Financial Report

Financially, MinnPost is healthier than it has ever been. In recent years, we have made strategic investments to lay the groundwork for future revenue growth and enable MinnPost co-founders Joel and Laurie Kramer to reduce their involvement in our day-to-day operations. We started reaping the benefits of those investments in 2015, with strong growth in membership and event revenue offsetting expected declines in foundation support and capital campaign donations. At the same time, we made a few personnel moves that give us a business leadership team we believe will keep MinnPost growing for years to come.

MinnPost recorded revenues of $1.87 million in 2015, down 5% from 2014. This total includes $742,000 in membership donations and events, $442,000 in sponsorship and advertising, $602,000 in foundation grants, $83,000 in growth-capital campaign donations, and $5,000 in other revenue.

The slight decline in total revenue stems primarily from significant but anticipated decreases in foundation and capital campaign revenue. Foundation grants were down 17% from an abnormally high 2014 amount, while capital campaign revenue fell 51% as we entered the final stage of that multi-year fundraising effort.

The investments we made in our membership program over the past two years – with support from the Knight Foundation – are starting to bear fruit. Membership donations and event revenue were up 14% from 2014, with the strongest growth coming from member-donors who give less than $1,000. We finished 2015 with 2,616 member households, up 16% from last year.

Advertising and sponsorship revenue saw modest growth of 3% in what continues to be a challenging and competitive market.

Expenses for 2015 were $1.80 million, up 8% from 2014, due primarily to increased staff costs. The surplus for 2015 was $66,154, compared to a 2014 surplus of $298,116. (The 2014 surplus was partly a matter of timing: we received the first $300,000 payment on our membership-building grant from Knight Foundation that year, but didn’t spend much of it until 2015.) This is MinnPost’s sixth consecutive annual surplus. Cash on hand at year-end was $751,000, our strongest position since shortly after we launched in 2007.

Our cash reserves amount to more than four months of operating expenses, giving us a welcome financial cushion that puts us in good shape heading into the final phase of our leadership transition plan, which involves running manageable deficits in 2016 and 2017 as we increase operating revenue to the point where it fully supports the new staff positions we have added in recent years.

A handful of personnel changes made in 2015 have significantly changed the face and structure of our business staff.

In August, we said farewell to Membership & Events Coordinator Ashleigh Swenson, who after three years with MinnPost took another job that gives her more time to be with her young daughters.

In December, we hired Claire Radomski to be MinnPost’s Development Director, a new position that oversees our individual and institutional giving efforts, including membership, major gifts, and foundation grants. Claire comes to us from WFYI, a public radio and television broadcaster in Indianapolis, where she was director of membership. Her addition will enable Laurie and Joel Kramer to further reduce the amount of time they currently spend soliciting major gifts and foundation grants.

And on Jan. 1 we promoted Bethany Hollenkamp from Office Manager to Director of Operations and Finance. Bethany has been with MinnPost since 2013, and will soon receive her MBA from the University of Minnesota’s Carlson School of Management. Her promotion completes a yearlong process in which she gradually assumed responsibility for MinnPost’s day-to-day finances and administration from retiring Business Manager Bryan Powell, who ably managed our finances and administration since MinnPost launched in 2007.

Along with longtime Advertising Director Sally Waterman, Bethany and Claire report to me. Collectively, the four of us make up the MinnPost business leadership team.