

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
MAY 9, 2016
ZOOM CONFERENCE CALL

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

With President Paul Fletcher presiding, the meeting of the board of directors of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 1:02 p.m. ET on Monday, May 9, 2016, via Zoom teleconference.

In addition to Fletcher the following were present: President-Elect Lynn Walsh; Immediate Past President Dana Neuts; Secretary-Treasurer Rebecca Baker; Vice President of Campus Chapter Affairs Sue Kopen Katcef; Directors At-Large Bill McCloskey and Alex Tarquinio; Campus Adviser At-Large Becky Tallent; Regional Directors Jane Primerano, Andy Schotz, Michael Koretzky, Patti Gallagher Newberry, Deborah Givens, Joe Radske, Stephanie Wilkin, Eddy Gallagher, Tom Johnson, Matt Hall and Amanda Womac.

Staff members present for the meeting were Executive Director Joe Skeel and Membership Strategist Tara Puckey.

The primary purpose of the call was to discuss contracting the board, a proposal submitted by Koretzky (*APPENDIX A*).

Walsh recommended that the board talk about the proposal, but not take a vote at this time. In an effort to get member feedback, she said that she or Fletcher should write a blog post about the proposal. They could collect feedback for a couple weeks.

Tarquinio supported Lynn's plan.

Walsh asked if anyone was opposed to her recommendation. None voiced opposition.

Fletcher asked Koretzky to share his proposal.

Koretzky said the urgency is to make this move now because there are no current candidates for three Regional Directors spots that would be eliminated.

Koretzky said in order to keep an odd number, the board could also ask the delegates to contract from two campus advisers at-large to just one. Koretzky shared that there are several people on the board that hold professional positions at universities, and having two positions for that role is no longer necessary.

He also shared that some think the board needs a bigger overhaul. His proposal, however, is a starting point.

Neuts clarified that the reason there are no candidates for those RD spots is because she hasn't actively recruited for them. She is putting that on hold until the board decides on reconstructing the board.

Givens shared that some chapters in her region felt it was being rushed. Some of the pro chapter members didn't support the map as proposed.

McCloskey is wondering if the data that Johnson shared with board members before the meeting shows that the regions as proposed would be roughly equal in membership.

Johnson shared that there is territory mapping software that can be used to help make them more equal.

Fletcher said he isn't sure making regions equal is possible, given that they aren't equal now. He also said he wasn't sure making them equal was necessary.

Johnson agreed, saying equal takes many forms. East of the Mississippi, drive time is the key factor, he said. Out west, it's flight time.

Gallagher Newberry asked whether the board should consider cutting both campus at-large positions, and if there should be any specific effort to reduce the number of academics on the board. Should the board discuss the possibility of adding affiliate spots (RTDNA, NAHJ, etc.)? Should the board consider representation for our growing communities?

Koretzky likes all of the questions. He recommends making the changes the board can make now, then getting a group together to consider bigger changes. Having been on high-level task forces, he says it's discouraging when it feels like nothing is happening.

"If we try to consider all of the questions now, we may not accomplish anything," he said.

Primerano agreed that switching the regional borders probably won't have much impact on the rank-and-file members. But in looking at SDX Foundation President Robert Leger's e-mail comments prior to the meeting, she wondered if basing a board on geography makes sense any longer.

Schotz is glad we are putting this out to members. He thought that if the board was planning to take a vote, that's this info should have been shared before this meeting.

He asked if the board is sure of the changes it wants to make? Does it want to come up with other ideas? He said Koretzky makes a good point about "perfect being the enemy of good." But he hopes national leadership can commit to continuing the conversation about board make-up.

Fletcher said he could put together a group to discuss larger changes of board make-up, which would need to be carried on by Walsh during her upcoming term as president. Fletcher said he would talk with Walsh about creating a task force.

Koretzky suggested the task force talk to the executive director, as he has some ideas about the way other groups govern.

Hall said he brought this topic up during the Region 11 conference – where nearly every pro chapter was represented. No one raised objections or considered it a great idea. The sense was the board would do what’s best for membership.

Hall mentioned that RDs currently have the majority voting block. Are they willing to give that up? Not sure having the majority has ever come into play, but it’s something that must be considered.

Baker supported the proposal, but shared two comments: In the past, she said, we have taken an issue, studied it and then nothing happened. I’d like for this group to have a set of deadlines. I also truly believe the vast majority of membership will trust the board to make the best decision.

She agrees with Koretzky in taking a smaller approach in the beginning. Incremental change is more doable, she said.

Koretzky suggests that the blog post ask members to consider the proposal as written. The more narrow and concrete it is, the more likely it is we will get valuable feedback, he said. If we start putting all of the options out now, I don’t think we will get use information in time for EIJ16, he said.

McCloskey asked if there was a nominee for at-large director. Puckey confirmed there were two. (*Note: those nominations are for at-large director, not campus adviser at-large*).

Neuts asked for guidance in proceeding with seeking nominations. Gallagher Newberry asked if waiting a couple weeks would delay the process that much. Neuts said most nominations come in June. But, she can’t wait much longer than that. Puckey clarified that the Quill deadline for submission of bios is June 24.

Fletcher wrapped up by stating that he and Walsh would work together on a blog post regarding the proposal. The board would meet in two weeks, after membership had a chance to provide feedback.

Kopen Katcef asked for a summary on the composition of other boards before the next meeting. Fletcher asked Skeel to provide that.

Regarding the proposal, Gallagher Newberry asked “What does this do to improve journalism? What does this do to protect journalism?” She hopes that the board will keep that in mind as it moves forward.

“Keep the eyes on the prize,” she said. “The importance is the bigger issue, not the headcounts we are focusing on at the moment.”

Hall closed the meeting in memory of Debora Schwartz, who died over the weekend while hiking. She was an Arizona State University professor that attended the Region 11 conference the week before. He asked that board members keep her family in their thoughts.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon proper motion by McCloskey and second by Tarquinio, the meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m., Monday, May 9, 2016.

APPENDIX A

Motion 1

Effective Sept. 19, 2016, SPJ shall have nine regions, with their borders defined as:

- **Region 1:** Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont
- **Region 2:** Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia
- **Region 3:** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands
- **Region 4:** Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio
- **Region 5 (formerly 12):** Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee
- **Region 6:** Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin
- **Region 7 (formerly 8):** Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
- **Region 8 (formerly 10):** Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming
- **Region 9 (formerly 11):** Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Nevada, Mariana Islands, Utah

Motion 2

The SPJ board of directors requests the Bylaws Committee draft a resolution to the delegates to the convention, “the supreme legislative body of the organization,” that will change to Article 7 Section One of SPJ’s bylaws to remove one campus chapter adviser from the board (change in italic):

“The board of directors shall be composed of the national officers, the immediate past president, one regional director for each region established by the board, and six directors to be elected at large: *a campus chapter adviser*, two student members, and two professional members.”

Motion 3

SPJ shall create a Regional Directors Fund, replenished annually at \$3,000 from the operating budget and administered by the regional directors for the purpose of supporting chapter programming nationwide. At the first fall board meeting, regional directors shall submit to the board, for approval, a procedure for allocating these funds.

Motion 4

SPJ shall raise annual travel stipends from \$1,500 to \$1,700 for each regional director, the campus chapter adviser, two student members, and two at-large members.”