

Dear Board member:

The last three months have been nothing short of a roller coaster ride. We began with a huge drop and have experienced turns, ups, downs, speeding up and slowing down. And since almost none of us had adequately anticipated the global pandemic and associated economic crisis, it felt at times like we were riding this roller coaster wearing a blindfold.

As I assess where we have been since March 15, I realized the things that have occupied the majority of our time since that date didn't even exist on February 15.

Here is an update of where we are today.

Staff and Office

Our staff team is well and healthy. We have lost two parents of staff members to COVID-19 and one spouse of an employee died unexpectedly a couple weeks ago – so this period has not been without personal loss for us.

We continue to allow working from home for at least the coming months. On a daily basis, we now have about a dozen staff members in the building daily. A few others spend a few hours to a day or two a week in the office, depending on specific work needs. We seem to be handling the work adequately.

We have made some temporary work reassignments where the workload had dropped. There are other projects that certainly need attention (liability, legal, trademark, etc.).

We have rearranged the seating in all office meeting rooms for such time as when regular meetings are held in the building again – we will then meet social distancing norms.

Districts

As of today, almost all districts have cancelled their in-person convention, and many have opted for a virtual meeting of the house of delegates. In a very few cases, a district will likely re-elect its governor and governor-elect for a second term. In such a case, Diana O'Brien has been assisting the districts helping them ensure they are abiding by the bylaws and policies.

Kiwanis International Council

On Saturday, May 30, the Executive Committee met via GoToMeeting and discussed the options before us for convening the Kiwanis International Council. By consensus of the committee, we will survey the entire Council membership to measure everyone's ability and willingness to travel and meet in person versus a preference to participate remotely. That survey will go out this week. Based upon the results of that survey, the Executive Committee will convene for a second time on June 13 and formulate recommendations for the entire Board of Trustees (that meeting will be June 17).

Tentatively, we are looking at a meeting on July 24-25 in Indianapolis (if the meeting is held in person). Another option would be to wait until later in August, but that would cause an election delay that, in turn, would impact Board counselor participation in some district meetings. In addition to the decision of how, when and where to convene the Council, the Board will need to adopt new standing rules for the meeting. And, the Board will be asked to adopt a resolution clarifying that none of the amendments proposed by the Board for the 2020 House of Delegates will be considered by the Council.

Next Board meetings

You should have received notice of the next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on June 17. That meeting will be primarily to finalize the official call for a meeting of the Kiwanis International Council and several associated business items.

If the Council convenes in late July, we will likely have a Board meeting in conjunction with it.

Civil unrest in the US

The civil unrest that has pushed COVID-19 off the front page of many US media outlets is also driving a great deal of very passionate social media among our members, especially our CKI and Key Club members. In their eyes, to be silent is as bad as making a controversial public statement. We opted to share a statement based upon the values expressed through our Objects. While large numbers “liked” our posts, we are the target of some pretty direct criticisms as well.

I have reminded our team that we are an international organization, that we do not take political (partisan) positions on issues, and that absent a vote of the delegate body representing our membership, we should not be stating a position that could endanger our clubs and members or the good works they do in their communities.

We are sharing some statements on behalf of Key Club and CKI that are clearly aligned with the thoughts of those youth populations. We liked the Rotary statement released yesterday and will likely release a more detailed, thoughtful statement on behalf of the Kiwanis family acknowledging that we are listening and hearing on behalf of our diverse membership.

Final Comment

The word of the year seems to be *disruption*. Every aspect of our operation, of our service, of our interaction has been disrupted by a global pandemic, a resulting economic crisis and civil unrest in more than one Kiwanis nation. Add a US presidential election that will surely produce divisive campaigns, and it might give us pause to think about our survival strategy for the remainder of the year.

We should remind ourselves that the Objects of the organization really do express value statements that are worth repeating. The leaders who penned these statements captured some ideas that were important in 1924 and remain important today. Social media gives everyone a megaphone. Let’s be careful what we say and how we say it.

Thank you for leading.

Stan Soderstrom