

**MINUTES
MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
THE SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
JANUARY 16, 2010
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

With President Kevin Smith presiding, the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 9:10 a.m. on Saturday, January 16, 2010, at the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel in Albuquerque.

ROLL CALL

In addition to President Smith, the following were present for all or portions of the meeting: President-Elect Hagit Limor; Secretary-Treasurer Darcie Lunsford; Vice President, Campus Chapter Affairs Neil Ralston; Immediate Past President Dave Aeikens; Director-at-Large Bill McCloskey; Region 12 Director Sonny Albarado; SDX Foundation President Steve Geimann; SDX Foundation Vice President Robert Leger; Executive Director Joe Skeel; and Associate Executive Director Chris Vachon.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Smith reported that the shield law passed the Senate Judiciary Committee. We are fortunate that it has gotten to this point, but there is still more work to do to get it passed as a law. Smith knocked on doors and shook hands with senators and their staff during his recent visit to D.C.

Smith has represented SPJ at many conferences on the future of journalism and as a result, has met many people. The SPJ committee on the future of journalism has lost its chair, Scott Maben, due to his resignation. Smith will be working with the committee until a new chair is identified.

Smith provided an update on the work of the SPJ committees. Membership: Rolled out a campaign: 2,010 new members in 2010. Bylaws: Smith to ask the chair to develop a template for chapter bylaws that all chapters can use if they so choose. Ethics: The committee applied for a \$25,000 grant from the Ethics & Excellence in Journalism Foundation for a program based on the former Town Hall project. Digital Media: It has been busy with a variety of projects. Freelance: The chair put out a blog posting about Demand Studios and its relationship with SPJ. FOI: Filed an amicus brief regarding the Northwestern University situation; sent a letter about government transparency; and came to the defense of a St Louis Post Dispatch reporter. Government Relations: Smith is going to work to get the committee more involved in our shield law efforts. International: The committee has been active and has formed a relationship with the Committee to Protect Journalists. Legal Defense Fund: Filed 12 amicus briefs. Journalism Education: Members of this committee are also involved with the Committee to Protect Journalists and they are changing the way they approach Quill contributions. Gen J: Members have been busy doing lots of good work.

Since the time Smith took office, he has traveled to seven college campuses to speak about SPJ and journalism. Additionally, he has visited Washington, D.C. four times; New York City twice and a list of about seven other cities. Finally, the list of publications that have contacted Smith for quotes is a lengthy list.

FOUNDATION PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Geimann reported that at the end of 2009, the Foundation's investments had inched up. The managed fund was closed in the fourth quarter of 2009. Fundraising efforts have been affected by the economy and the decline in membership; however, the average amount of gifts has increased, but the average dollar amounts have decreased. The e-appeal sent out by the Foundation at the end of 2009 did not fare so well. There were 39 contributions totaling \$1600. 19% of those who received the e-appeal opened it (the national average is 21%). The Foundation will be implementing its new guidelines for the upcoming Pulliam Editorial Fellowship applications. The guidelines were widened to include more types of editorial writers.

STAFF REPORT

Skeel provided a written report of the Society's operations prior to the meeting.

At the meeting, he reported that finances are in decent shape. We definitely felt the effects of the industry changes and the economy throughout 2009. The process has begun for the development of next fiscal year's budget.

An advertising contract has been inked with Demand Studios for \$40,000. As a result of this endeavor, an advertising campaign has been developed and will be used to solicit new advertising business.

The capital improvement plan is on schedule. A new roof is on the headquarters building. The exterior painting is scheduled for the spring. The new boiler and the parking lot resurfacing are scheduled for after Aug. 1, 2010, assuming it fits within the FY2011 budget.

Skeel and Smith are moving the Outside Grants Committee from a volunteer committee to a staff responsibility. Vachon and Posavac will be the two staff members assigned to this duty.

The ethics book is in the final editing stages and it is scheduled to come out in the fall. Chapters will be able to sell the book and keep a portion of the profits.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVED

Upon proper motion and second by Aeikens and Limor, respectively, the committee approved the minutes from the following Executive Committee meetings:

June 27, 2009

Sept. 29, 2009

Nov. 18, 2009

With the following changes:

June 27: Under Wells Key: change committee to officers and add that the Wells Key winner is past Executive Director Terry Harper.

Nov. 18: In the roll call: add the words "accounting firm" in front of Greenwalt Sponsel

CONVENTION 2010

Vachon informed the group that the programming committee of Hagit Limor and John Ensslin met and reviewed about 80 program proposals the day prior. Confirmed sponsors, so far, for the conference are: Geico, Scripps Howard Foundation, Eli Lilly, Demand Studios and Google. Rob Curley from the Las Vegas Sun is a confirmed keynote speaker. Vachon presented a revised schedule for the October convention in Las Vegas in order to get input from the Executive Committee.

ETHICS TOWN HALL MEETINGS

A recommendation was made by Vachon to hold the joint conference with RTDNA in New Orleans.

The recommendation was made based on good hotel rates and the location of the hotel in connection to the French Quarter, and the overall positive interest in going to New Orleans. RTDNA has voted to go to New Orleans.

Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Albarado, respectively, the committee approved New Orleans as the 2011 convention location.

CONVENTION 2012

Vachon pointed out that SPJ is making a two year verbal commitment (2011 and 2012) to hosting the convention with RTDNA, based on the fact that site selection for 2012 needs to begin before the 2011 convention takes place.

SPRING CONFERENCES

President Smith asked if the Executive Committee members would like to attend any of the Spring Conferences. Below is a list of the conferences and the officers attending:

Region 1: Darcie Lunsford

Region 2: Darcie Lunsford

Region 3: Hagit Limor

Region 4: Kevin Smith

Region 5: Hagit Limor

Region 6: (Same weekend as Spring board meeting)

Region 7: Dave Aeikens

Region 8: Dave Aeikens

Region 9: Bill McCloskey

Region 10: Hagit Limor

Region 11: Kevin Smith

Region 12: Neil Ralston

HIGH SCHOOL JOURNALISTS AS MEMBERS

Ralston discussed the possibility of targeting high school journalism students for SPJ membership.

Ralston will be referring the concept to the membership and education committee chairs and hopes to have a report for the spring board meeting.

HISTORY BOOK

Robert Leger discussed his readings of the past SPJ history books. As a result, he feels that we need to chronicle the Society's past 25 years, just as we have documented the other 75 years of SPJ history.

Leger and Aeikens will develop a proposal for both boards to review at the spring board meeting regarding how to move forward with a history book.

HARPER MEMORIAL FUND

There is \$36,000 currently in the fund. The Memorial Fund committee consists of Ron Sylvester, Paul Davis, Hoag Levins and Dave Carlson. They will be holding their first conference call soon to begin determining the guidelines for the scholarships coming from the fund. To grow the fund, the organization needs fundraising ideas. We will no longer have success raising money for the fund through appeals and so an annual fundraising event needs to be established.

ANNUAL REPORTS/STAR RANKINGS

At the spring board meeting, Skeel plans to ask the board to amend a couple minor items it adopted during the fall meeting in Indianapolis. One of the rewards for becoming a four-star chapter is a 20 percent discount on SPJ merchandise. This reward has been on the books since the days SPJ managed its own merchandise. It is now handled by a third-party vendor who takes the orders directly. Because of our contract with them, we can't offer the discounts. We will ask this reward to be removed. A June 1 deadline for filing annual reports was adopted. However, this date will make it impossible in some years to adhere to the rewards that involve convention recognition and registrations. The best solution here is to keep the deadline in the spring. We will ask the board to repeal the June 1 date and allow staff to determine the deadline date each year that will allow it to complete the ranking process and inform chapters of their status in plenty of time to make travel arrangements.

NEW BUSINESS

PUBLIC OUTREACH COMMITTEE

The committee is requesting more direction from the national leadership. Smith discussed this with the Executive Committee members and asked them for feedback that he could then take to the Public Outreach committee. Additionally, the committee asked for money for marketing efforts such as PSAs and ad buys. The Executive Committee recommended that money, \$10,000, be included in the initial budget draft for fiscal year 2011.

NOMINATIONS UPDATE

Nominations Chair Aeikens has contacted all current board members whose terms expire at the 2010 convention and asked for their intentions. He is gradually getting their responses back. In addition, he is actively seeking out members who have not served on the board before for various board positions.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Albarado, respectively, the committee adjourned the meeting at 1:50 p.m.