

## **NFHR BOD Candidate: Jessica Reuterskiold**

### **Introduction (1-1.5 minutes):**

I am a lifetime member and past board member (2016-2022) of the NFHR and have a vested interest in the success of the NFHR. During my time on the board, I served on the Herald and Awards & Promotions Committees. I also served in various officer roles such as Vice President, Treasurer, and President.

While I served on the Awards & Promotions committee, we focused on promoting the Fjord at various competitions by creating the NFHR High Point award. Over the years, this award has been presented at several dressage, open shows, and driving competitions. While I was on the Herald Committee, we saw a change in editor and the refocus of the Herald to a 100% membership contributed publication.

The NFHR is in a state of change and has lost sight of its core values, especially as it relates to the NFHR mission statement and goals. The NFHR needs a strong board of directors that has the correct focus to bring the NFHR back to the positive side where they engage and grow the membership and ensure the evaluation system is effective and beneficial. With my years of experience of being an active Fjord owner and past NFHR board member, I can leverage these experiences and learnings to be a significant contributor to the NFHR board.

### **Candidate questions (2 minutes per response)**

#### **Question 1**

What do you feel is the first priority of the 2024 board working together?

#### **Response 1:**

If elected to the board, I would recommend the priority of the 2024 board is to have a full understanding of the NFHR financial situation. The financial situation has been a hot topic in 2023 for the membership. The first step would involve collaboration with the current Treasurer, Bookkeeper and Registrar to review past and current trends as they relate to income and expenses. A budget would then be drafted and agreed upon by the board. The goal would be to have these activities occur within the first 30 days of the new board being in place. This is an aggressive timeline but the future of the NFHR is at stake. In addition, detailed P&L reports would be the gold standard for reporting financials to the board and membership on a routine basis.

I also envision the Finance Committee focusing their priority on revenue generating goals. This would involve collaboration with other committees such as the Membership Committee to focus on bringing in new members. I would like to see all committees collaborate to ensure there are focused efforts to have routine revenue generating activities to support the financial health of the NFHR.

Once the financial situation is understood and an agreed upon budget is in place, the board can move forward with setting immediate and 5-year organizational goals. Overall, this approach would be forward-looking, provide a transparent view, and support the financial health of the NFHR.

**Question 2**

As a board member, how will you work with the rest of the team to encourage younger and more diverse members to join the registry?

Response 2:

First, the board itself needs to be open to a diverse set of directors. The board should not consist of only individuals who are retired or only individuals who have never been involved with the NFHR or only individuals who have served on the NFHR board. There should be a mix of these types of individuals who can bring historical knowledge and learnings and bring fresh ideas and perspectives. If the board is not diverse, how can it encourage and grow a more diverse membership?

As it relates to working with the rest of the board on recruitment, I would want to leverage other board members' knowledge and experience. We are all involved in different circles of the horse world; including regional and discipline-related activities. The Fjord population is also diverse. We have fjords competing at the highest levels of their respective disciplines, Fjords providing rewarding and comforting therapy to those in need and Fjords providing pure enjoyment to their owners in the simplest terms.

The NFHR gift membership service is another great way to work towards recruitment and retainment. Gift memberships have historically been given to new Fjords owners from sellers or given to riders, drivers, or trainers to be eligible for NFHR awards. The more value we bring to being a member of the NFHR, the higher likelihood we recruit and retain long term members.

I envision the Membership committee would also be at the core of driving new memberships. The board needs to empower the respective committees to own and meet their goals. It truly needs to be a team effort! The board also needs to encourage the membership to get involved with committees. They are the grass roots of any effort put forth by the NFHR. Membership should be the primary ingredient of any committee.

I would also like to leverage the learnings from the recent membership survey to better understand how the NFHR can improve membership relations. Membership engagement is key to the success of an organization.

**Question 3**

How do you see yourself in the role of the board member of NFHR and what do you hope the team will accomplish during your term?

Response 3:

I see myself as a small piece of a bigger puzzle. My intent to be on the board is to be a team player. The board is not about an individual person or an individual agenda. Being a member of the board is about working as a team to meet the goals and mission statement of the NFHR organization.

For the board to be successful and accomplish the goals that are set, there needs to be strong leadership. I pledge I will bring my best self to the table for every meeting and work as hard as possible to meet the needs of the membership. I will lead by example to embrace a culture of trust and respect. I will be accountable for my actions and I would expect my board peers and the membership to hold me accountable as I would hold them accountable.

I would like to see the NFHR board accomplish the following:

- Have regional evaluations on a yearly basis to improve our understanding of the quality of the Fjord horse in North America and to provide members with educational opportunities to learn more about their Fjords and the breed standard
- Formalize the board member onboarding process to ensure board members understand their role and responsibility to the NFHR and the membership
- Implement quarterly board training sessions- an informed board will have than have the tools to be a successful board
- Implement quarterly membership townhall meetings to improve membership engagement as this has been a clear gap in the past year. Membership townhall meetings that were held in 2021 and 2022 were met with positive feedback from the membership.

#### Question 4

What would you propose to the board to increase funds to keep this organization moving forward?

Response 4:

I will preface that I am not a finance expert but would look to leverage the experience and knowledge of fellow board members on this subject matter. The non-profit status of the NFHR as a 501c(5) provides a challenge for receiving donations as they are not tax deductible for the donor. I would like to investigate if there are grants available to help fund certain Registry activities. I would also like to investigate if it would be possible to set up a 501(c)3 type group to assist in funding the NFHR (similar to the Norwegian Fjord Horse Foundation).

Fundraising is another avenue to explore. There were a couple of successful fundraising efforts in 2023. However, we would need to exercise caution of how and where fundraising efforts are being conducted due to the various legalities involved with fundraising activities.

I would also like to understand if there are apps or other virtual offerings that could assist with increasing funds for the NFHR. Could we host virtual shows? Could we implement targeted membership drives to align with membership renewal timelines? There are likely many opportunities out there yet to be explored that the NFHR could leverage for their funding needs. I acknowledge there could be upfront costs, but I would not want the NFHR to pursue an opportunity if the return on investment was not attainable.

The NFHR awards program could be another source of revenue with some major updating. For example, some of the awards do not specify that the owner, rider/driver/trainer need to be a NFHR member to receive the award. The awards also need improved promotion. How many members are aware of the different awards offered by the NFHR? Is the membership aware that not all the awards are for performance Fjords?

**Closing statement (2 minutes):**

I will not claim to be a subject matter expert on most things and I will not pretend I can solve all of the NFHR's problems. However, I can offer strong leadership capabilities. I work as a project manager to support my Fjord habit. My job is to lead teams of people who aren't my direct reports. People leadership is critical to a successful project. It's about understanding what engages an individual and how to incorporate everyone into a collaborative team.

If you want an accountable, dependable, and goal driven board member; vote for me. Accountability leads to trust. A board that trusts and respects each other will experience success. The NFHR will thrive with a board that embraces trust and respect. The NFHR will not survive with a board that does not exhibit these qualities.

The time is now to look ahead and move forward. The board needs to get back to doing business to support the mission and goals of the NFHR.

Overall, I want to see the NFHR return to a peaceful and functional organization that focuses on registering Fjords, bringing in and retaining new members, and supporting evaluations.

I wish the rest of the candidates the best of luck in the election! Thank you to the membership for your time and consideration.