

**Minutes for Imagine Adoption Board of Directors**  
**Location: Conference Call**  
**May 17, 2010**

**On Call:** Kelly Cussons, Lianne Armstrong, Rob Eagleson, Christine Starr, Martha Maslen, Scott Farrell, JoAnn Barber, Becky Barker, Melissa Burke, Valerie Goodyear

**Regrets:** Shauna Courtney

**1. OPENING ITEMS:**

**a) Call to Order**

Meeting was called to order at 8:02pm

**b) Opening Announcements**

There were no opening announcements.

**c) Completion & Adoption Of Agenda**

k) Zambia    l) Driver    m) Appeal    n) Siblings

**d) Minutes Of Last Regular Meeting**

Motion to approve minutes from April 26, 2010. Approved.

**2. APPROVAL ITEMS:**

a) None

### 3. DISCUSSION ITEMS:

#### a) Staff Update

Val let the Board know that a suitable replacement driver has been hired.

It was noted that negotiations are ongoing with the staff in Ethiopia regarding salaries and renewed contracts. Martha Moges is preparing a report for the Board.

Val reported that she anticipates a minor slow down in paperwork for referrals because of the new requirements that have just been implemented. She feels this will only be short term.

#### b) Review of Staff Meeting

Rob, Kelly and Scott met with the staff at the IA office last week. It was made clear that the staff need support to continue working on the priorities of the agency.

The office is still receiving dozens of calls and emails each day and they are having a hard time managing this. The staff understand how the families are feeling and the need for information and they are doing the best they can to prioritize tasks.

On this matter, the Board reviewed the original communication protocol dated October 29, that would be followed by staff as it came to communication with families and subsequent communications to families dated January 22, 2010 and April 23, 2010. The board feels that with the current staff levels and caseload, the protocols are still valid and are highlighted as follows.

*"We know that many of you have concerns and questions and we want to do our best to answer those in the most efficient way possible. Therefore, because of the reduced number of staff in the office and our desire to use our time and resources most effectively, we have decided on the following communication process. We will have an automated phone system, which will prompt you to leave a message either on the general mailbox, or for one of the individual staff members. We also now have our email system up and running and you can contact us through email at the addresses listed below. We will check these messages, both phone and email, regularly and will confirm receipt of your message within 48 hours. We will then respond to your question in one of two ways. Most often we will respond to questions through a bi-weekly general*

*update sent to all families. It is very likely that many families will share the same or similar questions, especially over the first several weeks. Responding in this way during this initial period of time will save the staff much time. If we feel that the question or concern that you raise in your message is specific to your situation, will not be addressed in the bi-weekly communication and requires an immediate response, we will do our best to respond through email or telephone as quickly as possible. Once you have received a referral, you can expect to hear from staff more regularly and we will be available for more on-going, personal communication back and forth.”*

The board and staff are empathetic for the need for communication with families but at the same time are fully aware that we need to insure that all aspects of the business are being managed.

#### **c) ED Update**

Scott reviewed findings from recruiter discussions. It would cost a minimum of \$25K. The recruitment agencies were hesitant to take on the search and saw it a high risk search.

We do not need an ED to manage the office; the staff are extremely capable. We need an ED to focus on high level priorities like orphanages, political connections, etc.

There was an expressed interest from an experienced professional which Rob is pursuing. We see this as a very good option for the agency at this time.

#### **d) Current Adoption Files/Adoption Trends**

Melissa discussed the sibling and twins trend report that was sent to the families waiting on those lists. The Board fully supports remaining transparent on these issues.

She reported that the majority of families are appreciative of receiving this update, although understandingly disappointed.

#### **e) Policies and Procedures**

Christine opened the discussion surrounding the integrity of the adoption process, here and in Ethiopia, as well as the quality/standard of care for the children.

It was agreed that the Board must review all policies and procedures as part of our due diligence and responsibility.

Melissa noted that she has the policies and training manuals and will provide to the Board.

The staff proposed that Melissa and JoAnn travel to Ethiopia in June in order to train the staff and to manage the expectations of the first families traveling to attend court. They are hopeful to be there when the first families arrive, but it will depend on court dates.

The staff would also train the caregivers, using the IA caregivers' manual. The Board will discuss separately and let the staff know as soon as possible so they can make travel arrangements.

#### **f) Business Continuity**

It was agreed that the Board needs to review the roles and responsibilities of all staff, both in Canada and in Ethiopia.

For accountability, all job descriptions need to be documented and updated on a regular basis.

#### **g) Immigration**

Becky and Val discussed the time line for getting a visa have become outrageous.

It was noted that the families are putting pressure on their individual MP's which might help.

The Transition Home is at half capacity right now, and the staff is anticipating receiving the first travel visas in the next 2 to 3 weeks.

It was decided that the agency should not get involved directly with this issue, as it has taken a long time to rebuild the agency's damaged relationship with the High Commission. It would be detrimental for the High Commission to feel pressure from IA.

It was suggested that the agency ask Ted Giesbrecht to step in on our behalf. Rob will follow up with him and report back.

#### **g) Fundraising**

It has been asked by some families 'where' the funds go when they donate money or fundraise for the agency.

All money donated to the agency goes to the communities we support around the orphanages. The money cannot go directly to the orphanages.

Rob presented an idea for possible fundraising. Neil Trotter has given the agency full access to his images from 120 hours in Ethiopia. Neil suggested for minimal investment, he could produce a calendar using 12 of his images, for us to sell. He also suggested, for a larger investment, we could look at doing a hardcover coffee table book of his work. Rob will discuss pricing with Neil and logistics and get back to the Board.

#### **h) Website Update**

Rob reported that the new landing page for the IA website is up and running. JoAnn noted that we need to correct the phone number and address.

Kevin will work on some minor changes with the text and layout with the staff.

Rob will thank Kevin on behalf of the Board for pulling this together.

#### **i) Zambia**

In Camera discussion

#### **j) Extra Driver**

Val revisited the impending need for a second driver in Ethiopia. She noted this individual must be professional and empathetic to deal with the families.

This will become necessary once families begin to travel to appear in court, and to pick up their children.

The Board would like to wait until the 2 staff members travel to see if they can work something out while in Ethiopia.

#### **k) Appeal**

In Camera Discussion

**l) Siblings**

In Camera Discussion

**4. REGULAR REPORTS & ROUTINE ITEMS:**

**a) Family Snapshot**

The Board reviewed all regular reporting with no concerns or questions noted.

**b) Referral Snapshot**

The Board reviewed all regular reporting with no concerns or questions noted.

**c) Financial Snapshot**

The Board reviewed all regular reporting with no concerns or questions noted. Scott explained how this report will be prepared for each meeting with comparisons to the projections in the proposal to the actual financial position of the agency.

**d) Cashflow Snapshot**

Rob will provide the Board with this report early next week.

**5. MEETING CLOSE:**

**a) Final Comments**

None

**b) Next Full Board Meeting**

Next board meeting will be a conference call on June 21, 2010 at 8pm.

**c) Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 10:05pm.