



Strategic Plan

8-14-21

Our Mission

To promote and teach the sport of rowing to the community in order to develop physical fitness, personal character, and an ethic of cooperation [through competitive and recreational opportunities](#).

Introduction

In 2017, the VBR Board developed a simple plan with one objective, to build the boathouse. All fundraising effort was to go for this purpose and a Building Committee was established to manage the project. The following 2 years saw a major effort to raise funds and build the building. It was opened in early 2020, a credit to everyone who contributed effort and money to the project. Early 2020 saw the Board ready to write a new strategic plan, but COVID intervened, and planning was limited to survival and dealing with a host of issues that came out of the pandemic.

With the end of the pandemic in sight, it is time to develop a plan that will carry us through the next few years as we endeavor to maximize the potential of our organization. The future is not unlimited since, at some point, we will be constrained by the capacity of our facilities to store boats for use in our programs.

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to set some goals for our organization and to act as a roadmap into the future. The financial goals for income are broken down into simplified segments over which we have control. Expenses are dominated by coaching costs and coaching is key to member satisfaction. Metrics are used to help inform the feasibility of hiring new coaches.

Like all plans, it will never be exactly on target and it will need to be refreshed from time to time to account for variations not currently foreseen. This plan will also be shared on Guidestar and will be important for maintaining our current Platinum Rating.

Financial Aspects

The associated Excel Spreadsheet breaks down income and expenses into simplified categories for the past four years and provides budgets or goals for the next three years. It has some notes and is pretty much self-explanatory. With the end of COVID and the success of our recruiting programs, in general, we are showing a 20% growth in revenue year to year for the three-year period. Revenue growth can come from increased participation and/or fee increases for the line items. The expense line items are driven by coaching costs and we have made some attempt to use metrics or ratios to match increased participation with increased coaching. Member satisfaction at every level is primarily driven by the access to competent coaching.



The metrics for coaching are dollars of revenue in several categories divided by the number of existing or planned coaching positions. It shows a relatively stable relationship in the past and going forward in terms of the amount of revenue divided by the cost of coaching for both youth and adults. It also shows a relatively stable relationship between fees paid and coaching salary costs. As a group, the youth pay about double what the adults pay, which is somewhat reasonable since they have twice as many coached rows, more time on the water and access to all the coaches for every practice, where the adults have only had one or occasionally two coaches for their practices.

There is another set of metrics which we have published on GuideStar and which are key to maintaining our Platinum status on that particularly important platform. We chose our own metrics out of a long list offered by GuideStar and we can change our choices going forward. For the time being, these seem to be reasonable choices. We need to make the projections for these metrics going forward.

Programs

Our programs are essential to us as an organization. While rowers, particularly adult rowers, may focus on their own program, the existence and growth of our community programs is of great interest to potential funders. Our suite of existing programs is well-established, and all have managed to adapt to COVID conditions, even if attendance has been somewhat affected.

The Masters and Junior programs are the 2 major activities at present. Both are revenue producing and account for most of our income. Continued expansion of these core programs is essential to both the financial stability of the club and expansion of its presence in the community. In spite of the challenges of the Covid-19 virus, participation has been fairly steady during the epidemic. With some encouraging signs that the epidemic can be managed, the first year of this plan focuses on renewed growth of these established and essential programs.

The Junior program recruits both middle and high school students. The focus for middle schoolers is learning to row and conditioning but moderates competitive intensity to avoid overstressing developing young bodies. High school students train to compete in youth regattas, of which there are many in Florida and the southeast. Accomplished high school rowers have many opportunities to secure financial aid if they wish to continue rowing in college. Recruiting students is done by engaging with the athletic departments of area schools and by organizing a schedule of summer programs that accommodate beginners through accomplished competitors. At the beginning of this year, we had 12 students in the program. Some financial aid is available to assist those challenged by the cost. (More on this below.)

The Masters program has grown largely by word our mouth and is supported by a regular schedule of Learn to Row classes. Once basic skills are developed regular coached rowing sessions are offered to continue skill enhancement, ultimately leading to independent rowing if desired. A number of adult rowers have their own boat; storing them in the boathouse is a steady source of income. It is traditional in rowing that clubs have a schedule of social activities. This has not been possible in the pandemic but



there is an apparent willingness to organize them when circumstances permit. At present there are 70 adult members, and Learn to Row classes are often fully booked as soon as they are scheduled.

A Diversity & Inclusion program is the club's top priority for program expansion. This is consistent with the focus of US Rowing, which will be a source of support as we develop our program. The Program Committee will undertake definition of this program and is expected to present an outline to the Board of Directors by (when?). Some efforts have been undertaken in the past, such as financial aid for students in need. While some contact with area youth organizations has been made, the pandemic has been a major impediment to meaningful progress. The commitment of the Board of Directors is to a substantial program supported by personnel and financial resources that engages (XX) underserved youth in 2021 and grows to (XX) by 2023.

As progress with these 3 essential programs is demonstrated the club will consider other activities to further engage members of the community. Examples are:

We need to continue with development of community programs and the list includes:

- Dragon boating. We need to hire a coach/leader to get this program going. We have one boat and funding committed for a second one as needed. This program is widely available in Florida and our lagoon conditions are perfect for it.
- Veterans and disabled veterans. Maybe they can row. Dragon boating is perhaps a better option since it is easier and more fun to start with.
- Disabled persons. This can be physically, mentally or visually handicapped persons.

In "normal" times the club's programs would be run in ways that foster engagement by members across all activities. The isolation that resulted from the Corona Virus has severely restricted such efforts. With the increasing rate of vaccination and declining rate of infection the club will renew its efforts to promote a sense of community that engages all members. Examples are social activities that involve participants in all programs, recruiting broader board and committee membership from all programs, and casual rows in which line ups are made of different programs for fun activities. Based on present circumstances and schedules, expanded engagement activities will likely begin in the fall.

Staff

In 2021, we have committed to a third full-time staff member. We also seem to be developing a good cadre of contract coaches. The revised financial plan shows us recruiting an Executive Director (ED) at the end of this year to start in early 2022. The ED would take over some of the functions that are currently done by our coaching staff and some that are currently done by volunteers and Board Members. We envision someone who would also coach part time, at least in the beginning.

Qualifications for the ED would include:

- Community Rowing Club experience.
- Strong financial background. Ability to develop budgets and manage to them.



- Experience in developing and managing strategic plans.
- Experience in leading and managing fundraising campaigns.
- Recognized coaching ability.
- Demonstrated interest in Community programs.
- Demonstrated experience in recruiting and managing staff.
- Ability to represent VBR in the community.

The duties of the Executive Director would consolidate some of the tasks that we have spread around to reduce the load on our Director of Rowing. Examples would be:

- Preparation of monthly operating budget reports.
- Devising a corporate calendar with recurring annual events, filings and the like saved.
- Preparation and implementation of a marketing plan for VBR membership and visiting teams.
- Managing and expanding our existing programs.
- Devising and implementing additional community programming.
- Managing our overall communications strategy and making sure that it is implemented.
- Devising and implementing our various fundraising efforts.
- Managing our equipment fleet and planning for replacement and maintenance.
- Managing our building and its maintenance.
- Hiring all of our staff and managing personnel.
- Leading our efforts in safety awareness and practices.
- Leading the preparation of future strategic plans.

Equipment Needs

The attached spreadsheet shows the current fleet and its capacity to seat various types of rowers. As of now, we have fairly good capability of seating the mix of rowers that we expect coming out of COVID. The part of the spreadsheet that shows our boathouse capacity with all racks full may eventually prove to be the limiting factor on growth. There are a few things we can do to add rack space or use rack space currently out-of-doors, but that can only go so far.

The total value of our fleet is currently \$400,000. Assuming an average lifespan of 8 years for a shell, we would need \$50,000 per year just for replacements for our existing fleet.

Fundraising

We are getting more organized with our fundraising efforts to cover operating costs. Our new NFG platform is going to be helpful in getting regular newsletters out and in managing donors and the requests to those donors. The contact management database program along with its features tailored for fundraising promises to be a great tool for us going forward. The Plan shows increasing need for fundraising, so we will have to make it happen. For 2021, we have settled on three major fundraising efforts:

- Spring fund drive aimed at adult members and external donors.



- October Ergathon aimed at youth parent families.
- End of year fund drive aimed at adult members and external donors.

Fundraising for capital items is less critical because of the Toffey funds that we have received and will receive. We need to develop policies on how those funds should be expended. Examples would be requiring that any purchases be covered at least 50% by new donations with the balance out of our capital fund. We could also commit some of this money to a endowment fund.

We have a small endowment fund. Increasing that fund or others like it should be part of our plan for the future. We also need to work to get future bequests.

Summary

Over the past 12 years Vero Beach Rowing has rowed out of a shared facility in Fellsmere, moved to a temporary facility in Vero Beach, and funded and completed a 14,700 square foot boathouse at its permanent location in Riverside Park. Onset of the pandemic in early 2020 was a major impediment to planned progress but the club rapidly adjusted its focus to single sculling to sustain its programs. Now, with encouraging developments in vaccine availability and declining infection rates, VBR is prepared to resume its growth. This plan charts the path forward over the next several years.

The Junior program will focus on resuming its growth in 2021. A resumption of regatta participation and an aggressive recruiting effort are planned. The Masters program will sustain the very successful progress established in 2020. Both programs are in the process of once again rowing team boats which will enhance the rowing experience of all participants.

Creation of a substantial diversity and inclusion program is the major expansion effort of the current year. Funds are budgeted for additional staff to provide the focus needed. This program is consistent with a comparable effort underway by US Rowing.

Revenues generated by rowing related income, including Juniors and Masters fees will provide around 60% of VBR's operating budget in 2021. The primary focus of fundraising will shift to support of operating funds now that the boathouse capital project has been completed.