
Status of the Name Change

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Members of the Friday Morning Music Club's Board of Governors held a Town Hall-style meeting with interested members on June 22, 2017, to discuss the Board's decision to adopt a new "doing business as" name for the Club.

The following is a summary of that meeting.

The Background

The project was initiated at the request of several long-term Club members. Since the suggestion emerges every year or so, the Board decided it was time to give the suggestion serious attention. A complete and thorough process was designed.

First, the Board obtained professional help through CultureCapital, from a Business Volunteer for the Arts (BVA) with professional name-change experience. With her assistance, a member survey was designed and circulated to Club members.

The survey was designed to help the Board assess the opinions of the membership about the concept of a possible name change. The survey response rate was a disappointing 18.4%. A painstaking analysis of the responses did not produce a clear answer on the name change question. Analyzed on a question-by-question basis, there was a fairly even split between "agree" answers to both anti- and pro-name change questions, with a number of responses that did not indicate a strong view. Moreover, it was often hard to tell the view of the individual responder.

Members, including, but not limited to those on the Board, believed that the name DID present an obstacle to potential members and audiences. Thus, the Board decided to proceed with the process suggested by the BVA for developing new name ideas. Lists were developed of names and feelings we wanted to convey with names. After additional meetings, email exchanges, and a focus group brought in by BVA, these were finally winnowed down to three. This completed our work with the BVA and a report was presented to the Board.

The Board then took over the project for further review and debate. Board members discussed their own feelings about the name as well as their experiences with others' reactions to the name. The following were among the various "pros" and "cons" that the Board considered:

Positives of keeping the name: history and continuity, member attachment/loyalty, loyalty/attachment of competition participants and winners, name recognition, and what the name might represent to others. No change would also, of course, be by far the easiest course.

Negatives of keeping the name: It misrepresents what the organization does; requires constant explanation; sounds old-fashioned; may not be attracting attention through Internet and other media; doesn't appeal to younger members and potential members; somewhat puzzling to audiences; conductors of our two major ensembles think the name should change; and the orchestra had already changed its name without negative consequences.

Regarding name recognition, it was also noted that times have changed. There are now a large number of organizations that compete with the Club for attention among musicians in this area. Both the organization's name recognition and, perhaps even its reputation, are not what they once inarguably were, even though the Club remains unique in the variety of opportunities that it offers. The Board also noted that membership has been declining rather than flourishing, dropping from the mid-700's to the mid-500's in recent years.

Next, the Board sought legal advice on the implications and requirements of a name change. The Board obtained a volunteer attorney through Washington Area Lawyers for the Arts (WALA) who advised us that a name change would not affect grants and bequests that referenced the Friday Morning Music Club name as long as the organization's mission was not changed. The attorney also advised us on the various procedures that might be followed, including use of "doing business as" versus doing a formal charter or bylaw amendment.

At its March 17, 2017 meeting, having reviewed and discussed this matter for close to two years, the Board unanimously agreed to adopt a new "doing business as" name for the Club. They also agreed that a short list of three names from the long list that had been developed be circulated to the Board and the results would be presented at the April 2017 meeting for a final discussion, decision and vote.

The name selection process: The objective for a new name was that it should clearly indicate that we are a large Washington area music organization with no limitations to types of musical activities. Also, the name should be reasonably clear, informative, and dignified. The Board decided against considering names that were catchy or trendy. Close to 200 names had been suggested by Club members, as well as through the BVA/CultureCapital exercise. Names that were viewed as possible candidates were given trademark and Google searches for conflicts.

"Washington Metropolitan" and "Washington Area" had already been taken by other organizations. The word "Metropolitan," alone, was seen as already "owned" by New York City. Board members did not warm to the use of "DC" in the name. The formulation using "Capital Area" together with "Music" seemed to be available, so "Capital Area" plus "Music" became the basis for the final formula. Because there was support for having an acronym that could be pronounced and used as a symbolic logo, and because there was also a strong feeling that the name needed an "entity" word to show that the Club is an organization (and because "Club" had been objected to by a number of members), the word "Alliance" was finally selected because it produced an acronym – CAMA -- that was both pronounceable and catchy and could be used as a logo. The word also suggests the size and breadth of the Club and its activities-- we encompass many activities and we work with many performance venues, Outreach locations and other organiza-

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tions, such as music teacher groups. It also suggests that we are open to working with other organizations.

Why did the Board select the “DBA” process without member vote?

The Board was elected to make decisions that it believed to be in the best interests of the organization. Board members who have responsibility to oversee the Club’s many activities are well-positioned to sense what is in the organization’s best interests. The low response rate to the name survey and the general lack of interest expressed during the course of the Board’s review also suggested that a very large portion of the membership was either indifferent or content to leave this matter to the Board. The Board also noted the very long time it had taken for Board members themselves to become comfortable, after full discussion and review, with the idea of changing the Club’s name. Giving a similar education to members could be enormously time-consuming for Board members who are already heavily vested with other responsibilities. The Board thus decided on using the “doing business as” procedure. Moreover, because this procedure would not involve a formal change of the Club’s charter or bylaws, it would permit a test of the new name, but would leave open the flexibility to tweak or adjust, or possibly even turn back. The Board understands that many longer-term members have a lot of history with the Club’s name. This procedure will give members some time to get used to the idea of a new name and to give the name a chance. Then a vote, when taken, would have a basis in experience and not just the emotion of the moment.

Implications for the website, emails, and list serve

Carol Fromboluti gave a web update based on recent meetings with Robert Wade, our Web contractor. Mr. Wade has secured capitalareamusic@gmail.com as well as on twitter, instagram and pinterest.

The Board is reviewing new logos and when one is selected it will be featured on a new and improved website with more interactive features. The aim is to make

the website more like the Facebook page, with better integration between the two. This process will take the better part of a year, with new features reviewed and vetted by a website design committee. The new site will be up for a trial run before going live.

We also hope to move from Bluehost, our current email platform, to a new email platform with new addresses. However, the current @fmmc.org addresses will remain active during an interim period

Public Relations

Richard Sawyer provided a brief overview of the status of public relations (PR) work, including how public relations work is related to the name change process. Richard joined the Board, as the PR lead, in November 2016, well into the name change process.

The Board decided, in January 2017, to establish a PR sub-committee to more efficiently and effectively develop PR plans and activities, including those concerned with the name change. The sub-committee met 3 times in the spring of 2017.

A PR plan for the organization was developed in March-April 2017. The plan, shared in the 2017 annual report, describes the main objectives, target audiences and PR methods to be employed. In summary, objectives include: to enhance the prestige and awareness about the organization among diverse audiences; to increase membership at the Performance, Association and Student levels; and to increase attendance at performance events. Target audiences include current members, possible new members, local music schools, other arts and music organizations, and the broader local population as potential audience members at performance events. The Board believes that the new name for the organization may facilitate progress on these objectives.

Richard concluded his presentation by briefly noting that a number of PR activities (described in detail in the PR annual report) are under consideration. These activities (e.g., outreach to local music

schools and local music teachers and more targeted promotion of performance events) will be developed and implemented in the context of the new name for the organization.

In Summary

Olivia emphasized that Board members, who all devote untold hours to managing this very large and complex organization, have enormous respect for this unique organization and its long history. Their decision reflects our sincere and best judgment that the current name is not helping the organization and in fact may be hurting it, and that a new name and fresher face will be beneficial for the organization’s future. While the history is very important, the Board also wants this organization to have a future that is full of vitality. We believe that a name change and the public awareness process that it entails will be a real boost to our status, membership, and attendance.

After the intensive two-year process, the Board is now turning its attention to designing and implementing the branding and rollout of the new name. We welcome member feedback on best ways to implement the name change. Please let us know your ideas, or volunteer to serve on a roll-out committee. Contact Yvonne Sabine if you are interested in serving on the roll-out committee at fmmc@fmmc.org. 📧