

**MINUTES  
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS  
APRIL 18, 2009  
GREENCASTLE, INDIANA**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

With President Dave Aeikens presiding, the meeting of the board of directors of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 9:09 a.m. on Saturday, April 18, 2009, at the Walden Inn in Greencastle, Indiana.

**ROLL CALL**

In addition to Aeikens, the following were present: President-Elect Kevin Smith; Secretary-Treasurer Hagit Limor; Vice President for Campus Chapter Affairs Neil Ralston; Director at-Large Bill McCloskey; Campus Adviser at-Large Sue Kopen Katcef; Regional Directors Luther Turmelle, Ann Augherton, Darcie Lunsford, Jeremy Steele, Liz Hansen, Gordon Govier, Scott Cooper, John Ensslin, Scott Maben, Sonya Smith and Sonny Albarado. Director at-Large Michael Koretzy joined by phone.

Staff members present for the meeting were Associate Executive Directors Chris Vachon and Joe Skeel; Professional Development Coordinator Heather Porter; Membership Coordinator Linda Hall; and Controller Jake Koenig.

Sigma Delta Chi Foundation board members in attendance were: Steve Geimann, Robert Leger and Todd Gillman. National membership chair John Huotari was also in attendance.

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVED**

**Upon proper motion and second by Sonya Smith and Arias, respectively, the board approved the minutes from the following board of directors meetings:**

- September 3, 2008
- September 7, 2008

**FY 2010 BUDGET**

Koenig explained how the budget was prepared and answered questions from the board. The Finance Committee met via conference call prior to the board meeting and reviewed the budget in detail.

**Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Limor, respectively, the board approved the 2009-10 SPJ budget as presented by the Finance Committee with two amendments:**

- TRNA (temporarily restricted net assets) funds may be used for the purpose of replacing the roof at headquarters along with the repair of the back door railings.
- An additional \$1,000 will be added to the stipends of the two non-officer members of the Executive Committee in order to aid in their expected travel expenses to two extra meetings each year. This does not apply to those current non-officer members of the Executive Committee nor would the additional funds be applied if those currently holding these positions are reappointed.

**CHAPTER MATTERS**

**Upon proper motion and second by Steele and Albarado, respectively, the board approved provisional status for the following chapters:**

- Angelo State University
- Butler University
- Harding University
- Northern Kentucky University
- Western Michigan University

**GRANTS COMMITTEE REPORT**

Kevin Smith reported on the work of the Grants Committee which is charged with applying for grants

from outside organizations. The committee plans to apply for a \$25,000 grant from the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation for the Town Hall program pending the outcome of this spring's programs. Additionally, the committee hopes to apply for grants from the McCormick Tribune for our citizen journalism initiative and from Anneberg for a social networking project. Finally, \$5,000 has already been secured for convention education.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT**

Vachon provided a brief update on work related to the strategic plan. The FOI committee is working to create a new and improved Sunshine Network; the database upgrade is moving along with phase one completed and one more phase to go; and planning has been underway for the Town Hall program with the programs taking place at the end of April.

## **ANNUAL REPORT/STAR RANKING SYSTEM**

The Regional Directors met prior to the board meeting to discuss the future of annual reports and the star ranking system. Lunsford reported that they discussed the removal of annual reports from the bylaws; revision of the star ranking system; development of a reporting mechanism to continue to collect chapter financial information; and the creation of a reporting system for regional directors to check in with chapters. Lunsford said the focus would first be on pro chapters with application to campus chapters to follow.

**A proper motion and second by Lunsford and Steele, respectively, was made to remove the annual report requirement from SPJ's bylaws and make it a board policy. The motion failed.**

A committee has been formed to work on this project and it consists of: Ensslin, S. Smith, Turmelle and Steele, with Steele serving as the chair. A June 1 deadline has been established by the regional directors for a draft proposal to all regional directors and then a final proposal will be prepared by June 15 for the summer executive committee meeting.

## **TRANSITIONAL/HARDSHIP MEMBERSHIPS**

The board discussed the concept of membership waivers for members who have lost their jobs. National membership chair Huotari reported on feedback he received on the concept based on an inquiry he distributed. Reaction was mixed. Skeel reported on his findings which were based on unscientific polling of members after their memberships had lapsed. He found that most would not take advantage of a discounted membership but would continue to use our services if membership were free to them. Skeel also contacted two other j-organizations who are already trying this out. Both organizations said it has done little to translate into noticeable retention.

**A proper motion and second by Ensslin and Cooper, respectively, was made to offer a one-year \$36 transitional membership (electronic) to members who have lost their jobs. Additionally, those who took advantage of the one-year membership would be asked to give five hours of service to the organization. The motion failed.**

**A proper motion and second by Limor and K. Smith, respectively, the board approved offering a six-month electronic membership extension to members who have lost their jobs and SPJ will ask, in return, for five hours of service to the organization. The offer sunsets in one year at the spring 2010 board meeting.**

## **CONVENTION 2010**

Vachon asked the group to share their thoughts about Harper's memo in which he presents the idea for a non-traditional approach to SPJ conventions. His memo suggests replacing a traditional convention with a program similar to the Scripps Leadership Institute which focuses on equipping chapter members and leaders with tools to grow and expand SPJ. SPJ business and traditions could still be conducted at this non-traditional convention. Board members expressed the importance of keeping our convention in its current format and as a result selected a city for the 2010 convention. After being supplied with information gathered by Vachon on eight cities, the board voted.

**A proper motion and second by Maben and Turmelle, respectively, was made to select New Orleans as the city for the 2010 convention. The motion failed.**

**A proper motion and second by Limor and Lunsford, respectively, the board approved Las Vegas as the city for the 2010 convention.**

## **CONVENTION 2011**

Aeikens brought the board up to date in relationship to a joint conference with RTNDA in 2011.

Harper originally spoke to the RTNDA Executive Director, Barbara Cochran, in October 2008 about a joint conference and there was initial interest. Subsequently, a conference call was held with RTNDA officers, SPJ officers, SPJ staff, Harper and Cochran. Again, the reaction was positive. Aeikens followed up with a face-to-face discussion with RTNDA's new chairman, Stacey Woelfel, this spring. Stacey planned to have the joint conference concept as an agenda item for RTNDA's upcoming board meeting.

**A proper motion and second by McCloskey and Limor, respectively, the board approved the concept of a joint conference with RTNDA in 2011 and asked for a staff report on its status at the June 27 executive committee meeting.**

**A proper motion and second by S. Smith and K. Smith, respectively, the board agreed to remove San Francisco as the site for the 2011 convention.**

## **FAIRNESS DOCTRINE**

Aeikens told the board that he gets regular inquiries as to the organization's position on the Fairness Doctrine. The organization has no position and Aeikens would like the organization to take a position in order for him to more clearly communicate to the public.

**A proper motion and second by Albarado and Govier, respectively, the board agreed to support the position that SPJ opposes the Fairness Doctrine.**

## **FEDERAL SHIELD LAW**

Aeikens informed the board that there is a D.C. lobbying trip scheduled for July 13-15. Board members are welcome to participate and all members are encouraged to contact their representatives in D.C. in support of the shield law.

## **DIGITAL MEDIA COMMITTEE REPORT**

The committee is proposing three steps that SPJ should undertake to improve digital communication and they are: move to WordPress; develop a social networking strategy; and make all our digital tools easier to access. Skeel discussed these goals and said they are in line with the strategic plan and that he is hopeful that he can work on them in the future.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH PUBLIC BRANDING SLOGAN**

The Public Outreach committee was asked to develop a branding proposal, including a slogan, which can be prominently featured during the centennial year and beyond. Additionally, they were asked to provide recommendations on how it could be used. The intent is that the slogan should complement the centennial slogan of "Improving & Protecting Journalism for 100 Years."

**A proper motion and second by K. Smith and Ralston, respectively, the board agreed to accept the committee's branding slogan recommendation of "Fighting for your right to know, one story at a time."**

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **STATE OF THE CRAFT COMMITTEE**

Aeikens reported that SPJ wants to get more involved in the discussions that are taking place about the future of journalism; we want "a seat at the table." Aeikens has asked Region 10 Director, Scott Maben, to

assemble a committee to work on this objective. Maben is asking for one name from each regional director to be appointed to the committee to assist him. The committee will report back to Aeikens with its findings.

### **SDX AWARDS BANQUET**

Due to cost, the SDX Awards Banquet is being moved from a July event in Washington, D.C to an awards reception on the Friday night of the convention, with the first one to be held in Indianapolis in 2009.

### **SMALL GROUP WORK: STRATEGIC PLANNING**

The board spent the balance of the afternoon working in small groups to brainstorm ideas in an effort to identify some ways for the organization to meet the Society's Strategic Plan goals.

The staff will review and organize the results of the small group work.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**There being no further business to come before the board of directors, and with a proper motion and second by Cooper and Maben, respectively, the meeting adjourned at 4 p.m. on Saturday, April 18, 2009.**