including a strategic plan, reexamining core values, mission, organizational priorities.

Joan asked Jim for suggestions on next steps as a board:

Jim suggested the following:

*Step 1: Finding agreement that there are worthwhile things to do.*

*Step 2: Commit to building a board with representative skills and talents; traditional process is through Nominating Committee.*

*Step 3: Encouraged PG to invite Diana Kern from the NEW Center to conduct a preliminary board training about recommendations for building the board.*

Several board members asked additional questions about Jim's recommendations. Many expressed an interest in facing the issues and being a part of the development process to help realize PG's potential. It was noted that the board is heavily representative of gardener constituents and that additional skills are needed. Engaging the membership was discussed as a key theme to integrate into the strategic planning process. Program evaluation was also voiced as a key need. Royer expressed his concerns and hesitations, suggesting that PG consider becoming another entity, rather than a 501c3.

Joan motioned that a vote be taken tonight regarding PG's future as a 501c3.

Vote: All in favor of retaining 501c3 status with one abstention.

Devon closed the meeting with the following comments:

- During this process of change, board meetings may need to be lengthened;
- It's important to identify best practices and reading materials from NEW Center.
- PG needs to discuss its mission and vision, gain input from members, and align in leadership.
- Melissa will invite Diana Kern to present at the September Board meeting.