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Minutes of LIHEDE Jubilee Planning Meeting

Sunday, March 29, 2009

On Sunday, March 29, 2009, the Planning Committee for LIHEDE 5th Anniversary Jubilee Conference convened via teleconference to assess the progress being made toward successful hosting of the jubilee. The meeting was attended by 18 persons, Ms. Sylvestine Payne, Ms. Nea Allison, Mr. Omari Jackson, Dr. Lawrence Zumo, Dr. Vera Tolbert, Dr. Joe Gbaba, Dr. Syrulwa Somah, Mr. Nat Gbessagee, Ms. Roberta Williams, Mr. David Kaipu, Ms. Nancy Freeman, Mr. Morris Koffa, Mr. Garnett Gbamokollie, Mr. Siahyonkron Nyanseor, Mr. Eli Tubman, Mr. Yancy Peter Flah, Mr. Abraham Walker, and Mr. Moses Bility.

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 p.m. by Jubilee Planning Committee General Chairman, Dr. Gbaba. He welcomed everyone to the meeting and talked about the immense importance of the upcoming jubilee to the cultural preservation of Liberia. Dr. Gbaba said showcasing our history during the jubilee was one of the best ways to let the world know who we are as a people, and hoped that we would exchange ideas during the meeting that are useful to the development of the country.

Dr. Gbaba stressed that persons attending the meeting were talented people in their own rights who have done a lot of things in their various communities here in the U.S. and in Liberia. He hoped we will all be able work together to tell the world who we are as people, by getting some support to improve the educational system to produce Liberian literature and history. He said there should be no need for living in the past anymore as much is expected of us to work together to make the jubilee as success. He asked each attendee to inform all friends and related contacts to know about conference the jubilee.

The secretary general, Mr. Gbessagee, explained the social etiquette for the meeting, and LIHEDE Executive Director, Dr. Somah sought a motion to read and adopt the minutes of the March 14 Planning Committee meeting. Ms. Williams proffered the motion to adopt the minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Koffa. The minutes were adopted on the strength that Ms. Varh had earlier circulated the minutes and new corrections or adjustments were proposed.

After adoption of the minutes, Dr. Somah briefed the body about a potential conflict with the original date of the LIHEDE jubilee due to other conferences that are scheduled to be held in Greensboro, North Carolina at the same time as the LIHEDE jubilee. The new dates of August 21 and 22 were proposed by Dr. Somah and accepted by the body.

The change in date, however, necessitated arrangement for a new jubilee hall because, according to Dr. Somah, a time frame of 8 to 9 months advanced notice is usually required to book a hall at the university where he works, so it was too late to book a new venue under the old arrangement. He disclosed that he was in discussion with the university's Alumni Association for LIHEDE to use the Alumni Hall for the jubilee. Dr. Somah promised to get back to the General Chairman with the results of the negotiation by first Wednesday immediately after the meeting of March 29.

Dr. Gbaba thanked Dr. Somah for his hard work, and stressed that planning a conference is a collective efforts not for only a few individual persons. Dr. Gbaba went on to read the list of the various subcommittees making up the planning committee. Dr. Somah assisted in the efforts.

During detailed discussion of planning committee activities, Ms. Williams raised concern about the information on the LIHEDE website, which she said might not be up-to-date. He volunteered to work as an assistant to the webmaster to help with updating the website on a regular basis. Ms. Williams also volunteered to create a profile for each LIHEDE member without scanned photos for upload on the website, provided that the photos are sent to her scanning and converting the photos into electronic format. She explained that based on her professional experience, many persons don't have access to the internet during working hours and in the evening, so it becomes difficult for such persons to have access to scanned photos in the correct jpeg or other graphic formats.

Dr. Gbaba thanked Ms. Williams for volunteering to assist with the website update, and advised her to contact the webmaster, Mr. Ward, to work out the details. Dr. Somah had earlier interjected that Mr. Ward was redesigning the LIHEDE website, and asked LIHEDE members to send their profiles and photos to Mr. Ward for inclusion on the website.

More discussions centered on the hall for the jubilee, funding for the jubilee, and jubilee publications.

On the new venue for the jubilee, Dr. Somah disclosed that the base price of Alumni Hall is \$1,900 a day from 7am -10pm for a total of \$3,800, but that the price would be reduced by 50 to 60 percent based on ongoing negotiations with the Alumni Hall management. Dr. Somah disclosed the reduced fees in answer to a question by Mr. Nyanseor, the LIHEDE Treasurer, and Ms. Williams who suggested that an alternative venue like a school house be secured while awaiting response from management of Alumni Hall.

Mr. Tubman supported Ms. Williams's suggestion for an alternative hall for the jubilee, factoring in the potential impact on intakes.

Ms. Payne also suggested for the jubilee planning committee to meet to hear from Dr. Somah regarding the Alumni, while another person looks for alternative venue. Then, thereafter, a general meeting could be held to discuss both fees. Ms. Williams agreed with Ms. Payne, and suggested that we needed to know how many members are there in LIHEDE in order to determine how much the whole event will cost and how much each person might be required to pay. Dr. Somah responded that the jubilee committee will meet and put a budget together and then we will be able to work from there.

As the discussion on the cost of a new hall progressed, Dr. Gbaba intervened and suggested that Wednesday was not too long, so Dr. Somah should be allowed to complete the negotiations for the new hall. Dr. Gbaba added that planning a conference the financial support in addition to verbal support because there is no way one can run a conference without dollar and cent. And for the LIHEDE jubilee, he said the reason is simple because whatever we contribute will be used toward a good cause, which is promotion of our cultural heritage. He then looked into Liberian historian and invoked a call by educator Edward Wilmot Blyden back in 1800s when has called for an African university to teach African language and culture.

At this time, Mr. Kaifu interjected to ask to leave the meeting for a prior engagement. Dr. Gbaba Mr. Kaifu for his participation and encouraged him to stay long time next time.

The discussion on funding for the jubilee continued with Dr. Gbaba requesting suggestion about financial contribution. Dr. Tolbert asked if the jubilee planners had considered have having sponsors for the conference, and Dr. Gbaba responded that part of the responsibility of the jubilee planning committee is to seek sponsors. He said as the planning committee decides on how best to raise funds for the jubilee, it is also important for people coming together to be able to contribute financially and materially to a cause, because Heaven helps those who help themselves.

Mr. Gbamokollie asked if the funds being sought were only to meet the budget cost for the jubilee or to do other things. Dr. Gbaba responded that the thing is to host the conference, which is the priority. He said it was necessary to put the suggestion out to create the awareness that at some point in the future

we will make some contribution. We have an obligation to make contribution once we identify with an institution to promote our cultural heritage.

Ms. Freeman said it was disheartening that if we want to do research it is difficult to find information on Liberia. She added that an organization cannot operate without funds, so we in LIHEDE should come up with monthly dues and not wait until we are in a jam. "Since we have this function, we should be able to collect money, can you look at that and come up with something the next meeting?" she asked.

Dr. Somah responded that LIHEDE does not collect membership dues, except for a one time membership application fee of 25. He said when LIHEDE came into existence we felt that we had to give back by contributing to our homeland. He said if a contribution had to be made, then personally made a contribution. Dr. Somah said he has taken several projects to Liberia at her own experience. When said when came to malaria, CDC and other entities around could sponsor the event, but he wasn't too sure if we could find many sponsors for an event on Liberian history. Dr. Somah added though that LIHEDE is now in the process of looking into the collection of monthly membership dues and other contributions.

Dr. Gbaba interjected to inform Dr. Somah that what LIHEDE was trying to do was most important because all Liberian organizations should not be only to socialize but to contribute to the upkeep of the organization. Dr. Gbaba hoped that all those who have attached their names to the jubilee will contribute financially or otherwise to make the jubilee a success.

Mr. Koffa added that finances are critical to the success of what we plan to do, and suggested that finance committee needs to come up with a budget and the amount we will need to host the jubilee. There needs to be some projection before contributions. Ms. Freeman urged for her name to be added to the jubilee budget committee.

Dr. Somah urged members of the planning committee to look at the committee list and pick which committee to work on.

At the end of the meeting, Mr. Gbamokollie suggested that the minutes should be in MS Word for everyone to open, and asked if there was any other means to reach members besides the internet like instant message, etc. because some people may not have ready access to the internet.

Dr. Gbaba announced that between now and August we will be having regular weekly meetings. If we keep the access code and phone number, that will be fine, he said. Every week we will be sending out progress report. He said he knows that everybody is busy but we should try to participate.

On jubilee presentations, Dr. Gbaba said only nine persons have agreed to present at the jubilee, and asked people to send in their abstracts. He also encouraged people who want to present to pay their \$55 registration fees. Dr. Somah encouraged people to attend the conference to present, suggesting that the history of afternoon school in Liberia could be a viable topic as well.

Dr. Gbaba gave his email address to planning committee members and asked members to send email to him in order for him to prepare a contact list. Dr. Somah said the chairman would get email address of all committee members by the next day, Monday, March 30.

Mr. Gbessagee gave synopsis of the meeting for the benefit of members. He also briefed the body on the magazine committee, and encouraged members to send in their articles for inclusion in the jubilee magazine committee.

Mr. Gbamokollie moved and I believe Mr. Koffa seconded to close meeting.

Signed

Nat Gbessagee, Secretary General, LIHEDE

