



MINUTES OF THE 138th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
JANUARY 27, 2023, AT FIOR D'ITALIA, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 PM.

President's Greeting

Ruedi Sandmeier extended a warm greeting to everyone and welcomed our guest, Consul Martin Zaugg, who arrived in San Francisco last July. Martin will later conduct the reelection of Board members and Auditors. Tonight, we have three recipients of our scholarship program, namely Claire Leffler, Fatuma Rinderknecht, and Mia Call as our guests. We'll ask them to tell us a little about themselves later. Finally, we are happy to welcome former Board member Susy Lutsky. Above all, thank you, our trusted and generous members who are attending this meeting. You are the backbone of our society.

Our records show that we have 100 dues-paying members. Tonight, we have 28 members in attendance, and have received 10 proxies, which meet our quorum requirement of 10% of the membership to conduct the Annual Meeting.

Copies of the minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting have been posted on our website and also placed on the tables. Are there any questions about the minutes? Andy Egglar made a motion to approve the minutes, which were approved without opposition.

Committee Reports

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer John Zeiter indicated that the P&L statement has been reviewed by our Auditors, and then proceeded to read the details of the financial profit and loss statement and endowment balances.

Auditors Report, presented by Stefan Welter

Stefan Welter presented the report of the audit that he and Pius Kampfen conducted for the period of January 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022 for the Swiss Benevolent Society's General Fund, the Amstutz Fund, the Canonica Fund, the Isler Fund, the Silvia and Jacques Iselin Fund, as well as the Walter Munz Scholarship Fund. They examined, on a test basis, the evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures to obtain reasonable assurances that these statements are free of material misstatements. In conclusion, they found that the balance sheets and the statements of operations fairly represent the financial position of the Swiss Benevolent Society and that the books have been kept in an orderly manner.

Finally, Pius applauded John Zeiter for the tremendous job he does in keeping the books in an exemplary manner and for the amount of work it represents.

Investment Committee Report, presented by Andy Egglar

Andy began by saying what a pleasure it is to be here in person again.

Andy began, as usual, with a little synopsis of what was going on in the economy in 2022 and what we can expect the current year to look like. Inflation dominated the economic discourse throughout last year and is still doing so to-date. Inflation is a monetary phenomenon; it can only occur in the wake of a disproportionate

increase in the supply of money and that's exactly what happened in 2020 and much more excessively in 2021 when the Federal Reserve, at the behest of the government, allowed the money supply to grow off the charts.

To make matters worse and without consideration of the fact that inflation had already reached a 40 year high, the Fed kept short-term interest rates near zero percent and allowed its balance sheet to grow in leaps and bounds; basically, it was creating money out of thin air like there is no tomorrow.

It was not until mid-March 2022 that the policy makers realized the damage they had done, came to their senses and, in a move not seen in over 40 years, began hiking short-term interest rates 7 consecutive times, from close to zero to 4.5% so far, and indicated just recently that we can expect at least one more tightening on Feb. 1. We are talking about a fivefold increase in less than a year.

The financial markets reaction to rampant inflation and rapidly rising interest rates is always brutal and painful and so it was no different last year. Among the indices, the tech heavy Nasdaq Composite suffered the most with a decline of one third of its value while the S&P 500 fared better with a drop of 19.5%. And how did the SBS do? We compare our portfolio return to the S&P 500 because of all the indices it best represents the American economy. Well, our portfolio also suffered, albeit not as much as the reference index. The decline was 9.5%, a relatively decent performance, which we attribute to the cushion of a large cash position and the renewed attractiveness of short-term bonds.

Looking forward, we are keenly aware of the many challenges, among them tepid economic growth, reckless government spending, pervasive inflation, and others, including geopolitical events. Our posture will therefore be cautious and conservative, hopefully with a tilt to fixed income investing such as in treasuries of short duration.

Ruedi thanked Andy for a job well done and his golden touch with our investments.

Welfare Report, presented by Carla Twitchell

We only disbursed \$900 this year. Carla asked that if members know of Swiss elderly or people in need in the Bay Area to let her or Ruedi know so they can be contacted.

Scholarship Committee Report, presented by Ariana Ghelfi

As a preface to her report, Ariana read a letter she recently received from the mother of a former scholarship recipient. It reads as follows: "As I was going through some old papers today, I came across a scholarship acceptance letter from the Swiss Benevolent Society. My name is Marianne Velasco (Christen) and I want to share with you how you helped my daughter, Heidi O'Keefe in 2003 with a scholarship for college. It was a difficult time, as I was going through a divorce and struggling to help with my daughter's college tuition. Every bit helped! Here is an update on Heidi: Fast forward to 2023 and Heidi graduated from UC Davis with a degree in Mathematics; taught with Teach for America in Houston for 2 years while earning her teaching credential; moved to Dublin, Ireland, where she received her Master of Education and is now head of the Mathematics Department at a high school in San Jose. On behalf of Heidi and myself, I want to thank the Swiss Benevolent Society for helping ease the burden of tuition. It was, and still is, greatly appreciated! Best regards, Marianne Velasco-Christen".

The Scholarship Committee (Susann Sandmeier, John Andrew, and Ariana Ghelfi) is pleased to report that in 2022 the Society awarded \$54,000 in scholarships to 13 young Swiss in Northern California. For comparison, in 2021 we made 25 awards for a total of \$79,000.

We received 20 applications, (including 13 re-applicants), from which we awarded 13 scholarships for a total of \$54,000. Awards were made from all named funds.

The students are majoring in a diverse set of subjects and attend an equally diverse set of schools, including campuses of the University of California and California State University, St. Mary's College of California,

California College of the Arts, Loyola Merrymont, University of Colorado at Boulder, Indiana State, Boston University, Benedictine College, and Vanderbilt.

Thank you, members, on behalf of the Committee and students, for your continuing generosity which make these scholarships possible.

As a final note, Ruedi pointed out that rejected applications are mostly due to being incomplete. Thank you for all the work you do, Committee members!

Membership Committee Report, presented by Doug Twitchell

The data has been verified with our Treasurer, John Zeiter. There may be some differences in our totals due to the timing of donations. I record donations based on the date the donation was made whereas accounting will record donations on the date actually posted by the bank.

In 2022, we received fewer donations (57) compared to 2021 (85-90). Four donations were of \$1,000 and above.

Doug plans to compile a list of all members' available e-mail addresses so they can be easily contacted in the future.

Ruedi then asked our three young guests to introduce themselves and tell us about their studies.

Claire Leffler is in her fifth year at the California College of the Arts, studying architecture. She'll graduate in May.

Fatuma Rinderknecht, attending the Annual Meeting for the second time, is in her third year of medical school at UCSF.

Mia Call is in her first year at UC Berkeley, with no declared major but leaning towards French and German literature.

All three students are happy to have a chance to meet the Board and SBS members and are very grateful for the awards.

President's Report by Ruedi Sandmeier

"As you have heard from the reports of the various functions, our society stands on a very solid foundation. We have excellent financial results, are able to award scholarships and welfare as needed, and were able to again operate normally.

Of our two events, the Annual Meeting was held again in person and was well attended, and we replaced our traditional Senior Party and Spring Dance with a luncheon outdoors at the SwissPark beer garden. We had 70 people attending including two 100-year-old ladies. Sadly, we learned a few months later that Rosemary Ramsell has passed on. We plan to hold another such event on May 21."

At this point, there were no questions, but Justin Fox expressed his appreciation to the Board and its members.

"Since no matters to be voted on were submitted from the floor, we can now proceed with the elections.

As I said before, I have an excellent Board helping me to run the various tasks of our society. I hope you can honor that by confirming our Board members and Auditors. Our Board works well together as a team, and I am honored to work with such a fine group.

Under our By-Laws, the Directors are elected based on a system of rotation over a three-year period. Four Board members are up for re-election for three-year terms, and we also need to re-elect Pius Kampfen and Stefan Welter for the auditor positions.

Max Munz was elected six years ago as corresponding member. You may recall that we received a huge donation from the estate of Walter Munz. His brother Max was interested in our operation and how we are handling this windfall. So, we decided to make him a corresponding member as he lives in Switzerland. Max informed me now that he does not plan to travel to San Francisco anymore, and that he is confident in our handling of the inheritance of his brother, so he will cease to be part of our Board. He is nevertheless interested in knowing how our society is doing.

Now it is time to hand over the meeting to Consul Zaugg, to proceed with the reelection of four Board members for a three-year term, and Auditors for a one-year term.”

Douglas Twitchell, Membership
John Andrew, Scholarships
Ariana Ghelfi, Scholarships
Suzanne Sandmeier, Scholarships
Pius Kampfen, Auditor
Stefan Welter, Auditor

All were approved by acclamation.

“Thank you, Martin, for conducting the elections so efficiently. I would also like to express our deep appreciation for the steadfast support we have been receiving from the Consulate. It has been a pleasure working with your team and we look forward to a continued close cooperation.”

Martin’s 30-year career led him to San Francisco last July. He is happy to brief the audience on current visa issues and to answer pertinent questions.

With no further questions or comments from the audience, Justin Cox made a motion to close the meeting, seconded by John Zeiter.

Meeting closed at 7:07 PM.