

MINUTES

Society of Professional Journalists

Board of Directors Meeting

Date: Sept. 26, 2020
Time: Noon, EDT

CALL TO ORDER

President Matthew T. Hall called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m. EDT

ROLL CALL

Secretary-treasurer Ivette Davila Richards called roll. In addition to Hall and Davila Richards, those present were: President-elect Rebecca Aguilar; Directors At-Large Lauren Bartlett, Claire Regan, Yvette Walker, Rafael Olmeda, Taylor Mirfendereski and Erica Carbajal.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Bartlett made a motion to approve the Sept. 9 meeting minutes. Aguilar seconded. Motion passed.

ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION

Hall announced the board would go into executive session for duty of care training by legal counsel and to discuss a hiring issue. Bartlett made a motion to enter executive session. Aguilar seconded. Board entered executive session at 12:07 p.m.

EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION

The board exited executive session at 1:05 p.m.

Bartlett made a motion to approve the contract discussed in executive session. Aguilar seconded. Motion passed.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Shertzer reported he was pleased with how SPJ2020 turned out and that he would call it a success for SPJ. Staff is debriefing about it, taking surveys and receiving feedback as well.

Bartlett asked for an update on the future conference sites discussion from the Sept. 5 meeting. Shertzer said he should have more details in about another month.

Shertzer said overall the elections went well, especially after the tech issues from last year. Aguilar referenced the Nominations Committee report and said the committee suggests SPJ hire an independent task force to make the elections process more fair and transparent. The board discussed elections and the public was able to weigh in as well.

FOUNDATION REPORT

SPJ Foundation Board President Irwin Gratz explained how the SPJ and SPJ Foundation boards work together. While the foundation funds many of SPJ's educational efforts, such as Quill and convention, the foundation makes sure the money it raises is used to educate journalists and the public and follows the IRS's rules for 501c3s. SPJ is a 501c6. He explained that four SPJ board members serve on the Foundation board and the SPJ board must ratify the elections of the foundation board. He also explained that the Foundation board adopted a new policy that 50 percent of the money they give in grants must go to outside groups, but as much as 50 percent can go to SPJ.

SPJ SPONSORSHIP POLICY

The final version of the sponsorship policy which was approved by delegates during the annual conference was presented to the board for its approval. Bartlett made a motion to approve the policy. Davila Richards seconded the motion. Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Israel Balderas said he has noticed on his campus but also across the country that college newsrooms are doing a great job holding universities accountable for COVID testing, budget questions, etc. He would like to have a discussion about how to strengthen college newsrooms and show student journalists and advisers that we continue to support them. Hall said we SPJ is trying over the next year to jump start 10 collegiate chapters, including some at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic-serving institutions.

Hazel Becker said freelancers appreciated a lot of the sessions at SPJ2020, not only the ones produced by the Freelance Community. She also noted the work toward offering an enhanced membership card and stressed that it is needed, especially for freelancers. And she applauded SPJ creating the race and gender hotline and working with the Trans Journalists Association. Hall added that the hotline is already off to a good start, and the thoughtful questions coming in show a real desire and need for that service.

APPOINTMENT PROCESS FOR OPEN POSITIONS

Hall referred to the committee chair roster in the board packet and said this year's committee chairs are a passionate, experienced, diverse group of people. He is proud to say it includes a majority of women, journalists of color and members of the LBGTQ community as well. He noted the Diversity Committee added Inclusion to its name, so it is now the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. A regional coordinator for Region 7 is also still needed, so Hall asked board members to encourage anyone who may be interested to contact him. He also asked for names to be submitted for the next two board appointees, who will replace Carbajal and Mirfendereski. He also received more than 100 responses to the email calling for members to serve on committees. There is not room for everyone, but Hall said he would email everyone back.

Aguilar made a motion to approve the four SPJ board members being appointed to the Foundation board. Olmeda seconded. Motion passed.

Bartlett made a motion to ratify the full SPJ Foundation Board of Directors roster. Walker seconded. Motion passed.

REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN

Shertzer reviewed the strategic plan and explained it would be used to make decisions for the organization moving forward. It would be reviewed annual to see if it is still the path the organization wants to take. He said if we accomplish what is in the 2021 plan, SPJ will emerge as a force for journalism and a leading, if not the leading, journalism organization.

Bartlett made the motion to support the 2021 plan. Mirfendereski seconded. Motion passed.

GOAL-SETTING SESSION

Hall started by apologizing to women on behalf of the organization because, on Nov. 15, 1969, delegates finally admitted women by a voice vote done at an SPJ meeting held in San Diego, where Hall lives. He said the vote was 75 in favor and 25 opposed, so in 1969, one out of four SPJ members thought women shouldn't be part of the organization. He is the 104th president of SPJ and only 12 women have been presidents during that time. He said that ratio is a problem for the organization. He also apologized to journalists of color who for too long were not part of the organization. He stressed that diversity of age, gender, race, ethnicity, geography is important and SPJ will be stronger if it reflects that diversity. Board members thanked Hall for his comments. Hall then had each board member state a goal they would like to see accomplished by SPJ in the coming year.

MEETING AND EVENTS CALENDAR

Hall said all board meetings have been set and will be conducted via Zoom between now and September 2021. The next SPJ conference is set for Sept. 3-5 in New Orleans.

ADJOURNMENT

Bartlett made a motion to adjourn. Davila Richards seconded. Meeting adjourned at 3:09 p.m. EDT.