

October 27, 2023

Dear Members of New Sweden Cultural Heritage Society,

For the past several months, the New Sweden Board of Directors has been addressing a complex situation with Nordic Northwest and its Board of Directors. The New Sweden Board believes in being open and transparent with our membership and this communication is intended to inform our membership of what is transpiring.

In July, 2006, the Scandinavian Heritage Foundation (the legal predecessor of Nordic Northwest) codified into contract the terms of its relationship with its three “Affiliate Members” – American Scandinavian Foundation, the Scandinavian Genealogical Society, and New Sweden Cultural Heritage Society. This contract stated, in part, that each Affiliate Member has the right to choose “a member of their organization to represent them on the Board of Directors” of SHF. This contract further stated that the chosen member from each Affiliate organization “has full voting rights and is expected to be an active participant in the business of the Foundation.”

In May, 2007, the Scandinavian Heritage Foundation Board (the legal predecessor of the Nordic Northwest Board) formally re-affirmed the prior, 2006 Affiliate Members contract with American Scandinavian Foundation, the Scandinavian Genealogical Society, and New Sweden. This new document was entitled “Affiliate Membership Policy”. This Affiliate Membership Policy delineated the multiple benefits to the three recognized Affiliate Members of their Affiliate Membership with SHF and re-affirmed the contractual right of each of the three recognized Affiliate members to “provide a representative to be a member of the Board of Directors provided such individual is a member of the Foundation in their own right.” The Affiliate Membership Policy further stated that the Agreement “will continue to operate as such under contract unless ... dissolved by mutual consent.”

Pursuant to the terms of both above contracts, members of New Sweden have subsequently served on the SHF/NNW Board, including Sandra Miller and Jimmy Granston, in the New Sweden Affiliate Member position.

In December, 2017, while serving as President of New Sweden, Kristi Gustafson was casually contacted by Sonja Haugen while at Nordia House. Sonja said she was part of the NNW Governance Committee and wanted to talk to Kristi about an agreement New Sweden had with the Scandinavian Heritage Society, now Nordic Northwest. Having heard of this agreement but not knowing details of it, and sensing the importance of this meeting, Kristi asked New Sweden's Vice-President at the time, Ross Fogelquist, to join her for the meeting.

Ross and Kristi subsequently met with Sonja Haugen, then-Acting Executive Director Sandra Miller, and NNW Board Member Grethe Larson. Ross and Kristi were advised that Sonja, Sandra and

Grethe were part of the NNW Board Governance Committee and they were doing a sort of house cleaning, going through old papers. They showed Ross and Kristi documents entitled “Affiliate Membership Policy” dated 2007 between SHF and New Sweden, with attached “Affiliate Members” contract dated 2006 between SHF and New Sweden. They said that as a courtesy they wanted to notify New Sweden that the NNW Board was getting rid of the contracts. Kristi scanned the document and pointed to the paragraph that said the contracts could only be vacated by mutual agreement of both parties. It was obvious there were benefits to New Sweden in the contracts including a position on the NNW Board. At that time, the New Sweden Affiliate Board Member position was being filled by our New Sweden member Jimmy Granstrom. Kristi said she and Ross would need to discuss this with the New Sweden Board. After discussion, the New Sweden Board voted to not dissolve the Affiliate Membership contracts.

At that time, Jimmy had served in the New Sweden Affiliate Member position on the NNW Board for several years and wanted to resign. Kristi agreed to replace him and to attend the January, 2018 NNW Board meeting as the next New Sweden Affiliate Member. Kristi was then notified by Sandra Miller that she had been advised by Sonja Haugen that Kristi would not be permitted to sit on the NNW Board as the New Sweden Affiliate Member and that New Sweden no longer had an Affiliate Member position on the NNW Board.

Notwithstanding NNW’s refusal to comply with the terms of the 2006 and 2007 Affiliate Membership contracts, New Sweden has continued to pay the annual Affiliate Membership fees of \$150 and it has continued to comply with all terms of the Affiliate Membership contracts. New Sweden bank statements confirm that the New Sweden Affiliate Membership checks for \$150 have been annually received and cashed by NNW. New Sweden has also received written letters from NNW wherein NNW confirms its receipt of “New Sweden Cultural Heritage Society’s Affiliate Membership” renewal fees of \$150.00.

On April 12, 2023, the Board of New Sweden formally notified NNW and its Board in writing that New Sweden had officially nominated Ross Fogelquist to fill the New Sweden Affiliate Member position on the NNW Board pursuant to the 2006 and 2007 Affiliate Membership contracts.

On May 22, 2023, as current Vice-President of New Sweden, Kristi made an oral and written presentation to the NNW Board at its monthly meeting. In this presentation Kristi entered the above referenced history of the 2006 and 2007 Affiliate Membership contracts into the NNW Board Meeting record, reiterated the long history of cooperation between New Sweden and SHF/NNW, and again requested that Ross Fogelquist be officially seated as the New Sweden Affiliate Board Member. Kristi was met with silence. Without comment, the NNW Board moved on to its next agenda item. At the conclusion of the public portion of the NNW Board meeting, when Ross attempted to join and participate in the non-public portion of the meeting in his capacity as the New Sweden Affiliate Board Member, Ross was asked to leave the Board Room. Sadly, the subject and content of Kristi’s presentation was not even included in the later-issued official NNW Board Meeting Minutes for that date.

Since May, 2023, New Sweden made multiple attempts to engage NNW, its Board, and its Board members, together and individually, in a conversation regarding this matter, all to no avail.

At the September 25, 2023, NNW Board Meeting, the Governance Committee of the NNW Board recommended that the NNW Board officially vote to unilaterally “sunset” the long-standing Affiliate Membership contracts with New Sweden. Notably, New Sweden was given no notice by the NNW Governance Committee that it had discussed and reached a decision on the matter of the Affiliate Membership Policy with New Sweden. Notably, New Sweden was given no notice by NNW that the Affiliate Membership Policy with New Sweden had been entered onto the Board agenda for discussion at the September, 2023 Board meeting. Notably, New Sweden was given no notice of the intent of the NNW Board to vote to terminate the Affiliate Membership Policy with New Sweden. Despite a motion by Ross Fogelquist to table the vote to allow for further discussion with New Sweden and its Board on the matter of the Affiliate Membership Policy and contracts, and to allow New Sweden to provide documents to NNW that, to our surprise, NNW stated it could not physically locate documenting the Affiliate Membership contracts, the Board voted to terminate the historical, long-standing, contractual Affiliate Membership Policy with New Sweden.

It is the position of New Sweden that the 2006 and 2007 Affiliate Membership contracts with SHF/NNW continue to stand, that the Affiliate Membership contracts have never been “dissolved by mutual consent” as mandated by the contract terms of the Affiliate Membership Policy, and that New Sweden has an Affiliate Membership position on the NNW Board by tradition, convention, and most certainly by contract.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors  
New Sweden Cultural Heritage Society