

**MINUTES
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
JANUARY 14, 2011
CONFERENCE CALL**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

With President Hagit Limor presiding, the board of directors of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 3:03 p.m. on Friday, January 14, 2011 via conference call.

ROLL CALL

In addition to Limor, the following were present: President-Elect Darcie Lunsford; Secretary-Treasurer John Ensslin; Immediate Past President Kevin Smith; Vice President, Campus Chapter Affairs Neil Ralston; Region 1 Director Luther Turmelle; Region 2 Director Brian Eckert; Region 3 Director Jenn Rowell; Region 4 Director James Pilcher; Region 5 Director Liz Hansen; Region 6 Director Amanda Theisen; Region 7 Director Kelsey Volkmann; Region 8 Director Scott Cooper; Region 9 Director Donald Meyers; Region 10 Director Dana Neuts; Region 11 Director Jodi Cleesattle; Region 12 Director Sonny Albarado; At-Large Director Lauren Bartlett; At-Large Director Bill McCloskey; Campus Adviser At-Large George Daniels; Campus Adviser At-Large Kym Fox; Student Representative Tara Puckey.

Others on the call were SDX Foundation President Steve Geimann.

Staff members on the call were Executive Director Joe Skeel, Associate Executive Director Chris Vachon, Director of Communications Scott Leadingham and Communications Coordinator Andrew Scott.

EXPLANATION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

President Limor opened by saying the executive committee had listened to the request of regional directors to bring this issue before the full board of directors. She asked McCloskey to explain the recommendation made by the executive committee on January 8 to retire the Helen Thomas Lifetime Achievement Award and send the recommendation to the board of directors for consideration within 10 days.

McCloskey provided that explanation. Limor asked if there were any motions.

McCloskey made a motion that the board of directors support the recommendation of the executive committee that the Helen Thomas Award for Lifetime Achievement be retired. Lunsford seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION OF THE MOTION

McCloskey explained his motion and said he believes that SPJ should continue to honor Helen Thomas and that he defends her right to free speech. But he agrees SPJ should not be further associated with the remarks she made and that is why he made the motion.

Smith said this issue isn't about free speech only. He said like parents, the board acts as guardians and by silence the board would be affirming her remarks. He said the solution is simple.

Lunsford said the executive committee discussed for a long time and that this was a compromise. To continue to honor Thomas by having her be the namesake on the award would be distracting. If this were just about honoring Helen Thomas, we'd give her an award every year, but SPJ honors someone else every year.

Ralston said he thinks retiring the award is no better than removing her name and that both actions are punitive.

Puckey asked if there was a consensus from past recipients. No one was aware of a feeling one way or the other from past recipients.

Daniels, Fox and Turmelle yielded the floor.

Eckert said Thomas is from his region and he is not persuaded that she did anything other than speak her mind on international relations. He also believes the action proposed is punitive.

Rowell said that in the future, if SPJ is to give new awards, perhaps they shouldn't be named after living people.

Pilcher said this is a practical issue and that SPJ is "damned if we do, damned if we don't." He said this compromise is the best route of any proposed.

Theisen said both sides in this debate have very valid points and she was torn on how to vote. Volkmann said renaming or retiring the award would be caving to pressure from outside.

Cooper said he spoke to chapters in his region and they feel doing anything other than keeping the award as-is in Thomas' name is inappropriate and a violation of free speech principles upheld by SPJ.

Meyers indicated that he would like to make a substitute motion.

A brief discussion ensued about the proper procedure for making substitute motions while another motion was already on the floor. McCloskey, acting as parliamentarian, indicated it was entirely appropriate to do so.

Meyers proposed a motion to continue presentation of the Helen Thomas Lifetime Achievement Award but to make a statement saying the award is for her decades of journalism service and indicating the board does not endorse her statement about Israel. Cleesattle seconded the motion.

Discussion continued from remaining board members on both motions. Neuts yielded the floor.

Cleesattle said she is against retiring the award since it is for Thomas' work as a reporter. She agreed with those who say retiring the award will not end the controversy.

Bartlett said she strongly urged support for the original motion to retire the award.

Limor said she has refrained from pushing through any objective and reiterated that SPJ is a First Amendment organization and that no one is saying Helen Thomas can't state her opinions, nor is SPJ

taking away her award from 2000. But she said continuing the award would bring up controversy every year when it's advertised for nominations and given out.

A brief discussion ensued about the procedure for voting on the original and substitute motion. It was determined that the substitute motion to continue the award in Thomas' name must be considered first.

Vote on Meyers' substitute motion:

The motion failed 7-14.

A discussion ensued about whether discussion needed to continue on the original motion or if other motions could be considered. It was determined that the board could Call the Question to limit debate and consider the original motion.

Vote on whether to Call the Question and bring forth the original motion:

The board voted 14-7 to Call the Question and bring forth the original motion to a vote.

Vote on McCloskey motion, seconded by Lunsford, to retire the Helen Thomas Award for Lifetime Achievement:

The motion carried 14-7.

Meyers requested that in making his vote (against retiring the award) he attach this explanation: That by doing this action to retire the award, SPJ is violating its own code of ethics to act independently.

Cleesattle made a motion to recommend to future boards of directors to never again offer a lifetime achievement award. Meyers seconded the motion.

The motion failed 7-14.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Upon proper motion and second by Smith and Lunsford, respectively, the meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m. ET, January 14, 2011.