

## **District 5 Special Task Force Meeting Notes- March 4, 2023**

There were 40 unique callers on the ZOOM call but some had 2 people from the same device.

President Cheryl Wille-Schlesser welcomed everyone to the call and thanked them for taking time to participate. She gave a recap of the recent Barnebirkie event and thanked all who sent cookies, financial support, or who volunteered at the event.

Cheryl also explained that she would like all lodges to send her a copy of their D17 and 990's confirmation so that we can help insure that all lodges are getting their required reports in. She also explained that we have many new policies and procedures from International, the new Lodge Bylaw Template, ways to post events on the websites, the map and lodge directory is back on the international website, and encouraged lodges to get their FraternalGives filed, and to complete Lodge Achievement and Family Lodge of the Year forms.

Cheryl introduced Duane Kittleson, International Director, who will lead this first task force call. Duane gave some background on the challenges our current zones and bylaws give us in trying to fill our Board of Director positions. The Nominating Committees during the past several biennium's have really struggled to have enough benefit members to approach for service. Many delegates who are elected to represent their lodges are not benefit members. We have been given the okay that delegates from Michigan and Tennessee do not have to be benefit members as Sons of Norway is not licensed to sell product in those states.

The District currently has a bylaw proposal to the 2022 District Lodge Delegates to address the current challenge of one zone having more than two people and a board member who was willing to serve a third consecutive term. Ballots are due March 10 to District Secretary Darlene Arneson.

Duane shared a PowerPoint and many statistics in regard to our benefit/non benefit members, ages of our membership, and details on the Central and Spirit of the New Century Lodges. He then reviewed the Duties of the District Board and the purpose of the zones. He reviewed maps of the current District and then shared several options if the zone lines were changed.

Other options that can be explored during the task force process include changing zone lines, officers who don't have zone responsibilities, and removing the benefit product requirement to serve on the board.

The participants in the call began discussion. Examples of how our Upper Michigan lodge's location is closer to Wisconsin than lower Michigan gives challenges to be a part of either. Another shared their struggle to find products that appeal to our membership- either members already have the investment products they need or younger people are looking for products other than what SN offers.

There was a lot of discussion on why benefit members can serve on the District Board when they really don't have any say in financial products for the organization. Should that requirement be only for International Board members? Duane was going to check with international on that.

Discussion about the changes in Sons of Norway on the international level and how that affects Districts led to questions of what other changes might be coming? Will Districts stay the same? When rezoning, should population as well as geography be considered. All Districts are struggling with this issue and the desire to have all parts of their Districts represented on their boards but having the same struggles in getting zone directors.

There was discussion about SN being an insurance vs an investment organization. As an insurance company, they can't offer some of the products that members want or that might add to our "mature" member's

portfolios as we must follow the State of Minnesota Insurance Commissioner's rules and oversight. Some shared that others (i.e. Cuna) did a split and how might SN consider shifting away from the fraternal model? The impact of losing the financial support from the insurance part is a huge consideration in anything like that?

There was discussion about taking away all zones. Would that work to have all at-large elections?

The group discussed ways to promote insurance sales and products. There was also questions about what products Central Lodge members are buying that has caused that lodge to have huge membership gains- why aren't local lodge members buying those same products?

As the call ended, Duane asked if someone would like to serve as the moderator for future calls. The Lodge Development and Zone Alignment Committee (chr. Darlene Arneson, Connie Kross, Judy Ghastin and Bill Bultinck) will assume leadership for the task force and Duane will remain involved. No volunteers came forward.

As the call concluded, the group discussed having the zone directors gather input from their assigned lodges, send out the notes in the FFFN along with the PowerPoint, and to look at past survey's for possibly doing another survey.

Notes taken by Darlene Arneson