

**Minutes  
Meeting of the Executive Committee  
Society of Professional Journalists  
January 18, 2014  
Nashville, Tenn.**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

With President David Cuillier presiding, the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Jan. 18, 2014, at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee.

**ROLL CALL**

In addition to Cuillier, the following were present: President-Elect Dana Neuts; Secretary-Treasurer Paul Fletcher; Vice President for Campus Chapter Affairs Sue Kopen Katcef; Immediate Past President Sonny Albarado; Director at-Large Bill McCloskey; Region 9 Director Don Meyer (via Google Hangout). SDX Foundation President Robert Leger was in attendance along with Executive Director Joe Skeel, associate Executive Director Chris Vachon and SPJ Webmaster Billy O'Keefe.

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVED**

**Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Albarado, respectively, the committee approved the minutes from the June 22, 2013 executive committee meeting.**

**Upon proper motion and second by Kopen Katcef and Fletcher, respectively, the committee approved the minutes from the January 15, 2014 executive committee meeting.**

**Upon proper motion and second by Albarado and Neuts, respectively, the committee approved the minutes from the following delegate meetings:**

- August 24, 2013, Anaheim, Opening Business Session
- August 26, 2013, Anaheim, Closing Business Session with the following addition:
- Add the resolutions to the minutes

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

President Cuillier reported that the SPJ name-change task force recommends no change to the organization's name, but instead recommends the task force shift its focus to engaging younger members. He mentioned that Fletcher has taken an active role in our advocacy efforts and that there may be movement regarding the federal shield law in the coming weeks and we should be prepared. Cuillier indicated that Neuts has taken the lead in the area of membership. He reported that the Ethics Committee is still working on possible updates to the Code of Ethics. The Freelance Community is making progress in its transition from a committee to a community and the digital media committee is disbanding for the time being. Cuillier discussed his desire for SPJ to communicate better with the public, its members and prospective members by hiring a new communications person.

**SDX FOUNDATION PRESIDENT REPORT**

SDX Foundation President Robert Leger reported that the stock market has been good to the Foundation. Investments rose \$1.3 million in 2013.

Associate Executive Director Vachon supplied an update on the recent projects being funded by the Foundation, such as the NPPA workshops, For Journalism and the IRE workshops. All projects are moving along and the workshop contacts are communicating with Vachon on a regular basis.

## **GRANT REQUESTS TO SDX FOUNDATION**

Region 3 Director Michael Koretzky submitted a proposed grant request for the Executive Committee's review. See Appendix A.

**Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Albarado, respectively, the committee voted to support the grant request being submitted to the SDX Foundation.**

## **ETHICS CODE UPDATE**

Cuillier reported that the Ethics Committee has been hashing out ideas for possible updates to the code and they have been soliciting feedback from members. The plan is to have something to present to the board in April and to the membership in August. The executive committee suggested that something preliminary be prepared for members to review at the spring conferences. Cuillier is to pass this request along to Ethics Committee Chairman Kevin Smith.

## **SPRING CONFERENCES**

Executive Committee members assigned officers to attend the SPJ spring conferences.

## **NAME CHANGE UPDATE**

Cuillier reviewed the extensive work of the task force, which was outlined in a memo from task force chairman John Ensslin. Between a survey, focus groups, a blog talk radio show and many discussions, ultimately, the task force found little support for a name change at this time, particularly among long-time members. The task force's work did inspire the group to shift their focus to current, and potential, young (under 30) members and how the organization can better serve that age group. The task force will look to add younger members to the group and then begin working on ideas to present to the board.

## **FREELANCE COMMUNITY UPDATE**

Neuts reported that Freelance Community leader Michael Fitzgerald and Webmaster O'Keefe have been working closely to create a place on spj.org for the community. So far they have created a community chat area, a job board and some other features of interest to this group. The hope is this will serve as a prototype for future communities. The Freelance Community will seek official approval from the SPJ board of directors in April.

## **MONTHLY AUTO DUES UPDATE**

Skeel updated the group on the status of the implementation of the online monthly auto dues feature. The new server has been ordered. After installation of the server, the database will be upgraded. Next, the two tech companies, with which we work, have steps they need to complete and finally, testing will need to take place. Skeel estimates the process to take about 10 weeks and will cost \$8-10,000.

## **WEBSITE UPDATE**

O'Keefe provided a visual overview of the web site redesign and an explanation of the work that goes into such a project. He projects the redesign will be ready in March.

## **SCRIPPS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE ANALYSIS**

Skeel provided an overview of the newly formatted Scripps Leadership Institute. The new format involves four programs being offered each year (as opposed to the one program/year in the past) and smaller groups at each program. Because of the increased quantity of programs, more members are being trained each year. Staff's overall analysis is that the smaller size is more beneficial because it leads to a stronger sense of community among the participants, and the fact that we are reaching more members is, of course, a

benefit. Chapter Coordinator Tara Puckey, who created a memo on the topic, also suggests that the program has a broader reach beyond chapter leaders. It could be used to train national leaders, newsroom leaders, etc.

## **STAFF SUCCESSION PLAN**

Skeel provided a memo outlining a succession plan for staff member's positions. Over the course of the past three years, he has realigned the staff positions so that each staffer has responsibility over a specific area rather than multiple areas. With the exception of a few positions, most positions can be filled by posting a job opening, interviewing, hiring and training. During that process, there is at least one other staff member that can do each of the positions on staff. With the current staff, in the event that the Foundation position should become vacant, Skeel will fill that role. In turn, if the Executive Director position becomes vacant, Vachon will fill that role.

## **BOARD MEMBER STIPENDS**

Fletcher was asked to conduct a review of the current system of stipends and make any recommendations to the executive committee and the board. Currently, the stipends total \$46,500. Fletcher suggests that some stipends increase for a total stipend amount of \$52,000 and they would be as follows:

President: \$10,000  
President-elect: \$4,000  
Secretary-Treasurer: \$4,000  
Past President: \$2,500  
VP, Campus Chapter Affairs: \$2,500  
Campus Reps (2): \$1,500  
Regional/At Large on Exec Comm: \$2,500  
Regional Directors: \$1,500  
At Large Directors: \$1,500

The Executive Committee discussed that the philosophy is that stipends are not intended to fully reimburse all costs of a board member. They are intended as a baseline and to help to defray the costs of required board service.

**Upon proper motion and second by McCloskey and Neuts, respectively, the committee voted to propose the revised stipends to the board at the April board meeting.**

**Upon proper motion and second by Fletcher and Kopen Katcef, respectively, the committee voted to make available, after completion of each fiscal year, an opportunity for board members to apply for additional expense reimbursement from any unused stipend money. The Executive Committee may award reimbursements of this money based on required travel.**

## **MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

Neuts outlined the work that is currently being done in the area of membership:

- reviving the member of the month program
- calling lapsed members (being done at HQ by a hired college student)
- calling new members to welcome them
- implementing the monthly auto dues program
- updating the membership web pages
- promoting the SPJ Solutions program
- revising the invoicing schedule

## **ADVOCACY EFFORTS**

Fletcher met with Baker Hostetler attorney Laurie Babinski to discuss the issues and has been working with O'Keefe to update the web pages related to this topic. He would like to see SPJ get back its active advocacy efforts including at the local level. For example, during congressional recess time, congressmen typically hold town hall meetings. He would like to get members to these gatherings.

## ADJOURNMENT

**Upon proper motion and second by Neuts and Kopen Katcef, the committee voted to adjourn for lunch.**

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

**Upon proper motion and second by Fletcher and Kopen Katcef, respectively, the committee voted to go into executive session at 1:40 p.m. to discuss personnel and strategic planning.**

## ADJOURNMENT

**Upon proper motion and second by Albarado and McCloskey, respectively, the committee voted to exit executive session and adjourn at 4:30 pm.**

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### \*\*\*APPENDIX A\*\*\*

#### ZOMBIE MONEY PLEA

**To:** SPJ executive committee and SDX board

**From:** Michael Koretzky, Region 3 director

**Re:** grant request for Zombie Stories

The weekend before Halloween, SPJ took over a grassy knoll on the banks of the Mississippi River in New Orleans. We invited 20 zombies to teach interviewing skills to 70-75 students. (It was hard to get an accurate count because it was dark and they kept moving.)

Instead of boring you with a recap, here are some links that explains the whole thing, each requiring only a minute to peruse...

- [Zombie Stories preview](#)
- [Dave Cuillier as a zombie](#)
- [Zombie Stories results](#)

We want to take Zombie Stories on the road, much like we do with the [First Amendment Free Food Festival](#). That program has been held at more than 50 college campuses since SPJ debuted it in 2006, and one SPJ chapter even made national news on [FOX and Friends](#). SPJ still assists today with these festivals, providing logistics and even T-shirts for the “goon squads.”

If you spend \$3,000 on Zombie Stories, here's what you'll get...

- **240 T-shirts for \$1,800.** I use a Christian T-shirt manufacturer in California, the cheapest I could find nationwide. I'm his only Jewish customer. But business is business.
- **12 micro-grants of \$100 per school.** This defrays the cost of zombie makeup and mixing the fake blood, which is comprised of corn syrup, vegetable oil, and red dye.
- **A dozen Zombie Stories around the country.** We already have enthusiastic interest from three SPJ college chapters (including the one advised by board member Kym Fox), plus a [community college](#) (Lorain) and a private four-year school (Stetson) without chapters.

As with First Amendment Free Food Festival, costs of mailing the shirts will be paid by [SPJ Florida](#), while step-by-step advice and troubleshooting will be provided by Region 3.

If you have any questions, holler. Thanks again for your past support of our crazy projects. Our goal is to teach journalism in creative ways, inspiring both students and the public. In this case, we settled on zombies.