

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
SEPT. 18, 2016
SHERATON, NEW ORLEANS

With President Paul Fletcher presiding, the meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. CT on Sunday, Sept. 18, 2016, at the Sheraton New Orleans.

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

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

SPJ PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Fletcher discussed SPJ's accomplishments over the past year. This included Fixing FOIA by 50. On June 30, President Barack Obama signed the FOI Improvement Act of 2016. There was also some success, though not as much as we want, on transparency/PIO issues. SPJ led a delegation to the White House last December and told Press Secretary Josh Earnest that the practices of secrecy among government agencies must stop. Earnest promised to get back to SPJ after the State of the Union Address, but that hasn't happened. SPJ sent another letter recently, signed by 40 of the original groups that signed the first letter to Earnest. SPJ then adapted the letter and sent it to the New York Times, which published it. "So the word is out there that we won't stop fighting the government transparency issue," Fletcher said. "The Obama Administration may be leaving the White House, but we aren't going anywhere."

The Society continued the roll out of the updated Ethics Code. Fletcher noted that Andrew Seaman, Ethics Committee chair, is a wonderful spokesperson for SPJ and he always finds the time to talk to people.

The inward-looking accomplishments SPJ made this year are mostly marked by conversations that were started. Fletcher never expected these conversations would end in a year, but we've started discussions on membership, which has gone down in almost every professional organization, including SPJ's. The Society had sessions in January and April that were high-minded and not focused on the minutiae, which is what this board should be doing.

Fletcher said: "Someone told me last night, 'You've had one helluva year.' My response is 'WE'VE had one helluva year,' and I thank you all for your work."

MINUTES

Upon proper motion by Tallent and second by Baker, the board unanimously approved the minutes from April 16, May 9, May 23 and July 27.

SDX FOUNDATION PRESIDENT'S REPORT

SDX Foundation President Robert Leger discussed the "Dr. J" journalist on call proposal, saying they are working on ways to fund this position. The SDX Foundation continues to transition from a grant-making foundation to more entrepreneurial. They continue to address questions they've never had to answer before, and continue to consider what the Foundation's top priorities are. Leger received a nice thank you note from two women in Region 7 who were awarded a Reginald Stuart Fellowship. One of them said the SDX Foundation investing in her future means a great deal to her. He reminded the board that even though an amount of money may seem small to SDX or SPJ, to people who receive it, especially these two students, it is valuable and makes them better journalists, and that's what SPJ is all about.

SPJ STAFF REPORT

Executive Director Skeel said a group interested in leasing part of headquarters toured the building. Two others groups expressed interest. For their privacy, details can be discussed in executive session.

As for EIJ16, there were more than 1,000 registrants at that moment. Estimate was that total number would reach 1,025 to 1,050. EIJ14 in Nashville (the last EIJ without NAHJ) had 900.

He shared that the Native American Journalists Association would like to join NAHJ, RTDNA and SPJ for EIJ17.

Lastly he shared important dates on the horizon:

January 28, 2017 – Executive Committee meets in San Diego

April 22, 2017 – Spring board meeting in Indianapolis at NCAA headquarters

Sept. 7-9, 2017 – EIJ17 at the Anaheim Marriott with RTDNA and NAHJ

Sept. 27-28, 2018 – EIJ18 in Baltimore.

SPJ MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The board revoked the charters of three inactive chapters.

Upon proper motion by McCloskey and second by Gallagher, the board voted unanimously to support the actions detailed in staff's chapter action memo.

As a result, the following chapters were inactivated:

Region 2: Howard University; **Region 3:** Auburn University, Georgia College & State University, Georgia State University, Georgia Southern University, University of Central Florida, University of Miami, Winthrop University; **Region 4:** Kent State University, Marshall University, Michigan State University, Ohio State University, Wayne State University; **Region 6,** North Dakota State University, University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh, Milwaukee Pro; **Region 7:** University of Iowa, Webster University; **Region 9:** Colorado Mesa University, University of Colorado, Wyoming Pro; **Region 10:** Montana Pro

The following chapters had their charters revoked:

Region 3: Mid Florida Pro, North Central Florida Pro; **Region 10:** Inland Northwest Pro

There was discussion about what to do with money that these chapters had. Article 5, Section 16 of SPJ bylaws state the chapters that were revoked have 60 days to take action on how to distribute the money. The national board takes action if the local board does not.

Upon proper motion by Koretzky and second by Primerano, the board voted unanimously to set aside that money so that RDs can distribute as they see fit.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Fletcher reminded the board that when it meets on Tuesday there would be two bylaws amendments to consider. One, to take care of the 41-percent issue and create a regional at-large delegate system. Another to create a category of "SPJ Supporter."

Puckey said there were several membership issues on the to-do list, including changes to the associate member category should the bylaws amendment pass. She mentioned the SPJ After Deadline program was a success. Ambassadors were asked to organize informal meet ups, volunteer for a short time commitment, and have gatherings in their city for journalists to "meet up." There were about 20 around the country, which was more than we were expecting. The plan is to have those quarterly and continue to branch out to other cities.

Cleanup work continues on the database, Puckey reported, as information on several deceased members, etc., is updated. That does account for a bit of a decline in membership, but as members renew and new members join, we are able to collect more information about them and create a more informative member profile. There are a few hurdles we are working through, including a complicated dues structure. Members will be able to go into the database and update their own information (though that is not available yet).

Newberry reported on the Governance Task Force, which is looking at board governance and composition. The task force has met online twice and assembled a presentation to be given the next day at EIJ. The executive committee voted in June to assemble the task force and appointed Newberry as chair. The five-member task force includes Newberry, Joe Skeel, Victor Hernandez, Irwin Gratz and Jason Parsley. General thinking is that the board is too large, it often gets sidetracked by individuals' priorities and agendas, and there might be a way to think about a smaller board that sets direction, vision and strategy and spend less time on the mechanics of how SPJ operates. The task force will look at next steps, conduct a focus group, develop a communications plan and ask all members to offer their ideas and questions. If successful, a plan would be brought to the full board at its April meeting in Indianapolis and a recommendation could be voted on at EIJ17.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no comments from the public.

DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP FELLOWS/HARPER SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Introduction of the 2015 Dori Maynard Diversity Leadership Fellows and Harper Scholarship winners was made by April Bethea, Diversity Committee chair. Diversity Fellows are Richard Gaspar, Christiana Lilly, Jennifer Matthews, Neha Negandhi, Alicia Nieves and Andrew Seaman. Bethea then introduced the new Diversity Committee Chair, Dori Zinn. Harper Scholarship recipients are Caley Cook, Brett Hall, Kristin LaFratta, Robyn Sidersky.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon proper motion by Baker and second by Primerano, the board voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 10:35 a.m. to discuss the Executive Director evaluation. They exited executive session at 11:51 a.m.

OTHER BUSINESS

Upon proper motion by McCloskey and Second by Schotz, the board unanimously directed staff to explore the possibility of reincorporating SPJ in another state, and present a report to the board at its April meeting.

Upon proper motion by Koretzky and second by Neuts the board voted to clarify language regarding rules related to the SPJ Honors selection process. For Distinguished Teaching in Journalism, Ethics in Journalism, Fellows of the Society, Historic Site in Journalism, Sunshine Award, Pro Member, Outstanding SPJ Campus Adviser, and Outstanding Campus Member – the language will change from: “The recommendation will be presented to the SPJ board for approval” to “The recommendation will be presented to the SPJ board for review, and if a majority wishes a discussion, a vote will be required.” Schotz was opposed.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Upon proper motion and second, the meeting adjourned at 12:01 p.m. CT.