

**MINUTES**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS**  
**Sept. 27, 2018**  
**Hilton Baltimore – Baltimore, Maryland**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

The meeting of the Board of Directors of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 9:10 a.m. EDT on Thursday, Sept. 27, during the Excellence in Journalism conference at the Baltimore Hilton in Baltimore, Md.

Those present were: President Rebecca Baker; President-elect Alex Tarquinio; Secretary-Treasurer Patti Newberry; Immediate Past President Lynn Walsh; Vice President of Campus Chapter Affairs Sue Kopen Katcef; Director At-Large Lauren Bartlett; Campus Adviser At-Large Leticia Steffen; Region 1 Director Jane Primerano; Region 2 Director Andy Schotz; Region 3 Director Michael Koretzky; Region 4 Director Tom McKee; Region 5 Director Michele Day; Region 6 Director Joe Radske; Region 7 Director Kari Williams; Region 8 Director Eddy Gallagher; Region 9 Director Ed Otte; Region 10 Director Donald Meyers; Region 11 Director Matt Hall and Region 12 Director Kelly Kissel.

Staff members present for the meeting were Executive Director Alison Bethel McKenzie, Journalist on Call Rod Hicks, Director of Development Larry Messing, Director of Finance and Administration Amy Wong and Director of Communications and Marketing Jennifer Royer.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Baker started the meeting with public comment. Stephanie Bluestein, Los Angeles chapter president urged the board not to solicit or accept conference sponsorships from the Koch Foundation or other such groups that have intentions of influencing news coverage or policies of journalism organizations. She also encouraged the board to refrain from entering into multi-year agreements with sponsors, work with other organizations or a campus host for the conference that would potentially be less expensive than a hotel venue. These changes would help lower the burden of raising money from sponsors, she said.

Ben Meyerson of the Chicago Headline Club said their chapter president brought up the issue of the Koch sponsorship before and they are disappointed Koch was allowed to sponsor the conference. He said some semblance of effort should be made to uphold the SPJ Code of Ethics when deciding on sponsorships and SPJ is not obligated to accept every sponsor. He said the Chicago chapter is not alone in its concern. The LA and San Diego chapters are concerned as well. They are heartened by the board's willingness to update its sponsorship policy, but they are concerned the board is not moving quickly enough. Taking money from political groups lessens SPJ's trustworthiness, Meyerson said. He hopes the board will move more quickly to resolve this.

Baker said the board has heard the suggestions and will take them very seriously.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Baker asked that someone move to go into Executive Session. Bartlett moved, McKee seconded. The board went into Executive Session at 9:15 a.m. The board exited Executive Session at 11:05 a.m.

### **SPJ PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Baker asked for a round of applause for Kopen Katcef and Schotz for their leadership in the money raised for the Capital Gazette. Baker, Bethel McKenzie and Schotz donated their stipends for a total of \$3,500 and to-date, \$6,500 was raised from selling I Back the First Amendment T-shirts. Baker said this was one of the best things SPJ has done this year and it is a wonderful thing the board and staff did. There is more to come and Baker thanked everyone for their help.

### **SDX PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

SDX Foundation President Robert Leger said the Foundation has nearly \$14 million in holdings and directed everyone to the full report in the board packet. He said the Foundation is excited to have Rod Hicks on board as the Journalist on Call and commended the event he organized Tuesday night in Baltimore. He reported that the Foundation would be voting on changing its name to the SPJ Foundation at its board meeting tomorrow. He said he has no idea how it will go, but we'll see what happens. It would take 2/3 of board votes for it to pass, and if it does pass, SPJ has 30 days to vote it down.

### **APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES**

Primerano said the July 21 minutes should be amended to show she was in attendance. Bartlett moved to approve minutes from the April and July board meetings. McKee seconded. Motion passed.

### **STAFF REPORT**

Bethel McKenzie introduced new staff Hicks, Wong and Messing. She thanked Baker adding it has been a fast and furious six months in which seven new employees were hired, two key association clients were lost, but she is grateful for constructive criticism and ideas for how we all can work together as a team. Bethel McKenzie and Wong gave an update on the fiscal year 2019 budget. Work is already happening to attract more association management clients, fundraising strategy is being developed and there is a focus on strengthening current partnerships and developing new ones. In addition to raising money for Capital Gazette families, Bethel McKenzie spoke on the Hill about violence toward journalists, the Journalist on Call was hired, she and Messing have been working on fundraising with various groups, Day of Giving was hosted in May and looking at doing another in November. Bethel McKenzie said she is working on fine-tuning communications with the new board and has been keeping the board informed on progress every step of the way, asking for advice and assistance when needed. She wanted to publicly thank the staff for their work on EIJ18. A vast majority of them came in 2/3 of the way into the planning and hustled and learned what to do. Staff members who were already in place were invaluable to her and the new staffers.

Wong reminded the board that the 2019 budget is in a deficit, but there has been \$65,000 in savings across SDX and SPJ, expenses were reduced by \$29,000. She is emailing the individual numbers for association management, awards revenue and membership, etc., to the board during the meeting.

Bethel McKenzie and Messing gave an update on projects (Google, Facebook, Scripps Leadership Institute). She said Walsh has agreed to oversee the Facebook project, which is a very similar arrangement to SPJ's partnership with Google. They trained several trainers in New York and Facebook is very happy with what we're doing. We met Facebook's goal of having 30 trainings and there is money left in the budget to do more trainings. There is a waiting list for Google trainings and Google recently gave us another project related to election coverage for midterms. The new Quill editor, Monica Williams, is managing the Google partnership. Messing said we submitted a new proposal to Scripps for a new Scripps Institute program. Bethel McKenzie met with Scripps and received good feedback on the proposed changes. More input is expected from Scripps and then a direction will be decided. Funding is not at risk at this point, Bethel McKenzie said.

Gallagher Newberry asked what the focus of the new Scripps Institute will be. Messing said it will likely be geared toward managers of student newsrooms and providing them with leadership skills. It will be taught right before they begin as student editors, so once they start in that role they will be strong leaders in their newsrooms. Gallagher Newberry followed up by asking why we selected that focus? And where in the organization will we now train new SPJ leaders? Bethel McKenzie said after several conversations with Scripps, they were interested in seeing a more dynamic focus for the program. They have a keen eye on students. The final program may be a hybrid of what was proposed and what we already do. Training for SPJ leaders could happen at regional conferences or we could find a way to train incoming leaders at the annual conference.

Schotz said during the RD caucus meeting this was discussed and they would like to do SPJ leader training at regional conferences. The question is, is there a curriculum they can work on for this training? Koretzky asked if a comparative analysis has been done of other college/university trainings that other groups such as CMA or ACP might already be doing? Messing said the goal would be to take a small program and expand it to as diverse an audience as possible, taking it to large campuses, smaller schools and HBCUs. A survey will be given to Scripps graduates of the last five years or so to get their feedback on the program and make sure it is as good as it can be.

Bethel McKenzie said each student would be matched with a high-ranking mentor from their town and that mentor would follow the student through an entire year of leading their staff. They would come to EIJ for a final meeting, but hopefully the mentor/mentee relationship will continue after that. Otte asked if this would be in place for regionals in April? Bethel McKenzie said that's the goal. There is going to be another meeting with Scripps and the goal is to begin the new program in early spring. Hall said the survey will have to go out soon. Messing said the survey will go out within two weeks of the end of EIJ (mid-October).

Hicks gave the Journalist on Call report. The primary role is for him to get in front of the public, stress the importance of a free press and help them learn how to navigate the news every day. He will also serve as a mediator between the press and the public. Explaining to news organizations why people don't trust them and possibly make suggestions for helping them gain the public's trust. He is working on projects that will help do that. We had a town hall meeting Tuesday in Baltimore, which is one example of how we can get in front of the public and talk about the issues of trust in the media. He also went to Annapolis after the Capital Gazette shooting. He attended two vigils and spoke briefly with Capital Gazette employee Phil Davis and the chaplain from the local sheriff's department. In speaking with people in Annapolis he heard what was maybe expected: some trust the media and some don't, but they do trust the Capital Gazette. We've talked a lot about how local media is trusted more than national media. Rod has written a couple of pieces about the Capital Gazette and there is more news organizations can be doing to gain trust. He served on a panel at the NABJ conference about restoring trust in media and he is working on a project that will bring news literacy to communities across the country, to help people learn how to navigate all the information that is out there. His big project will be where we go into a community and stick with them for a while – at least a year – talk about issues, hearing from them about questions they have about what press does, see if after a year's time if the sessions have made a difference on how they view news and understand the role we have in democracy.

Baker asked if we are partnering with the News Literacy Project and Hicks said yes. Koretzky asked what percentage of his time does he think will be spent helping journalists and helping the public. Hicks said most of the time will be spent focusing on the public, so probably 80-20 or 70-30 percent. Gallagher Newberry asked who was in the audience for the Tuesday night town hall? Hicks said the town hall was a little different than probably most others he'll be doing. It was by invitation and was a cross section of people – clergy, activists, business owners, social programs and the other half was journalists. McClelland said it will be important to have a good measure of impact so he can quantify the results. Hicks agreed. Baker thanked Hicks for everything he's done so far.

### **ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Bethel McKenzie said we lost two association management clients and are working diligently to recruit new clients. A packet was sent to one organization that is very interested and there are two others that may be interested. We are also focusing on maintaining the great relationships we have with the three associations we currently work for.

Barlett thanked members of the Chapter Finance Rules task force Schotz, Otte, Koretzky and Kissell. She explained that after the spring board meeting where the board adopted new regional rules, the change in board structure and the regional directors coming off the board, they took the best practices from the 2013 task force and beta tested them with chapters, made changes and took them to chapters and RDs a second time. The proposed new rules are in the board packet (the campus chapter report was inadvertently left out).

Bartlett moved that the board approve the new rules. Schotz seconded. Hall commented that at the RD caucus, it was discussed that the \$200 limit should be raised to \$500. Bartlett said the task force believes \$500 is too high a threshold. If expenses above \$200 are handled in the budget, they don't need to be approved separately.

Baker abstained. Gallagher voted against. Motion passed.

The board then voted on an amendment to new rules to regional funds. The requirement of transparency was left in, but leaves it up to each region on which method to use. Bartlett made a motion, Schotz seconded. Motion passed.

Messing said the First Amendment Forever Fund was first introduced four years ago, and is now ready to be used. Dave Cuillier said we can spend about \$10,000 per year from the fund. He said hopefully after EIJ we can get a nimble committee together to submit proposals and generate more funds, so in 20 years it will be built up and can do even more. Messing said if people see it being used, others will want to contribute to it, too. Koretzky asked who approves the use of the funds? Cuillier said under \$5,000 the committee can approve. Larger requests will go to the full SPJ board. Committee includes LDF Committee Chair Hagit Limor, FOI Committee Chair Danielle McLean, Cuillier, Messing and some outside folks will likely also be brought in. The committee will also coordinate with other groups such as NFOIC and First Look Media to be more effective.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

There were not questions or comments regarding committee reports.

### **RECOGNITION OF DEPARTING BOARD MEMBERS**

Baker recognized Lynn Walsh, Rachel McClelland, Leticia Steffens, Hayley Harding, Rahim Chagani, Jane Primerano, Tom McKee, Michele Day, Kari Williams, Eddy Gallagher and Ed Otte.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Bartlett requested a short public discussion about the task force on sponsorship. Tarquinio explained that the president appoints task forces. When the issue came up it was too late to address EIJ18 sponsorships, so the task force has been created and will begin work Sunday for guidelines that will be in effect for EIJ19. We will have discussions with our EIJ partners as much as possible because we produce EIJ together. Tarquinio said she has scheduled full year of board meetings for next year's board. Next one is a virtual zoom meeting on Dec. 1. Gallagher Newberry is chairing the task force and she will give an update at the Dec. 1 meeting.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Meyers moved to adjourn. Bartlett seconded. Upon proper motion and second the meeting was adjourned at 12:01 p.m. EDT.