

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
SEPT. 6, 2017
ANAHEIM MARRIOTT
ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA

With President Lynn Walsh presiding, the meeting was called to order at 2:06 p.m. PT on Wednesday, Sept. 6, 2017, at the Anaheim Marriott.

In addition to Walsh, the following were present: President-elect Rebecca Baker; Secretary-Treasurer Alex Tarquinio; Immediate Past President Paul Fletcher; Vice President of Campus Chapter Affairs Sue Kopen Katcef; Directors At-Large Bill McCloskey and Rachel Wedding McClelland; Campus Representatives Maggie Gottlieb and Keem Muhammad; Campus Advisers At-Large Leticia Steffen and Rebecca Tallent; and Regional Directors Jane Primerano; Andy Schotz; Patti Gallagher Newberry; Michele Day; Joe Radske; Kari Williams; Eddy Gallagher; Ed Otte; Ethan Chung; Matt Hall and Amanda Womac.

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

SPJ PRESIDENT’S REPORT

President Walsh shared that we have been tracking how often SPJ has been speaking out on issues; sending press releases; when SPJ and its leaders have been featured in coverage; asked to comment for stories; etc., and she would be circulating that information later that night or the next day. It has been a busy year, she said, but she is grateful for the support and help she has received. SPJ has been able to respond more quickly to national, regional and local events and she appreciates everyone working together to give her and national a heads up on issues important to SPJ and journalism – from fake news and enemies of the people to even threats and assaults on journalists. Unfortunately, these things probably won’t be stopping soon, she said, so we will continue the work on those.

MINUTES

Tarquinio had two edits to the minutes – changing “delegate” to “Director” and “appointed board directors.”

For the April 22 meeting minutes, McCloskey had an update regarding the credit card agreement. It has been reviewed by legal and is now being enforced. In the June 14 meeting minutes, “January” needs to be changed to “June.”

Upon proper motion by Baker and second by Kopen Katcef, the board unanimously approved the minutes from the meetings on April 22, 2017 and June 14, 2017.

SDX FOUNDATION PRESIDENT’S REPORT

SDX Foundation President Robert Leger shared that the Foundation board would meet tomorrow and the main area of discussion will be to decide whether to fully fund the journalist on-call position that has been discussed for three years. He mentioned that the foundation’s investments are doing well. And as an informational item, the board will discuss Quill magazine. The publications committee of the foundation, with Chung and Muhammad of the SPJ board, came up with great ideas for making Quill better, including printing less often and putting more resources into its online presence in an effort to be more timely. That is more of a management issue than an action item, Leger explained.

Newberry asked what will be accepted from the SPJ board regarding Quill. Leger said Quill is the responsibility of the foundation in terms of funding it, and SPJ is the publisher. If the SPJ board did not want to reduce Quill to four issues, the foundation board would consider that. It welcomes input and of course will listen, Leger said.

SPJ STAFF REPORT

Skeel introduced Christine Cordial, the new programs coordinator who will be working on events and awards. He also introduced Anna Gutierrez the new communications coordinator. This position has been expanded to a two-year position. In other staffing updates, the education manager position should be filled before Skeel's departure Dec. 1. The development position was just posted and will probably take longer to fill, but the plan is to have someone in place by late October or early November. At the August development meeting in Indianapolis, it was stressed that this person should have experience in major gifts and working with individuals who are potential donors, Skeel said. Programming will become a responsibility of the education position. With Chris Vachon and Katie Hunt both leaving, the rest of staff will pick up where they left off in the meantime.

Skeel wanted to share before he leaves Dec. 1 some thoughts about a potential road map for the Foundation and SPJ working together. He encouraged them to continue to think as one entity and not two. As far as strategic planning goes, he encouraged SPJ board members to think about it holistically. He said that's not the only path, but it is a path he would recommend.

Newberry asked if the education position listed Quill editor as part of the job description. Skeel said that it did.

ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

Chapter Action

Puckey said there are no new chapters to activate. The board approved a recommendation to inactivate several pro and campus chapters.

- Pro: Milwaukee Pro, Inland Northwest Pro
- Campus: Boston U., Brockport College, Canisius College, Franklin Pierce U., Winthrop U., Kent State U., Wayne State College, Western Michigan U., DePauw U., Franklin College, Indiana U.-Purdue, U. of Wisconsin-Madison, U. of Central Missouri, U. of Missouri, Abilene Christian U., Baylor U., SMU, TCU, U. of Oklahoma, Utah State U., Seattle U., U. of Idaho, U. of Oregon, Cal State U.-Long Beach.

Puckey explained this does not mean these chapters will be inactive forever, as they can take steps to be active again. Kopen Katcef asked specifically about the University of Missouri and whether there has been any communications with them. Puckey said yes, there have been conversations. Some campus chapters struggle to keep them going and this is one of them. It was also mentioned that DePauw, where SPJ was founded, is on the list. Puckey said they are having trouble finding an adviser. Puckey said members of those chapters will still be members, they just won't have a chapter at their school. Radske said it is important for pro chapters to encourage student members to join, but should stress more the importance of having student chapters.

Upon proper motion by McCloskey and second by Tarquinio, the board approved unanimously inactivating all chapters in the memo.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

- a. Governance update – Walsh said she appreciates the work done to investigate how members are feeling about the proposal to reduce the number of members on the board. Newberry said there were two virtual meetings in August attended by 12-15 people each. There has not been a huge

outry of people trying to torpedo the effort, she said. The Press Club of Long Island chapter was the only chapter that offered a formal amendment. They would like a regional director to have a designated role on the new board. Emails were also exchanged with chapters and many are supportive. Newberry is optimistic that it will pass. Hall said the San Diego chapter had a discussion the night before and decided to endorse the proposal as written as long as there is a reporting mechanism between regional coordinators and the board.

In addition to the Long Island chapter, New Jersey and Fort Worth chapters also have concerns about regional directors losing their voice on the board. Hall asked why the group of regional directors couldn't be viewed as a regular committee. Walsh said the task force worked to draft position descriptions and organization charts that the new board could use to address those concerns.

There was discussion about how, logistically, the business meeting would be run and how the board would let the chapters and delegates know that these concerns were voiced and heard, but it still does not support Long Island's amendment and gave the reasons why.

Upon proper motion by Schotz and second by McCloskey, the board voted unanimously to create a more formal reporting structure for regional coordinators, but voted against supporting PCLI's proposed bylaws amendment.

Update on communications strategic plan – Walsh asked Royer to update the board on the plan's status. We have made a lot of progress since the San Diego meeting and have implemented most of the changes identified as priorities, she said. A few need some finishing touches, but that should happen by the end of the year. Royer and Baker have discussed the plan and communications goals for the coming year and will continue to build and implement the priorities identified in the plan. We will also work with Baker on communications for her goal of educating the public about journalism and the First Amendment.

- b. Quill Task Force recommendations – Fletcher said a survey was sent to members about Quill and of those who responded – 5 percent of the membership -- very strongly supports keeping Quill. Tarquinio added that respondents said they like receiving Quill in print, but would like for it to be better quality. Newberry said she feels the SPJ board has not had a rigorous conversation about Quill. She said it needs much more improvement and there are others who do a good job of collating good journalistic content and pumping it out every day. Quill is nowhere near competitive when it comes to analysis at the moment. Leger said it would be wonderful to turn out high quality, daily content, but it has not been a top priority to do that. It would cost even more money than the SDX Foundation is putting into it now. The task force's recommendations were to look at, realistically, what the resources are and what can we do to make it better. It may never reach the point of daily updates, but with the current print schedule, it makes it difficult to get stories online when they're still relevant. The board discussed the task force's recommendations of cutting Quill from six issues to four issues per year, with more frequent updates on the website; more in-depth, themed stories; limiting news about chapters and SPJ HQ to the website; and have students participate more. Skeel said once the new staff member is in place, they will receive feedback from leadership who studied Quill and carry out many of the recommended changes. Chung suggested the need for an editorial board. Walsh agreed that is something that could happen.
- c. Fundraising strategy session update – Walsh gave a recap of the Aug. 5 fundraising session in Indianapolis. Fundraising has traditionally been more of a priority for the SDX Foundation. SPJ hasn't said "let's go out and fundraise," but as board members we should always be thinking

about bringing in money and/or people who can help benefit this organization. Board members should know that's an expectation and be willing to be called upon to talk about SPJ and help raise funds. Schotz said Chris Vachon encourages everyone on the board to give. Even if it is not a lot, it is good to have 100 percent of the boards contributing to the SDX Foundation and SPJ. There was discussion about whether it should be made a policy or requirement of board members to donate. Skeel said the question is how far do you want to go with it, and asked if is money more important than time? He recommends encouraging donations and reminding board members that they are encouraged to donate, but he does not think it should be a requirement.

- d. Wiggin Donation – Skeel said SPJ received a \$52,000 donation from Hillary Wiggin, a member who joined in 1959. The request was to use the money however SPJ saw fit. Skeel recommended the board designate the money to the First Amendment Forever Fund, an endowed fund where it will grow. Baker said she agreed the FAFF is the absolute best place for this money. It will go a long way in meeting goals and building the fund so at some point we can do great things with it.

Upon proper motion by Fletcher and second by Baker, the board voted unanimously to put the donation in the FAFF.

- e. Spending policy – Walsh said the Finance Committee unanimously voted to move to this topic to the board. It did not make a recommendation, however.

The proposal is as follows:

Executive Committee approval is required to pay for any services costing \$3,000 or more unless the full board previously authorized the expenditure.

After discussion about the definition of “services” and the \$3,000 figure, Muhammad made the motion to accept the proposal, but raise the amount to \$5,000.

Upon proper motion by Muhammad and second by Tallent, the board voted 17-6 that: Executive Committee approval is required to pay for any services costing \$5,000 or more unless the full board previously authorized the expenditure.

Those voting against were Bill McCloskey, Rebecca Baker, Lynn Walsh, Paul Fletcher, Joe Radske and Rachel Wedding McClelland.

RECOGNITION OF RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS

Walsh recognized those members retiring off the board: Campus Representative Maggie Gottlieb; Campus Adviser At-Large Becky Tallent; Immediate Past President Paul Fletcher; At-Large Director Bill McCloskey and Region 12 Director Amanda Womac

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 4:18 p.m. PT the board went into executive session to talk about plans for hiring a new executive director. The board exited executive session at 5:24 p.m. PT.

MEETING ADJOURNED

Upon proper motion and second the meeting adjourned at 5:24 p.m. PT, Sept. 6, 2017.