

MINUTES

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS OCTOBER 3, 2010 LAS VEGAS, NEVADA PLANET HOLLYWOOD HOTEL

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

With President Kevin Smith presiding, the meeting of the board of directors of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 9:05 a.m. on Sunday, October 3, 2010, at the Planet Hollywood Hotel.

ROLL CALL

In addition to Smith, the following were present: Immediate Past President Dave Aeikens; President-Elect Hagit Limor; Secretary-Treasurer Darcie Lunsford; Vice President for Campus Chapter Affairs Neil Ralston; Director at-Large Bill McCloskey; Director Lauren Bartlett, Campus Advisers at-Large Sue Kopen Katcef and George Daniels; Student Representative Tara Puckey; Regional Directors Luther Turmelle, Brian Eckert, Jenn Rowell, Jeremy Steele, Liz Hansen, Amanda Theisen, Holly Edgell, Scott Cooper, John Ensslin, Jodi Cleesattle, Dana Neuts and Sonny Albarado.

Staff members present for the meeting were Executive Director Joe Skeel and Associate Executive Director Chris Vachon.

Others in attendance were SDX Foundation President Steve Geimann; SDX Foundation Vice President Robert Leger; SDX Foundation Secretary Irwin Gratz; SDX Foundation Board member Dave Carlson; FOI Committee Chairman Dave Cuillier and several representatives from RTDNA.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVED

Upon proper motion and second by Aeikens and Neuts, respectively, the board approved the minutes from the April 17, 2010 board of directors meeting.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Smith first acknowledged the work of the SPJ committees and recommended that people take time to read the committee reports in the board meeting packet.

Next, Smith discussed the shield law. He recommends, looking forward, that SPJ put forth as much effort as possible in the way of support for the bill and directs it at the senate in the next two months to facilitate its passage. During Smith's tenure, he hand-delivered two letters to senators; blogged on the issue three times; wrote two guest editorials; was interviewed 27 times and signed off on five press releases.

As for the discussions on the future of journalism, Smith attended four conferences on the topic and feels little has transpired from these conferences that warrants SPJ's involvement at this time. Perhaps the next discussions need to focus on the consequences of these leaner newsrooms and the impact it has on news.

SPJ welcomed its first, official international chapter: Northwestern University — Qatar. Also on the international front, Smith has been interviewed by journalists from eight different countries.

Finally, Smith summarized his 13-month term in the following way:

- 33 trips: Two countries, 16 states, 14 college campuses
- 88 interviews, 17 speeches, 12 newsroom meetings, 15 President's blogs
- 12, 456 emails, 3,887 Google Alerts, 485 text messages

REPORT OF THE SDX FOUNDATION PRESIDENT

Steve Geimann reported that the Foundation resumed the \$75,000 Pulliam Editorial Fellowship this year and 21 applications were received. Jim Dwyer, a 30-year newspaperman, Pulitzer Prize winner at Newsday and the "About New York" columnist at the New York Times, plans to investigate the Internet

as both a tool for the powerless and powerful.

Financially, the Foundation's endowment is up modestly and fundraising efforts continue to bear fruit. Through several different fundraising efforts, \$44,000 was raised during the last fiscal year.

REPORT OF THE ACEJMC

Steve Geimann joined the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communications on behalf of SPJ in 1997. He provided a report informing the board about the Council's accrediting decisions in 2010.

Geimann is a member of ACEJMC's strategic planning committee. The Council is wrestling with issues after six associations withdrew from the Council. Additionally, the Council has operated in a deficit for several years. Geimann recommends that SPJ monitor these strategic discussions.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Joe Skeel reported that membership is on par with 2009; we are gaining ground and trending up. Financially, SPJ ended the year with a \$34,000 budget surplus.

Skeel provided a brief overview of all the professional development being provided to journalists from headquarters. Along with our usual offerings of Narrative Writing Workshops, the Newsroom Training Programs, the Reporters Institute and the Scripps Howard Leadership Institute, SPJ is launching an online training portal called eCampus and the first addition to the portal are On Demand training vignettes.

As far as communications are concerned, this year saw an increase in our reach through social media. As of mid-September, SPJ's Twitter account has 3,469 followers and SPJ's Facebook fan page includes 3,089 "likes". The Quill website has been expanded through an overhaul this year. And Quill online content is being expanded.

In the area of awards, an awards platform has been in development for about a year. It is an awards software product that will be sold to chapters and other journalism organizations. Award entries for the SDX Awards program increased by 33 percent and the Mark of Excellence Awards program experienced a 1 percent decrease from last year.

Capital improvements have continued at headquarters. This fiscal year the boiler and heating unit were replaced and the parking lot was repaved.

SPJ.org launched a redesigned site this year and visitors and page views are up from last year.

2010 CONVENTION

Vachon provided a summary of convention numbers stating that registration numbers are up from the past two years for the 2010 convention. There are 750 people registered so far. Our room block is at 140 percent and the number of exhibitors is up from previous years as well as number of sponsors (and sponsorship dollars as well).

Vachon also updated the board on the Harper Scholarship recipients and the Diversity Leader Fellows recipients.

2011 CONVENTION

Vachon reported that the website for the New Orleans conference is already up and running. The Call for Programs is open and closes in early January 2011. Finally, she noted that RTDNA has two staff members and three volunteer leaders attending the Las Vegas in order for them to meet our folks and to see how our convention operates.

2012 CONVENTION

Vachon informed the board that she is waiting to hear from RTDNA as to when the announcement of the 2012 conference location can take place.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

TAKING SPJ INTERNATIONAL

The board discussed that research should be done to ensure the Society has strong legal footing before expanding outside of the U.S. borders. Skeel will discuss international efforts with representatives at SPJ's council: Baker Hostetler before the spring board meeting.

ONLINE RADIO PROGRAM

Smith and Skeel shared that SPJ recently launched a new online radio program aimed at engaging new members. They explained the hope of expanding the radio programs once the kinks were worked out.

DUES DISCOUNTS/INSTALLMENT BILLING

The board discussed whether or not to continue offering a six-month waiver to current members, who lose their job, when their dues come up for renewal.

Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Limor, respectively, the board voted to extend the dues discount to April and the board will discuss at the April board meeting.

The board discussed the concept of installment billing for membership dues.

HISTORY BOOK

The board reviewed a memo from Dave Aeikens and Robert Leger, outlining their plans for the development a history book. They sent a request for proposal to members of the Journalism Historians Association and have not received replies as of this meeting.

In the memo, they outlined printing options and the board discussed those options.

Upon proper motion and second by Albarado and Cooper, respectively, the board voted to accept the printing proposal of Marion Street Press fulfilling all orders, with SPJ receiving a 10 percent royalty. Members could buy the book at a discounted price. There would be no cost to SPJ. The book would be priced at \$24.95 and would be a 200- to 250-page trade paperback.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

BYLAWS/BOARD'S ROLE AS JUDICIARY BODY

Kevin Smith shared that Bylaws Committee chairman Bob Becker, who is an attorney, concluded the Society's current national bylaws gives it the authority to act as a judiciary body in times of conflict within chapters.

PROFESSIONAL STAR RANKING SYSTEM

Region 4 Director Jeremy Steele recommended several actions related to the Graduated Professional Chapter Requirements (otherwise known as the star system).

Steele proposed changes that would:

- Require the financial review be completed with the annual report. A number of chapters are neglecting to complete this. It is SPJ's only routine financial check on chapters and provides important information.
- Require 3-star chapters file their annual reports on time. Annual reports that are filed late create a paperwork nightmare. These reports traditionally have been put in a file without being rated as a result. These late reports should be rated if at all possible. This change essentially simplifies the scale for late reports to 1-star (doesn't meet standards) or 2-star (does meet standards) to ease the burden of managing late reports.
- Slightly revise the membership recruitment language in 2-star and 1-star levels.
- Clarify the waiver process for chapters unable to attend the national convention or regional conference.

— Update the implementation section (which was not updated in the 2009 revisions).

Upon proper motion and second by Steele and Limor, respectively, the board voted to accept Steele's recommended changes.

The second action recommend by Steele was to declare several chapters “on assistance,” “inactive,” or “on probation.”

Steele recommended the following chapters be placed on Step One: Assistance until the annual report deadline in 2011, when these chapters will again be evaluated. Headquarters should immediately notify these chapter presidents of this status and its consequences in writing:

Maine Pro Chapter
New England Pro Chapter Maryland Pro Chapter
North Carolina Pro
Alabama Pro
Atlanta Pro Chapter
Pittsburgh Pro Chapter Bluegrass Pro Chapter
Madison Pro Chapter Milwaukee Pro Chapter
Iowa Pro
Kansas Pro Chapter
Houston Pro Chapter
San Antonio Pro Chapter
Farthest North Pro Chapter
Inland Northwest Pro Chapter
Montana Pro Chapter
Las Vegas Pro Chapter
So Cal Inland Pro Chapter
Greater Tri-Cities Pro Chapter
Mid-South Pro Chapter
Middle Tennessee Pro Chapter
Northwest Arkansas Pro Chapter

Steele recommended the following chapters be placed on Step Two: Probation. Headquarters should immediately notify these chapters' presidents of this status and its consequences in writing.

Greater Philadelphia Pro Chapter
Mid Florida Pro Chapter

Steele recommended that because the following chapters are not functioning and show little or no signs of resurgence they be declared Inactive. Headquarters should immediately notify these chapters' last known presidents of this status and its consequences in writing. Headquarters should immediately stop collecting local dues on behalf of these chapters. Any local dues that have not been distributed by national to the chapter shall become the property of the national organization and shall be held in a separate fund until such time that this board either releases them to the chapter upon returning to active status or appropriates them to another activity.

Cardinal States Pro Chapter
Southern Arizona Pro Chapter
Northeast Mississippi Pro Chapter

Lastly, the Eastern Oklahoma Pro Chapter no longer exists. It was folded some time ago into the Oklahoma Pro Chapter, yet remained in SPJ's chapter database with a small number of members attached to it. Therefore, I recommend its charter be revoked and its members and any local dues held by SPJ be assigned to the Oklahoma Pro Chapter.

Upon proper motion and second by Steele and Turmelle, respectively, the board voted to accept Steele's recommendations for taking chapter action.

CAMPUS STAR RANKING SYSTEM

Vice President Campus Chapter Affairs Neil Ralston recommended changes to the Graduated Student Chapter Requirements (otherwise known as the star system) that currently in effect and posted on the SPJ website.

In general, the proposal reflects three changes:

- 1) It brings the star-system requirements more in line with the recent changes made to the professional chapter requirements.
- 2) It includes a rewards system similar to the one for professional chapters.
- 3) It provides for clarifications regarding the selection of best chapters in each region and nationally.

Upon proper motion and second by Ralston and Steele, respectively, the board voted to adopt Ralston's recommended changes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EVALUATION

Smith shared with the board that Skeel's evaluation was conducted the day before the meeting. In lieu of a pay increase, Skeel requested an extra week of vacation — allowing him to use money budgeted for his increase for fellow staff pay increases.

Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Limor, respectively, the board voted to grant Skeel five weeks of vacation each year.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Cooper, respectively, the meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m., Oct. 3, 2010.