



August 2021: Electronic Meeting “Minutes”

Overview of the August process:

For our August meeting, we were hopeful to convene our first in-person gathering since February 2020. Plans were announced to gather at Esker Point Beach on Tuesday, August 17 for a meeting and social gathering to celebrate our in-person event. Unfortunately, on August 15th we changed course due to the upsurge in Covid during the summer and increased concern among members. We opted to continue with a 6th online meeting. Details of the submissions follow, as well as a report from FRESH, our May 2021 recipient. The dates for the online process were:

9:00 pm, Friday, August 20: Deadline to submit name and organization

Saturday, August 21: Three pitches randomly chosen and the three submitting members notified.

6:00 pm, Thursday, August 26: Deadline for the three chosen members to submit their 500 maximum word pitch.

9:00 am, Friday, August 27: Three pitches sent to membership to read and vote on via an online survey link.

6:00 pm, Tuesday, August 31: Deadline for members to submit votes (via online survey link)

Wednesday, September 1: Chosen recipient announced

Report from May 2021 recipient: FRESH of New London

With the help of Power of Together, we at FRESH New London have been able to make a real impact on food access in our city. Through the spring, we partnered with the City of New London, L&M Hospital, the New London Senior Center, and Ledge Light Health District to collect and distribute food to nearly 3000 of our friends and neighbors every week at our food pantry. This pop-up pantry project also included a delivery option for those in New London that are also transportation insecure. What started out as a short-term emergency Covid relief effort in 2020 quickly shed light on the increasing food insecurity in New London, and we were able to continue the work for over a year. On average, this program continues to distribute 8,500 lbs of food to over 450 people each week.

In late spring, your donations helped us start the NLC Dream Market, a weekly multicultural food, art, and music celebration. With themes ranging from Juneteenth to Peruvian Independence Day to Youth Arts, the market has been a wonderful way to gather together and showcase local talent and creativity. FRESH distributes our weekly CSA (community supported agriculture) shares at the market, and we also host a “pay-what-you-can” table, where we display and give out any and all extra vegetables that have been harvested. In total, FRESH distributes food to 60-90 families every week, putting healthy, organic vegetables directly into the hands of our community.

FRESH a tiny but mighty food justice organization, and your support helped us do a lot of really good, really important work. Thank you.

Presentations:

Fourteen (14) members offered their names to make a pitch. Of those, the three pitches randomly chosen to present to the membership were:

1. Mystic Geriatric Institute, presented by Chris Morren.

Mystic Geriatrics Institute (MGI) is a non-profit organization with a mission to make a significant difference in improving the lives of the elderly and to make our region a center of excellence for elder well-being through specialized health care and education. Our mission is to create an organization in our region to foster the development and communication of effective geriatric care; to coordinate responses to elder issues, broadcasting effective strategies to invested audiences through workshops, conferencing and symposia; and to educate and collaborate with communities to establish infrastructure and services that promote elder well-being. MGI is planning a conference in November covering the seven areas of competency a caregiver needs in order to do this. They wish to offer this program free of charge. The PoT2 funding will help them accomplish this.

2. Eastern Community Gardens Association, presented by Eunice Sutphen.

Founded in 2011, this small but significant nonprofit works tirelessly to improve the food security and nutrition of vulnerable citizens in the region and is committed to educating gardeners and emerging farmers about sustainable farming practices. Working to combat the lack of healthy produce in low-income and low-access areas, ECCGA has a partnership with FRESH New London, partnerships with private landowners to create several highly productive Giving Gardens, and has established over 30 raised bed gardens for organizations focused on mitigating food insecurity, including Coogan Farm, the Groton Senior Center, the Ledyard and Stonington Housing Authorities, and many others.

3. Sophia Sees Hope, presented by Ken Dirico.

Founded in 2014, Sophia Sees Hope is a non-profit patient advocacy organization dedicated to generating awareness, raising funds for research, and providing support, education, and outreach to the Leber congenital amaurosis (LCA) and rare inherited retinal disease (IRD) community. Founded at a kitchen table in Ledyard, they are the only organization that supports a growing global LCA community. Covid has created an environment in which direct contributions for research have dramatically decreased. Beginning in 2017, government funding for research to prevent blindness was dramatically reduced. PoT contributions will be used to fund treatments for LCA. These funds will advance critical therapies for patients.

Outcome and Payment:

We had another very good response to the survey, with 104 members voting. The chosen recipient was **Mystic Geriatrics Institute**. We continue to ask members to pay online through Givinga, a service generously donated by PoT member Chris Shields, although checks are always accepted.

Next Meeting:

Our next regularly scheduled meeting is 7 pm, November 10, 2021. We will keep you posted as to the venue. Many thanks for your continued support!