



LaShana Lewis <lashana@saintlouisdna.org>

Membership Fees & Board Objective for 2020

1 message

LaShana Lewis <lashana@saintlouisdna.org>

Tue, Dec 10, 2019 at 2:55 PM

To: Alexander Hurst <alexander@saintlouisdna.org>, Dan <dpistor@hotmail.com>, James Page <james@saintlouisdna.org>, Melanie Fries <melanie@saintlouisdna.org>, Taylor Jackson <taylor@saintlouisdna.org>

Bcc: LaShana Lewis <lmlewis517@gmail.com>

All,

It has been a rocky road full of ups and downs, but we've made it almost to 2020, mostly intact.

I decided to take some extra time to dole out a rough map of the rest of 2019 and some early objectives for 2020 until the new board is decided and takes over. None of this has to be addressed right this moment, but are good points of reference.

Note that this is a LONG email, so I don't expect everyone to read it promptly. Again, this is more so for reference to see where I'm heading with trains of thoughts, correspondence, etc.

Membership Fees

Obviously, this is going to be a bone of contention for many. However, I've been observing our members, their activities, and watching their responses versus protestations.

What I've found, overwhelmingly, is that many members who have voiced their opinions against the new fee structure also happen to not regularly show up to our meetings and/or events. May it be for personal reasons (working during that time, unable to leave their home, etc.), it seems to be more in preference than in practice.

For now, I'd like to go ahead with advertising the fee structure as it is laid out, reminding involved members as we go. We will do our normal reach outs: social media, email, brochures at booths/events, etc. However, anything above and beyond that will almost certainly be futile and spent energy, especially for those of us that are also working full-time positions and/or with other commitments.

As there is already a moniker (with no timeframe or definitive structure... which was done on purpose) for a "hardship exemption" model, we can still collect the names of those individuals for whenever/if the volunteer structure that Melanie mentioned is instituted/amended to the bylaws.

Neighborhood Association versus Homeowner/Condo Association

Informally, I've heard rumblings that members and potential members are not entirely aware that neighborhood associations are inherently different than homeowner associations (HOAs) or Condominium Owner Associations (COAs).

What doesn't help is the fact that sometimes there are articles, brochures, etc. that sometimes refer to them interchangeably, and can sometimes confuse individuals, leading them to believe that some of the rules for both are the same.

As a result, I did a bit of research myself and found an article that seems to pretty clearly explain the marked difference between both of them:

<https://independentamericancommunities.com/2016/02/14/hoa-vs-neighborhood-association-apples-vs-oranges/>

My rough plan, through future correspondence, is to allude to this information (not copy/paste, verbatim) in a format that makes it clear that we understand how the two can be confused, and that we are quite sure we're sticking to "neighborhood association" regulations.

SLACO - St. Louis Association of Community Organizations

Going forward, this brings me to the understanding of our relationship with the St. Louis Association of Community Organizations (SLACO). For those unaware, I've actually been aware of SLACO since about the early 2000s, as I was assembling the LGBT Center of St. Louis.

I served as a de facto LGBT+ community representative to try to initially help tie in efforts that were important to that community into the landscape of community organizations across the St. Louis region. As a result, I made a lot of alliances within various aspects of organizations that serve as powerhouses into shaping the city.

SLACO also serves as the umbrella organization for the St. Louis Region's Neighborhood Associations (that is its main objective, but I understand, as previously mentioned, that they have other tie-ins with local community organizations, as well). I'd love to see DNA work more closely with the organization, even asking for assistance as we continue to evaluate our bylaws and outreach to our residential and small business neighbors. This kind of collective consciousness can also prevent us from sliding into "analysis paralysis" when deciding new procedures and efforts, in the future.

For reference, DNA is a current paid member of SLACO.

Outreach / Advocacy / Advertising

Up until now, Mike, Taylor and I have been the main folks making sure that information is relayed to membership through email and social media.

Mike initially updated the email list on a regular basis, which has now fallen on me to do during our Thursday office hours or as often as possible.

Ed Reggi has been our back-end website technician, but posts and website designs, creations, and updates mostly fell on me, with Mike providing approval as well as James.

Obviously with Mike resigned, my duties not only include the ones that I'm currently doing in addition to the above-mentioned, but also many duties that Mike did regarding technology fell on me, as well.

To help prevent something like this from unwittingly falling on the next board member to take on these tasks, I suggest having two people, at all times, hold responsibility for messaging to our members using our MailChimp subscription, creating surveys using SurveyMonkey, and updating the website via the WordPress portal. In this way, one person will not be shoved with the responsibility of all major media communication.

Comparisons and Other References

I believe that strength in numbers is essential for a healthy board and neighborhood association. We also want to be judicious in not stretching ourselves too thin.

Throughout my research, I landed on some interesting aspects to the neighborhood association conglomeration. I also tried to find more information about a hardship fee exemption, but found that many are conflated between HOA/COA/neighborhood association structures and sometimes overlap in ways that seem indistinguishable. Basically, each board makes up its own rules, and it leaves us back at square one of deciding what we think is best/helpful for our neighbors (and not ourselves, individually).

I hope you find some inspiration from these links, like I did:

(A very cool Neighborhood Association website)

Lakewood Neighborhood Association

<http://www.lakewoodneighborhood.org/>

(More info about SLACO, and other member St. Louis Neighborhood Associations)

SLACO

<http://slaco-mo.org/>

(A good breakdown of major differences between HOA/COA and Neighborhood Associations)

HOA vs. Neighborhood Associations - Apples vs. Oranges

<https://independentamericancommunities.com/2016/02/14/hoa-vs-neighborhood-association-apples-vs-oranges/>

(Wikipedia article that gives a rough outline of neighborhood associations... I really use it for reference links at the bottom, as Wiki can be a bit contrived)

Neighborhood Associations

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neighborhood_association

(A fellow SLACO member neighborhood association website that I'm seeing DNA as being closely related to regarding the populous of our downtown proximity, and found their membership fee structure interesting - albeit they have single-family, free-standing housing where we do not. But their activation of community Urban Planning initiatives is worth mentioning.)

Lafayette Square Restoration Committee

<https://lafayettesquare.org/community/lafayette-square-restoration-committee/>

Alright all, as stated, I don't expect an immediate - if any - response, reply, etc. as I took months to try to collaborate a lot of this information, cross-checking and referencing other sites that aren't mentioned here, as well as doing a bit of deep-diving into certain web pages and websites to see "how we compare" given similar structures (i.e. I can't compare their single-family home structure to ours, as we have no free-standing "houses" in downtown, really, but I can compare some aspects of the events/initiatives like "living tours").

Going into 2020... we'll take this one step at a time!

Best and see you all this evening,

--

LaShana Lewis

Acting Chair, Board of Directors

St. Louis Downtown Neighborhood Association

lashana@saintlouisdna.org | 618-409-9128



401 Pine Street | St. Louis, MO 63102 | saintlouisdna.org