

SPJ Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

October 4, 2001 - Bellevue, Wash.

Meeting Date: October 4, 2001

Meeting Place: The DoubleTree Hotel, Bellevue, Wash.

Roll Call:

Board Members Present: 20

Ray Marcano, president

Al Cross, president-elect

Robert Leger, secretary-treasurer

Kyle Niederpruem, immediate past president

David Carlson, vice president for campus chapter affairs

Irwin Gratz, Region 1 director

Julie Asher, Region 2 director

Marsha Biggs, Region 3 director

Bruce Cadwallader, Region 4 director

Dave Aeikens, Region 6 director

Patrick Dobson, Region 7 director

Todd Gillman, Region 8 director

Jay Evensen, Region 9 director

Oren Campbell, Region 10 director

Mark Scarp, Region 11 director

Jim Parker, director at large

Robyn Eoff, campus adviser at large

Charles Davis, campus adviser at large

Brian Joseph, student representative at large

Andrew Marra, student representative at large

Board Members Absent: 2

Vicky Katz Whitaker, Region 5 Director

Jamie Gonzales, director at large

Staff Members Present: 3

Jim Gray, SPJ Executive Director

Julie, SPJ Deputy Director

Catherine Davis, SPJ Finance Director

Others Present (for all or portions of the meeting)

Kelly Hawes

Steve Geimann

Bruce Sanford

Paul McMasters

Kevin Smith

Howard Dubin

Mac McKerral

Jim Highland

CALL TO ORDER

President Ray Marcano called the meeting to order at 7 a.m. and led the group in a moment of silence in recognition of the victims of the terrorist attacks in New York City, Pennsylvania and the Washington, D.C. area.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

David Carlson made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 2001 meeting. Second by Jim Parker. The motion carried with the correction outlined below.

Page 8 of the minutes outlines the inactive chapter policy. The last sentence of the first explanation paragraph following the policy should read, "... would only be enacted if a chapter dissolved WITHOUT setting up its own method for disbursing such funds."

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Jim Gray distributed his report at the meeting. Highlights: Fiscal Year 2001, which ended July 31, 2001, showed a substantial loss. Gray said it was a paper loss, not a cash loss. There have been some additional costs due to owning a building. The last year has been relatively stable with regard to personnel, but the development director position currently is vacant. SPJ's redesigned Web site is up and running and includes members only features and some database driven content. Response has been generally positive, and known problems are being addressed.

Gray said SPJ has received several inquiries from international journalists, and he has had an invitation for SPJ to visit with journalists in South Korea next spring. The group briefly discussed other international efforts including working with journalists in Puerto Rico.

Gray said Headquarters' priorities continue to be better serving SPJ members and boosting the Society's retention rate. President Ray Marcano suggested working with other journalism organizations, which also were struggling with membership issues.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Director of Finance Catherine Davis distributed the results of the organization's preliminary audit. The information was available in draft form. The audit shows an approximately \$200,000 loss for the year, but Davis explained that SPJ did not have to use any funds in its invested reserves account.

Secretary/Treasurer Robert Leger explained to board members that this meant that "we didn't use our savings' account, but we have less funds in our checking' account this year."

Gray said that in the coming year, insurance costs will rise, at least double and possible triple the current rates. The board discussed cost-cutting measures, including a better watch on expenses, staying within budgeted figures, and cutting back the number of pages of Quill magazine.

Board members questioned several line items that were over budget — supplies, meals and entertainment and non-staff travel.

Marcano pointed out that the coming year would be a challenging one, and the Finance Committee must be well informed about all budgetary and financial issues in order to make good decisions for the organization.

MEMBERSHIP DISCUSSION

Executive Director Jim Gray referred board members to the membership analysis available in the board

packets. The analysis provides a snapshot of the current membership, an analysis of members who joined SPJ in Fiscal Year 1999, and the results of the 2001 Quill Readership Survey. The report also included a status report on each of SPJ's professional and student chapters.

Currently, SPJ serves about 500 life members — members who pay no annual dues. Gray pointed out that a provision in bylaws provides that these members should pay annually for their Quill subscription, a procedure which hasn't taken place in several years. Gray asked board members to consider sending Quill invoices to life members.

Other Discussion

- Chapter affiliation is important. Seventy-one percent of SPJ members are affiliated with a chapter.
- The report shows only three active Institutional Members.
- This isn't an accurate report to examine a student retention rate. A member type analysis doesn't account for students who became post-graduate or professional members during the two-year analysis.
- Getting new members isn't a problem. Retaining them seems to be the biggest issue.
- Chapters should be very involved in any retention efforts.
- SPJ needs to know what people expect when they join, and why they leave, so the organization can work to meet those expectations. Exit interviews might also be beneficial.
- The group briefly discussed a recognition program related to years of membership in the Society. If a gift is not feasible, a letter from the executive director is appropriate.
- SPJ should consider an e-mail reminder to students each spring asking them to update their contact information.
- Gray suggested a focus on mid-career journalists. He pointed out that, according to the Quill readership survey, SPJ's strength is in print journalism. SPJ shouldn't ignore other areas, but the organization should focus on this important market, possibly in the smaller outlets.
- Region 1 Director Irwin Gratz said that, as a chapter president, it was clear to him that personal contact was the best way to involve members. He suggested dividing the list of 70 professional chapters and having each board member personally work with three chapter presidents. Staff could organize the effort, and board members could implement it.
- Of the 70 professional chapters, 10 participated in the membership phone-a-thon in some way. If each chapter president had been contacted by phone, that number might have been higher, said Gratz.
- SPJ has more than 200 campus chapters, and 78 filed an annual report. SPJ should examine a policy for removing inactive chapters from the rolls.
- There was a brief discussion about hiring a public relations firm.
- The group discussed developing a new concept of SPJ chapters -- possibly a cyber chapter.

After a 10-minute break, President Ray Marcano asked past SPJ officers Howard Dubin and Steve Geimann to provide some historical perspective to the membership discussion. Geimann said that the most likely candidates to join and support SPJ were people who were committed to the profession — people who've made decision that "we want to be journalists. We want to make the organization better." Dubin commented that people join an organization for a particular reason and usually drop out for another reason. Understanding our members is very important.

President-Elect Al Cross told board members that Howard Dubin will be chairing the SPJ Membership Committee next year. Dubin also has offered to finance a recruitment campaign this year. The plan is to send a recruitment letter to more than 100,000 journalists and follow up with contact by local chapters. Each letter will include a section personalized for each chapter. Dubin said a similar campaign was carried out 20 years ago and was very successful. The first phase will target large cities where there are chapters. A second phase will target areas with a potential for organizing chapters.

Cross explained the campaign will be financed with SPJ funds. Those funds would be redirected from Quill expense allocations. Dubin will make a \$50,000 donation to the Quill endowment, which will used

to increase financial support this year for Quill. SPJ's lawyers have approved this funding method.

Region 8 Director Todd Gillman asked that there be substantial coordination with chapters during this process. Chapters should know when the mailing is going out and should plan programs immediately after the mailing.

Irwin Gratz agreed that a personal component would be essential to success with the campaign. He encouraged Dubin to look for employers with large number of people who will be getting this letter. A board member could contact or visit that employer.

David Carlson made a motion to move forward with the membership campaign. Second by Jim Parker.

Continued Membership Discussion

- The following membership items were discussed following the vote:
- A follow-up phone call was suggested in addition to the letters being mailed as part of the membership campaign.
- A detailed timeline needs to be developed.
- New members should receive follow-up contact at three or six-month intervals to maintain interest.
- SPJ should consider adding an 800 number.
- Retention efforts should be a part of a board discussion in the future.
- The Membership Committee should take a more active role with regional membership chairs.
- The group discussed hiring an outside company to prepare and implement a recruitment and retention campaign. Gray said costs range from \$30,000 to \$220,000. The board would need specific proposals before considering such a proposition.
- SPJ needs to know more about its members in order to better service them.
- Region 11 Director Mark Scarp suggested that directors maintain monthly contact with chapter presidents in their region. E-mail is an excellent way to communicate, and Scarp is willing to advise other regional directors about starting an e-mail communication list.
- Region 8 Director Todd Gillman mentioned a possible theme for the campaign and suggested that SPJ use a "This is SPJ" approach in future campaigns.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Nominations Committee Chair Kyle Niederpruem referred board members to the Delegate Handbook for information about the slate of candidates. She introduced secretary/treasurer candidates Gordon "Mac" McKerral and Kevin Smith. They will be speaking during the Saturday business meeting. Any additional nominations must come during the opening business session on Friday.

GOVERNANCE REPORT

Governance Committee Chair Steve Geimann presented his report, which was available in the board packet. Geimann discussed a possible restructuring of the SPJ board of directors. The recommendation from the committee is to eliminate the two at-large director positions and remove immediate past president as a voting position. There was no consensus among regional directors in terms of number of RDs in a restructured system.

Irwin Gratz reminded board members about the Regional Directors Caucus scheduled for the following day. This will be part of that discussion.

Geimann explained that these recommendations were a result of the Society's Strategic Planning process.

The current board structure is representative of decisions made 30 years ago. It may make sense to have a smaller board in the future. A smaller board engages board members in more of the discussions and streamlines the processes and work of the board.

The group discussed decreasing the board size and decreasing the number of regional directors. It was pointed out that a vote by the board today would be to recommend a bylaws change during the 2002 SPJ National Convention.

The group discussed other issues that should be addressed by the Governance Committee:

— Mac McKerral pointed out that 30 percent of SPJ members have no voice in governance because they are not affiliated with chapter. The board should examine the election process. He reminded board members that the group had examined regional realignment several years ago.

— Jamie Gonzalez also is working on a proposal regarding chapter governance issues.

Robert Leger recommended that the proposal on board structure supplemented by materials from this weekend's RD caucus be advanced to the Regional Conferences for further discussion next spring. The discussions would be distilled for the spring board meeting at which time the board would vote whether to send this proposal to the delegates at the 2002 SPJ National Convention. Second by Al Cross. Upon vote, motion carried unanimously.

Region 9 Director Jay Evensen reminded board members that this motion basically said the board would take action on this issue next spring.

CONVENTION REPORT

President-elect Robert Leger said plans were proceeding smoothly for the 2002 National Convention in Fort Worth, Texas Sept. 12-14. Fund raising pledges total \$71,000, and the goal is \$120,000. The Opening Night Reception will be at Billy Bob's, a line dancing bar and rodeo arena. The convention theme is "Staking New Frontiers." The Professional Development Chair is Dorothy Estes. (Cross has since appointed Lillian Lodge Kopenhaver as co-chair of the national Professional Development Committee.)

FUTURE CONVENTION PROSPECTS

The 2003 SPJ National Convention is scheduled for Tampa, Fla. The New York Deadline Club plans to make a bid for the 2004 SPJ National Convention.

David Carlson suggested the possibility of a convention without a host chapter, possibly a regionally hosted event.

David Carlson made a motion to have the staff pursue the idea of how the 2005 convention could be carried out as a regionally hosted event. Staff should present a report at the Spring Board Meeting. Second by Robert Leger. The motion carried with one opposed (Bruce Cadwallader).

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Al Cross reported that the Publications Committee met and offered comments regarding Quill to the publisher, Jim Gray, who had requested that the report be delivered through him. Copies of the report were distributed to the Executive Committee. The Publications Committee saw needs and opportunities. Cross asked regional directors to submit the names of proposed committee members. Cross hopes the committee will become a truly national committee offering critiques and comments about the magazine, Web site and everything the society publishes, including its news releases. Committee members might also be called

upon for contributions in those areas.

NEW BUSINESS

Region 2 Director Julie Asher asked that the Headquarters chapter records reflect that in Region 2, the Triangle Pro Chapter is active. The Mid-Carolinas chapter is not but the Lowcountry Pro Chapter is reorganizing. Lowcountry Pro is in Region 3, not Region 2.

FOUNDATION GRANT REQUESTS

Board members considered the grant requests the SDX Foundation would be reviewing later in the day. The 11 requests were available in the Joint Board Meeting Packets.

Mark Scarp made a motion to approve all requests as a block. Second by Robert Leger.

Mark Scarp made a motion to pull from the block the requests of the First Amendment Project (Page 23) and the Northern California SPJ Chapter (Page 105) and consider those two requests jointly. Second by Robert Leger. The motion carried.

Kyle Niederpruem made a motion to remove the Ethics AdviceLine request by the Chicago Headline Club and Loyola University. Second by Jim Parker. The motion carried.

Robert Leger made a motion to pull the requests from Howard Stewart and Bethune College. Second Jim Parker. The motion carried.

Al Cross made a motion to pull all SPJ Headquarters proposals from the block. Second by Kyle Niederpruem. The motion carried.

The items remaining in the block are: the SPJ FOI Committee request, the University of Kentucky request, the LSU Manship School of Journalism request, and the Student Press Law Center request.

The original motion to approve the block as described above carried. (Cross asked that it be noted that he abstained on voting due to the University of Kentucky request being considered.)

The group considered the requests from the First Amendment Project and the Northern California SPJ chapter. Mark Scarp explained that these projects were at the core of what every chapter should be doing, and they should seek local rather than national funding. There was no motion to recommend these requests to the Foundation board of directors.

There was no motion to recommend the funding of the requests by Howard Stewart and Bethune College.

The group considered the Chicago Headline Club's request for funding of the Ethics AdviceLine for Journalists. There was a concern about granting funds to chapters that might in some way duplicate or take away from an existing service provided by SPJ on the national level. SPJ has maintained an Ethics Hotline since 1996. Callers leave a voicemail message, and a summary of the message is forwarded by e-mail to an Ethics Committee member. The group discussed working with the Headline Club to develop a joint program.

SPJ Ethics Committee Co-Chair Fred Brown joined the meeting and indicated his support for the chapter's efforts. The chapter's system is more formal than the headquarters operation, and it is full time. The ideal situation would be for SPJ to cooperate with the Headline Club on this project.

Irwin Gratz made a motion to approve funding provided the operation is made part of the national SPJ effort including the use of the SPJ's name as a joint partner in this effort. Second Jim Parker.

There was concern about SPJ having some control over who is speaking on behalf of SPJ in the area of ethics. Bruce Sanford, SPJ's legal counsel explained that there was some legal liability if the Society funded this project and lent its name to the project.

Irwin Gratz made a motion encouraging the Foundation board to defer a decision regarding this request while SPJ works with the Chicago Chapter to prepare a proposal that meets both groups' purposes. Second by Jim Parker. The motion carried with Todd Gillman opposed.

Jim Parker made a motion to recommend funding of all SPJ proposals. Second by Todd Gillman. The motion carried unanimously.

The group also discussed the SPJ Awards Coordinator grant request individually. This position is necessary because it will elevate the level of SPJ and the Foundation's awards programs and processes.

Jim Parker made a motion that this request be funding in the amount of the original request. Second by Region 6 Director Dave Aeikens. The motion carried unanimously.

Grant requests forwarded to SDX Foundation board of directors total \$186,500.

FOI ISSUES

SPJ FOI Chair Ian Marquand presented his FOI Committee report. Marquand announced that he will remain another year as FOI Chair, but as co-chair with Charles Davis. Marquand will retain primary approval authority for Legal Defense Fund requests.

Marquand is working to fill Sunshine Network vacancies in Texas and West Virginia. He said the committee's FOI Alerts have become more frequent this summer and fall. The alerts are news bulletins about FOI issues. Marquand will be presenting a funding request this weekend to the Foundation board for the "Open Doors" project to remind the public and journalists of the importance of open records and meetings.

He highlighted the strong FOI component at this national convention and explained this was taking the place of the annual FOI Conference, and state Sunshine Chairs were receiving stipends to attend.

Bruce Sanford of Baker & Hostetler presented the firm's annual report, which he distributed at the meeting. Sanford expressed his pleasure at working with Marquand, LDF Chair Christine Tatum and SPJ President Ray Marcano.

He explained that very recently, SPJ and Baker & Hostetler had taken the lead in drafting a Statement of Principles regarding war coverage. All major media will eventually sign on, and SPJ should be pleased that it has taken such a lead in this process. The American media are entering a rough time, and SPJ must be smart and articulate about why the public should participate in important discussions. Stories of journalists abroad and in this country are going to be very important in coming months.

Sanford encouraged the Resolutions Committee to consider drafting a resolution regarding this Statement of Principles.

OLD BUSINESS

Kyle Niederpruem made a motion that all items from the April and July meetings that had not been discussed at this meeting be added to the agenda for the February 2002 Executive Committee meeting. Second by Irwin Gratz. The motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

The group reviewed a request from John Carroll University to establish a provisional chapter.

There was a motion, duly made, to approve the request conditionally until the group supplies the member numbers of faculty and students. Second by Brian Joseph. The motion carried unanimously.

President Ray Marcano recognized Immediate Past President Kyle Niederpruem. This is Niederpruem's last board meeting. Marcano thanked Niederpruem for her commitment and said very few people have ever been as dedicated to this board as Niederpruem.

Niederpruem thanked Marcano and referred to the family of SPJ. Niederpruem thanked Marcano for his efforts on behalf of SPJ during his term as president. She specifically recognized his efforts in the Dale Earnhardt case. Niederpruem presented Marcano with a card and shared that board members made a \$375 donation to the Legal Defense Fund in honor of Marcano for his efforts to keep the doors open for all working journalists.

David Carlson made a motion that the board recognize and thank the host chapter — the Western Washington Pro Chapter — for its hard work preparing the 2001 SPJ National Convention. Second by Region 4 Director Bruce Cadwallader. The motion carried unanimously.

David Carlson made a motion commending the staff for their efforts in the past year. Second by Jim Parker. The motion carried unanimously.

Marcano recognized retiring board members Kyle Niederpruem, Julie Asher, Marcia Biggs, Oren Campbell, Charles Davis, and Andrew Marra.

ADJOURNMENT

Al Cross made a motion to adjourn. Second by Todd Gillman. The motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned.