



February 2021: Electronic Meeting “Minutes”

Overview of the February process:

For our first meeting of 2021, we continued to “virtually” meet online, now for the fourth time since COVID began. On February 9th, we asked members to consider making a pitch for a worthy organization by February 14th. Twelve organizations were submitted, and three were chosen randomly by the organizers. Pitches were due by February 20th, and voting, via Survey Monkey, took place until 6pm, Thursday, the 25th. Details of the submissions follow, as well as a report from the JFEC, our November 2020 recipient.

Report from November 2020 Recipient: The Jewish Federation of Eastern Connecticut

Hello everyone,

What a delight to be able to write to you all and thank you for your incredible contribution to the Food Pantry. Well, it's been quite a time for everyone, but I am happy to report that other than a 2-day Covid scare closure, the food pantry has been in full contact-less operation for the whole community.

As you know, we ask no questions of anyone who asks for food. The pandemic has escalated food insecurity in the community; for every 12 people we fed in 2019, we fed 65 in 2020. The need keeps growing, but I am happy to report that thanks to the generosity of groups like Power of Together2, we have not turned away a single person in need of food.

In 2020/21 we have given out more than 50,000 meals to families and individuals! Over 90% of our clients live in the City of New London. The remaining clients come from surrounding towns. While we do feed anyone who reaches out to us, based on the demographics we record, during CY2020:

- *49% of our clients identified as Hispanic*
- *17% of our clients identified as African American*
- *25% of our clients identified as Caucasian*
- *7% of our clients identified as Other*

Sometimes, we get a letter or two from people who have benefitted from Federation services. Here are two I have posted below. They all remind us that we're in this together.

*Thank you again for everything you have done!
Carin Savel, Executive Director
Jewish Federation of Eastern Connecticut*

Dear Jewish Federation Staff & Volunteers:

We could not be more thankful for the abundant donation. We were in tears upon opening the bags. All four of them were stuffed full with amazing items! We were even given toilet paper! We had been in desperate need and we had been cutting the few napkins we had left in half. Your generosity is incredible! You can't even imagine how much we appreciate everything. Your time, dedication, and hard work are not unnoticed. We realize it takes many people to provide. So thank you all!

Tracie and Reggie

Hello,

How are you? I am writing to express gratitude for your assistance. I am very grateful and wanted to say thank you to JFEC for the opportunity to get the food pantry each month. It has been a very helpful aspect to supplement my snap benefits every month. Thank you for what you are doing for the community and your help to me and my household. I am very grateful for the vegetarian options and all the things that JFEC provides. Thank you so much for the opportunity that you've given me so that I can have less stress during financial hardship.

*Sincerely,
Zakia*

Received 1/8/21

Dear Jewish Federation,

I recently applied for help with my electric bill. At the same time I asked if there was any other suggestions with any other help available that I could benefit from. Carly, whom was very helpful, texted over several suggestions. Included was your food pantry. I did call and stopped by to pick up a bag of food and a package of meat.

It was such a fun bag to go through. I haven't seen powdered milk since I was young. I myself am not a fan, but my daughter was thrilled. She's the cook in our family and is looking forward in finding the perfect recipe to use this milk in. I haven't brought pancake mix in like forever ago. I don't know why because we love pancakes. What a treat it was to find that in the bag . The candy bars made for a good laugh, who would have thought that would have been in the bag... I loved that you did that... so unexpected.

Thank you so much for putting this bag together for us... it was like unwrapping a present.

Thank you Carly for all of your help.
From all of us here to your whole

staff "Thank you for your kindness, your thoughtfulness in how you put everything together to help us. It is very appreciated... we will not let anything go to waste."

Keep smiling and take care.
Minerva 

Presentations:

Twelve members offered their names to make a pitch. Of those, the three pitches randomly chosen to present to the membership were:

1. **GOSA: Groton Open Space Association**, presented by Cindy Fortner. Currently the steward of almost 2000 acres of land which form a critical, undeveloped greenway, GOSA “endeavors to balance the continuing need for protection of land, water, wildlife and passive outdoor recreation with the growing interest in smart development.” This has been especially true during these stressful times, which has brought about a new appreciation and passion for the outdoors. Currently, GOSA is raising funds to save 104 acres in the heart of Groton called Sheep Farm South which is a critical greenway link. It will connect GOSA’S Merritt Family Forest to the existing Groton Greenbelt. This beautiful corridor will extend from Bluff Point to Mystic. This is a chance to make a statement of everlasting support for the natural environment that surrounds us. COVID-19 will pass, but when we support GOSA, we protect the land, greenways and water, that sustain us, forever.

2. **Spark Makerspace**, presented by Kristen Harkness. Spark Makerspace is a scrappy non-profit 501(c)3 in the heart of downtown New London asking for your help to survive COVID-19. We believe that a thriving makerspace will bring people, activity and life to downtown, helping New London come back strong. Spark’s purpose is to “support making by providing a location, tools, and equipment for people to pursue projects; facilitating the open and productive exchange of ideas; and engaging in community outreach.” With the support of Power of Together2 we will be able to hang in until we can reopen in our new space with in-person activities. Although our revenue decreased dramatically our costs have not, and this blew a big hole in our already lean budget. Institutions like Spark will be crucial to the post-pandemic revival of New London, bringing people, activities and life - community - back to downtown.

3. **FRESH New London**, presented by Lori Calobrisi. FRESH calls itself “a tiny but mighty food justice organization” with the mission to build momentum for food system change. They use food to connect the community, encourage stewardship, inspire leadership and incite change. They do this through three different buckets of work: Growing Food, Empowering Youth and Connecting Communities. Their

vision is called Edible New London - a city full of food planted by, with and for New London families. And it's more than just community gardens and urban farming. Their work includes elementary school students who go on tasting tours and build their own potting soil and youth employment programs where high school students gain job skills and leadership opportunities all while making New London a more vibrant and healthy city. Their food delivery program now serves nearly 10,000 lbs of food to over 200 families each week. Unfortunately, the funding for this wonderful program is nearly depleted. With the help of Power of Together the weekly food box program can continue. The executive director states she would use half of our donations also to open a new Community Farmers Market that will increase neighborhood food access and build critical social cohesion after Covid is over.

Outcome and Payment:

We had another very good response to the survey, with 103 members voting. The chosen recipient was FRESH.

For safety and expediency, we have requested that members pay through our online donation mechanism, Givinga, although checks are also accepted. Instructions are included with this email.

Next Meeting:

Our next regularly scheduled meeting is 7 pm, May 11, 2021. We will keep you posted as to the venue. Many thanks for your continued support!