

**MINUTES
MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
JANUARY 22, 2005
MARRIOTT ATLANTA MIDTOWN
ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

With President Irwin Gratz presiding, the Executive Committee meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Secretary/Treasurer Christine Tatum called the roll. Those present for all or portions of the meeting were President Irwin Gratz; President-elect David Carlson; Secretary/Treasurer Christine Tatum; Immediate Past President Mac McKerral; Vice President for Campus Chapter Affairs Jim Highland; Region 3 Director Holly Fisher; Director At Large Jim Parker; Executive Director Terry Harper; and Deputy Executive Director Julie Grimes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon a proper motion and second by Carlson and Highland, the committee approved as amended the minutes from the July 2004 Executive Committee Meeting. (The change to the minutes included correctly noting the name of SPJ Fellow Anne Garrels.)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Gratz reviewed his report, which was distributed at the meeting. He highlighted his travel schedule; recent SPJ-related interviews; the formation of the Quill Advisory Board; the resignation of Chapter Doctor Kyle Niederpruem and interim appointment of Mark Scarp; and a proposal for a partnership with journalists from Taiwan.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT

Harper provided a verbal report during the meeting. He noted that the organization's cash flow remains positive, and the auditors are about to complete the Society's audit. The audit delay this year resulted from auditors' concerns about whether to consolidate the financial statements for SPJ and the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation.

Harper also mentioned the hiring of Quill editor Joe Skeel. Harper mentioned the current membership numbers are a bit down but should increase with upcoming membership campaigns.

To date, two ads have been billed for the 2005 issue of The Journalist. The committee reinforced the SPJ marketing potential of the magazine and suggested that it is essential that young journalists see others like themselves in the pages of the magazine.

Committee members suggested SPJ should evaluate its use of house ads in its publications, including The Journalist. Think about effective ways to promote and present SPJ's LDF Fund, ethics hotline and other resources.

Committee members discussed the financial statements that are distributed monthly to the board. They would like to see year-to-date versus budget comparisons on the reports, if possible. They would also like to see the current year figures as compared to the previous year.

REGIONAL CONFERENCE ASSIGNMENTS

The committee reviewed the upcoming regional conference schedule and made officer assignments as follows: Region 1, Gratz; Region 2, TBD; Region 3, Carlson; Region 4, Highland; Region 5, Highland; Region 6, McKerral; Region 7, Gratz; Region 8, Carlson or Tatum; Region 9, Tatum; Region 10, Gratz; Region 11, Parker; and Region 12, McKerral.

FACS PARTNERSHIP

Harper updated the group on the grant development process for the FACS partnership. The grant is currently in the final revision stage. Committee members suggested adding information to SPJ's Web site about the availability of FACS programming.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Gratz suggested the idea that SPJ consider freedom of information training for ethnic media outlets. Gratz will be in touch with Diversity Chairwoman Sally Lehrman about this opportunity and potential fund raising for the effort.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY/MARKETING DISCUSSION

Committee members agreed that SPJ Leads has been a valuable addition to the SPJ communications resources. The group discussed the need to develop a plan for ongoing production and publication of the e-newsletter. There was a brief discussion about the need to define the newsletter's content.

The committee discussed the organization's overall communications strategy. Leadership needs to determine how statements on behalf of SPJ fit in the group's overall strategy and whether or not those statements are necessary. Statement preparation is currently a largely-volunteer driven function. Questions to address: Should it become a professional staff function? How are issues monitored? How does the organization determine which issues it will track?

The committee also discussed SPJ's Web site and the need to incorporate it more into the overall communications strategy. Gratz will form a committee to further discuss Web issues. Tatum and Parker will serve on the committee.

The committee briefly reviewed the HQ IT infrastructure report distributed in the board packet.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

The Society's model Anti-SLAPP statute and lobbying plan will be put on the Web in the coming weeks. SPJ will follow up with FOI Committee leaders about selecting a state to focus SPJ's efforts. Baker & Hostetler should be consulted about this, too.

The group discussed a strategy for Capitol Hill visits in the coming year. The consensus was to consider moving the planned visits from Spring 2005 to Fall 2005. SPJ also should encourage individuals to

contact their representatives through mail and visits.

The group briefly discussed a proposed co-sponsorship of training programs with the Legacy Family Institute. To date, the group has been unable to find funding for its efforts.

Committee members discussed how SPJ selects the First Amendment issues it becomes involved with, specifically those involving free speech. It was suggested that the board consider drafting a policy or statement about how and when SPJ becomes involved in certain issues like free speech issues.

ETHICS DISCUSSION

The group discussed the timing of the Society's annual Ethics in Journalism Week. It was suggested that the organization consider different timing for the annual event. Spring is typically very busy for local chapters, with regional conferences and contest management. Ethics in Journalism Week might receive more resources and publicity if it were moved to the fall.

Gratz mentioned the status of *Doing Ethics in Journalism*, the ethics book published on behalf of the Society. Harper will be in touch with Bruce Sanford at Baker & Hostetler about the status of a new publishing of this book.

LUNCH BREAK

The committee took a break for lunch at 11:50 a.m. and reconvened at 1 p.m.

MEMBERSHIP ISSUES AND GENERAL DISCUSSION

Tatum reported concerns about membership processing after receiving more than 20 e-mails in response to SPJ Leads. The most common issue was a lag time between the point of deciding to join and hearing from the organization.

Tatum also expressed concern that the organization doesn't make the best use of its Web site. She would like to see more membership and chapter support on the site in the form of services and resources on the site. For example, a resource section should include generic fliers that can be personalized and membership pitch letters that can be tailored for a specific chapter.

Tatum suggested SPJ consider a tiered dues structure to help individuals cover the cost of SPJ memberships.

Tatum suggested that SPJ work with its chapters to update electronic membership reports and rosters that are more useful to chapters. For instance, it would be helpful for a chapter to know immediately when someone in the area joined SPJ and/or the local chapter. A report that automatically flags new members (rather than depending on the chapter to check dates) would be helpful.

Other suggestions:

- Have local dues to automatically show up on an electronic bill based on zip code.
 - Consider a more substantial membership welcome packet for new members. Include a copy of the most recent issue of *Quill*.
 - Consider a catchy renewal postcard.
 - Examine the current barriers to entry in SPJ.
 - Seek out ways to involve young people in the organization.
 - Look for services that would be useful to young adult journalists.
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SDX FOUNDATION GRANT REQUEST DISCUSSION

The committee reviewed two staff proposals for Foundation grant requests — a Sigma Delta Chi awards CD and a series of narrative writing seminars. The committee's consensus was to proceed with both requests.

The group then discussed other possible program ideas, including:

- Expanding professional resources at SPJ's Web site
 - Funding a communications position for SPJ and the SDX Foundation, with a main purpose to educate the public about journalism issues
 - Establishing scholarships for young, professional journalists to attend SPJ's convention (see the Taishoff seminar model)
 - Developing a weekly ethics watch or FOIA update, or another type of SPJ blog (this would be like PressNotes, only with a more specific topic)
 - Prepare state open meetings and open records law cards for all 50 states (also consider federal issues that could be addressed)
 - Develop a series of Town Hall Meetings about a specific topic that would take place during a specific timeframe
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CENTENNIAL HISTORY UPDATE

The group discussed SPJ's upcoming centennial celebration in 2009. The national convention is scheduled to take place in Indianapolis that year. These commemorative options were tossed out: update SPJ's history book; create a special Web site or CD presentation with timelines, photos, slideshows and an oral history of SPJ; and/or plan a series of special events around the country to commemorate the 100-year celebration.

The first step will be to get the Centennial Celebration Committee together. The committee should consider all possibilities, then narrow the field and make a recommendation to the board.

CHAPTER CHARTERS

Upon a proper motion and second by Parker and Highland, the committee approved the following:

- Satellite chapter status for Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio (as a satellite of the Central Ohio Pro Chapter)
 - Campus Chapter Charter for Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, La.
 - Provisional Campus Chapter status for Shepherd University in Shepherdstown, W.Va.
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NEW BUSINESS: HARNISCH APPOINTMENT TO FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Upon a proper motion and second by Parker and Fisher, the committee ratified Ruth Ann Harnisch's appointment to the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation board of directors.

NEW BUSINESS: JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION OF KOREA

The committee reviewed a proposal by Robert Leger to host a forum in Fall 2005 in Washington, D.C., as part of SPJ's exchange program with the Journalists Association of Korea.

Upon a proper motion and second by McKerral and Carlson, the committee voted to proceed with plans to develop the forum and arrange for home stays with SPJ members following the event.

NEW BUSINESS: TAIWAN EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Gratz introduced a proposal from Frank Wang of a journalists' association in Taiwan. The general consensus was that Gratz would proceed to find a volunteer to work out more details about this potential exchange program.

NEW BUSINESS: LEGAL DEFENSE FUND GRANT

Upon a proper motion and second by Tatum and Parker, the Executive Committee authorized a Legal Defense Fund grant of up to \$15,000 to fight an Illinois case involving the Joliet, Ill., archdiocese, providing the Chicago Headline Club raises the remaining funds needed to hire the lawyer for the case. Payment will be release when proof of funds has been provided.

OTHER BUSINESS: PR NEWSWIRE ACTIVITIES

Tatum encouraged SPJ leadership to further investigate a potential revenue-generating partnership with PR Newswire. Successful programs have been established in Chicago and Indianapolis.

OTHER BUSINESS: BLOGGERS

Tatum encouraged SPJ leadership to seek out ways to include bloggers at part of SPJ's membership. Carlson will contact the executive director of the Online News Association to discuss potential partnerships between SPJ and ONA. Specifically, he will also investigate programming options related to the convention.

OTHER BUSINESS: CHAPTERS ON PROBATION

The group's general consensus on how to best proceed with chapters on probationary status was to have regional directors stay in touch with these chapters and see how best to help them return to full, active status. Pro chapters on probation include: Augusta, Brazos Valley, Dallas, Detroit, East End, Indiana East, Mobile, Mid South, Nebraska, and Northwest Indiana.

OTHER BUSINESS: BUDGET PLANNING

Committee members asked Harper to look at increasing board stipends for the coming fiscal year.

Committee members also were interested in maintaining the funds for advertising that would congratulate Sigma Delta Chi Award winners in the coming year.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a proper motion and second by Carlson and Parker, the committee adjourned at 4:45 p.m.