

MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
SUNDAY, SEPT. 8, 2019
SAN ANTONIO GRAND HYATT – SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

DRAFT

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m. CDT. Members present: President Patricia Gallagher Newberry; President-elect Matt Hall; Secretary-Treasurer Rebecca Aguilar; directors at-large Lauren Bartlett, Tess Fox, Mike Reilly, Yvette Walker. Also present: SPJ communications director Jennifer Royer, SPJ attorney Mark Bailen, Strategic Planning Task Force chair Victor Hernandez and other SPJ members and staff members.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW AND RETURNING BOARD MEMBERS

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF STAFF

2019-20 GOALS

Newberry said her goals for the coming year don't involve any new initiatives or big endeavors, but focusing on what we're doing now, which is serious and important. She recognized that the board has transitioned from 23 members to 18 and now, to a board of seven plus two appointees to be named. The smaller board will be more strategic – thinker bees instead of worker bees. Newberry said she tends to be very collaborative and hopes everyone can be civil, collegial and work together to build consensus and prevent discord from the previous year. She plans to reach out to members, asking them to do more of the heavy lifting, and bring everyone together as we try to accomplish our goals.

Newberry said Talbott Talent was interviewing a couple candidates for the executive director position this week. Talbott would like to stay on as interim ED and Newberry said that would be discussed in executive session.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE REPORT

She referred to the Strategic Planning Task Force's presentation that had already been presented three other times at EIJ. She referred everyone to the slide deck online and to the packet for complete survey results, timelines, etc.

Hernandez said in large, the task force has received support and appreciation for the work that has happened so far. There is a lot of intrigue and desire to potentially do more with the survey and reach younger members. There was concern about breakdown of communications between members and leaders, lack of understanding of SPJ's identity and lack of celebrating what SPJ does very well. EIJ19 concludes Phase 1 of the project and begins Phase 2. Matt Hall will be the new task force chair.

Newberry said she thinks SPJ has done exceptionally well in the years she has been on the board in terms of advocacy and issues more statements and reacting more quickly. She hopes to continue that

and work with the communications director on that. She won't be able to do as many public appearances as Immediate Past President J. Alex Tarquinio, so she will be calling on board members and chapter leaders to do appearances and media interviews.

RATIFICATION OF SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS FOUNDATION BOARD ELECTIONS

Reilley made a motion to ratify Newberry and Hall as SPJ Foundation Board members. Newberry said because Andy Schotz did not win his race, she needs to follow up on that appointment. Bartlett pointed out that at least two additional people can be appointed per the new bylaws. Fox recommended that at least one be under the age of 35. Newberry said she needs a chance to speak with Schotz and consider that people not on the SPJ board can be invited to serve on the Foundation Board.

APPOINTMENTS

COMMITTEES

Membership Committee – Colin Devries will continue to be Membership Committee Chair. He discussed the summer membership drive which resulted in 220 new members joining SPJ (72 more than in that same timeframe last year). He wants to do it again and time it better for students.

Jane Primerano will be Regional Coordinator Chair; Rebecca Aguilar continues as Diversity Committee chair; Sue Kopen Katcef chairs Awards and Honors Committee; Bob Becker continues as Bylaws Committee chair; Paul Fletcher is FOI chair; Hagit Limor continues as LDF chair; Aguilar will probably also chair Finance Committee since she is the board secretary-treasurer; Lynn Walsh continues as Ethics chair; J. Alex Tarquinio will be Nominations Committee chair; Mike Savino is considering staying on as Resolutions Committee chair; Leticia Steffen is chair of the Journalism Education committee and Tess Fox is chair of the Gen J committee.

A committee is also being formed that will support EIJ engagement. The committee will look at programming, etc., as we work out SPJ's relationship with RTDNA. Newberry said having someone from the DC Pro chapter will be a key person to have on that committee. She plans to talk with Hall about how to compose the committee. There was discussion about inviting well-known political figures to speak at EIJ20 and how to navigate that and potentially paying for secret service, etc. Newberry said it is worth exploring and pricing it out.

SPJ FOUNDATION BOARD

SPJ BOARD

There are two appointments that need to be made to the SPJ Board of Directors. Newberry said we need to look at our needs when making those appointments. Where are the holes in our areas of expertise? Now that Regional Coordinators are freed from their board responsibilities they can focus on their chapters and unaffiliated members. Newberry passed around a Board Organizational Chart handout showing lines of communication between the board and membership constituencies.

It is the second year for the two appointed positions. Victor Hernandez and Ivette Davila Richards were the two appointed members for the past year. Newberry said it is important to think about what we need in the short term and who can bring that skillset to the board. Walker pointed out that many of the current board members are university affiliated and suggested considering full-time or part-time journalists, including freelancers, working in the industry. Bartlett suggested a strong background in strategic planning. Hall added that diversity should be top of mind.

Newberry discussed partnerships and future sites for EIJ. She said SPJ's partnerships are very important and they are on her radar and she has been thinking about how we work with them. EIJ20 will be with RTDNA in Washington, D.C. Focusing on New Orleans in 2021, considering EIJ22 at the April board meeting and whether to begin considering EIJ23. Bartlett and Fox recommended looking at locations on the West coast or in the Mountain Time Zone.

There was discussion about SPJ's job board and making it more robust and hardship membership rate, which DeVries said is not very well known – even by the membership committee.

Bartlett said the Strategic Planning Task Force should consider these types of things going forward. Who are we and what are our main areas of focus going to be?

Newberry discussed SPJ's current job board contract with Boxwood and suggested the jobs section of Leads go to a more in-depth job search page. Reilley reminded everyone that the Journalist's Toolbox has links to journalism jobs searches.

Reilley made a motion to amend the agenda to add two items – Discussion of Blackbaud moving forward and the options needed to discuss related to that; and a longer-term discussion of limits of presidential powers moving forward.

Newberry said those would be discussed in executive session.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Kathryn Foxhall briefed the board on SPJ's work regarding public information officers and the cultural shift in prohibiting journalists from speaking to officials without first going through a public relations office. She referred to the resolution on the issue that delegates passed in the Closing Business Meeting the day before. She thinks SPJ and the FOI Committee should write a letter to congress about the issue and asked that SPJ commit to talk about the issue every chance it gets when the topic is about the free press.

Colin DeVries said he felt totally disrespected during the Closing Business Meeting when delegates voted to table a couple of resolutions regarding conference sponsorships. He said members of his own committee (membership) and many others are upset about the sponsorship feedback. He said SPJ leaders keep saying conference sponsorships aren't a big deal, but he thinks it is a silo of leadership. Members of SPJ's largest chapters are really upset, he said. People who could not be delegates wanted to start a debate about it, but it was pushed aside and swept under the rug. He said he was ready to walk into the meeting today and resign, but he said hearing from the Fellows of the Society at the President's Banquet was reassuring to him, especially when Terry Anderson said journalism is not to be treated as a business, but as a public trust. DeVries said he wants journalists to know we are still fighting for them every day and he's still going to do as much as he can and however he can, he said.

Newberry responded by reminding him that delegates passed a measure to create a sponsorship task force that will be populated primarily by non-board members to look at the issue. She thanked DeVries for his thoughts on that. Hall also thanked DeVries for continuing as chair of the membership committee and said he knew how emotional and difficult it has been for him. He also added that the Strategic Planning Task Force will study the delegate system in place and whether it needs to change.

Andy Schotz said that during the previous board meeting the Greater Charlotte Chapter was discussed. The treasurer of that chapter contacted headquarters and said the chapter had about \$700 and wanted to know what the procedures are for handing over the money. He said it could be added to the general fund, or the board could have a different preference.

Schotz also said the Awards Committee discussed during its meeting changes to the contests, but one thing they would like to do is name the podcast category after John Ensslin.

Schotz then said while he doesn't agree with all the ideas DeVries discussed, he respects his passion on the issue and feels bad that DeVries feels disrespected. We said we hashed it out but we didn't, Schotz said. It could get very messy, but it needs to be done or time will be spent on it every year.

Newberry said she understands the passion related to this and assured them the task force will be created with due haste and will include people with differing points of view.

Robert Elder, president of the Chicago Headline Club, said his chapter was disappointed it wasn't discussed more in the closing business meeting. He said it is a huge issue that is impacting the membership and the way it went in the business session felt orchestrated and not in the spirit of this organization.

In a separate issue, Elder said his chapter had six delegates present and three did not get ballots emailed to them for the election. He is wondering how many people didn't get ballots and didn't know.

Hilary Niles of the Freelance Community thanked Newberry, Tarquinio, Larry Messing and Basharat Saleem for their quick response in creating a space for the freelance corner at EIJ. It was successful and she said it couldn't have been done without their support. The freelance constituency is important and a growth opportunity within SPJ, she said, so more resources need to be created for them so they can work to keep journalism afloat.

Hall made a motion to get a report from staff detailing this year's elections. Bartlett seconded. Motion passed.

Reilley said in April the board passed a motion unanimously that we would not move forward with Blackbaud and sign the contract until Billy O'Keefe had time to log in and look at the system and whether it would work with other systems we have in place. The board did not know the contract had already been signed.

Reilley made a motion and Bartlett seconded for the Blackbaud contract to be forwarded to the SPJ Board by EOB on Thursday, Sept. 12, for review of out clause, etc. And for Billy O'Keefe to have hands-on work with Blackbaud by Monday, Sept. 16, as well as the ability to directly ask questions to Blackbaud staff. The board asks for a recommendation from Billy, Larry and Caroline by Oct. 1 EOB. Motion passed.

Reilley then moved the discussion to limiting the SPJ president in being able to self-appoint to the interim executive director position. He said it probably isn't good to be in another situation where we go for months without an executive director or interim, or for the president to be able to self-appoint.

Newberry said she doesn't have the ability or desire to take on that role if SPJ finds itself in the position of not having an ED, and she doesn't think it is an appropriate role for the president.

Immediate Past President J. Alex Tarquinio, who was in the audience, explained that the bylaws allowed for it and the first person she spoke with about it was SPJ legal counsel Mark Bailen. Bylaws say president is chief executive of SPJ and ED reports to president, so they agreed it made sense for Tarquinio to fill that role. Bailen even asked Tarquinio if she could relocate to Indianapolis for a month or so, to which she answered no. She called a meeting of the executive committee and the committee decide it could not afford higher priced services and agreed that she would fill in as interim ED.

Bailen said it was an unusual circumstance and that usually someone on staff would step into that role. Without having an associate executive director to do that, it was decided Tarquinio would take that role.

Reilley said he would like for a working group to possibly review a bylaws change.

Bartlett said it is ideal if there is a qualified staff member who can fill that role if it happens again. That structure has worked in the past.

Hall said he also pledges that he would not want to step into the interim ED role and it is a granular issue that won't happen for at least the next two years.

Reilley made a motion to have the Bylaws Committee review the existing bylaw that says the president is the chief executive. Bartlett seconded. Hall and Walker opposed. Reilley withdrew the motion and it was tabled. He said he would draft something for the next meeting.

Bartlett made a motion to disband the Charlotte, North Carolina chapter. Fox seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The board voted at 11:51 a.m. CDT to enter executive session to discuss EIJ contractual business and board orientation. Motion: Reilley. Second: Walker. Vote: unanimous. The board voted at 1:14 p.m. CDT to exit executive session. Motion: Bartlett. Second: Fox. Vote: unanimous.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Reilley said that he was continuing for the second year of his term to be a Google News Initiative trainer through SPJ and that he would recuse himself from votes or serious discussion about the Google program.

ADJOURNMENT

The board voted to adjourn at 1:17 p.m. CDT. Motion: Bartlett. Second: Hall. Vote: unanimous.