

November 29, 2007

Joel Ware
President of the Board, SCNA

Dear Joel,

I am writing to you in your capacity as president of SCNA. I'm of course familiar with your long history of community activism and I believe that you and I share many basic aspirations. For that reason I intend to be frank and direct in this note. My hope is that you'll agree with the serious criticisms that this note contains and you initiate tangible steps that will encourage SCNA to recover from the deteriorated and irrelevant state that the organization now appears to be in.

As you know, I introduced the idea of a community network at a local CPSR meeting over a decade ago. I attended many meetings in the early days and wrote numerous articles about the movement including the first book on the topic. It was our hope that we could create an innovative and energetic institution that would be a long-lived community asset. Given these initial high hopes it is particularly distressing to note the forlorn state of the present system.

From my vantage point, the SCNA board has presided over a protracted period of disregard of SCN and SCNA. The current board has seemingly been missing in action on all major duties related to SCNA administration, mission, membership, and community duties. I don't know how much of this is due to neglect and how much is due to something more serious. I am not by nature a suspicious person. Unfortunately I am honestly unable to keep the notion that more nefarious aims might be behind the board's secrecy and paralysis.

Unfortunately the board does not seem to have any knowledge of who is actually a member of SCNA. For an organization that is specifically intended to be membership driven this is particularly grievous. This is aggravated by the fact that according to the board the membership records were turned over to a "professional company" some years ago. Unfortunately there is some evidence that membership has been intentionally discouraged and reduced for whatever reason. At any rate, these unsettling facts turn a simple lack of competence or interest into an organizational crisis.

My recent encounter demonstrates several of these shortcomings. I recently sent in membership fees and received a receipt with your signature on it. Interestingly, your response to me in the letter made no mention of "membership" but explicitly thanked me for my "donation." While this could in fact could be a typo or an honest error, it's certainly suspicious in light of the dubious state of the membership records. You then went on to say that "every dollar you are able to send really does make a difference." From what I can see, virtually nothing has been spent on basic *maintenance*, let alone *enhancement* or improvement for at least five years. The money has grown considerably on donations such as the ones I've made for years but it appears to simply gather dust. At the very least one wonders why you'd even ask for money since there are no new projects or initiatives on the horizon.

In fact there are apparently no updates, no visibility, no reports to members, no op-eds, no outreach – nothing that one would come to expect from a community oriented non-profit corporation. To anybody that looked, it would appear that slow motion organizational suicide is in progress.

The board is so non-forthcoming and non-answerable to its members that I would use the term *reclusive*, if not *secretive*. As you know firsthand, this is the antithesis of what a community oriented organization should be. This unwillingness to communicate with the community or, even, with its own membership, while unreasonable enough, is sufficiently irrational to lead one to question why the board would want to continue in this role. The board is simply not acting on anything resembling good faith.

As you know, I am not a lawyer. Moreover, this note is not intended to be a legal challenge. Having said that I will let you know that it's difficult for me to ignore the growing feeling that certain fundamental obligations of an ethical – if

not legal – nature have been and are being abrogated. I note the following major problems associated with the current board:

1. Inadequate number of public meetings; private and postponed board meetings; occasionally no annual meeting as required by law.
2. No public minutes.
3. No program. No projects.
4. Inadequate maintenance of the technological system.
5. Little to no communication with members and others, including with our main partner, the Seattle Public Library.
6. Lack of financial accounting. Misreporting of financial information to members. A full financial audit may be warranted.
7. Other inadequate record keeping, membership data
8. In general, disregard of the stated mission of SCNA and lack of good faith.

This negligence may even place the organization in legal jeopardy and vulnerable to lawsuits.

It is my belief as a past and current member of SCNA that the current SCNA board of directors is, and has been, neglectful of all or nearly all of its key duties for a substantial amount of time. In order to save the organization I recommend that most if not all current board members should step down in the near future after first consulting with long-term SCN volunteers and advocates and appointing an interim board based on this consultation to replace them. Frankly it is very nearly impossible for me to imagine any legitimate desire on the part of the board to retain their position when I don't see any desire on their part to actually do the job they are entrusted with.

I submit that the shape of the Internet has not been totally determined. For this reason, a community-oriented project that actively works for democracy and community empowerment on the Internet is still needed today. In my opinion, it is not too late to help SCNA fulfill the vision that it was established to pursue.

I'd like to think that you would be motivated to action by this note. Although I'm speaking for myself alone, I believe that there are people who would be willing to contribute to an enlivened SCNA. My strong suspicion is that the present board is largely incapable of, if not directly opposed to, taking the necessary steps.

I call on you as president of SCNA and supporter from the early days to initiate tangible steps towards cleaning up this mess. I have tried to convey my frustration and sadness at the deterioration of this innovative and innovative project. I hope that this note at least demonstrates that there are people out there who care about the fate of SCNA. I would like to see an honest attempt to bring satisfactory resolution to these problems. Without this attempt, the logical next step would be to bring these concerns to a broader audience.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Schuler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Doug Schuler, SCN Co-Founder and SCNA Member