

MINUTES
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE
3 p.m. EST
Nov. 21, 2020

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 p.m. by President Matthew T. Hall.

ROLL CALL

Those present were Hall; Rebecca Aguilar, president-elect; Ivette Davila-Richards, secretary-treasurer, Lauren Bartlett, director at-large; Jerry McCormick, director at-large; Rafael Olmeda, director at-large; Claire Regan, director at-large; Bey-Ling Sha, director at-large; Yvette Walker, director at-large. Also present were Robert Becker, parliamentarian, John Shertzler, executive director and Jake Koenig, controller.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Bartlett made a motion to approve the minutes from the Sept. 26 and Oct. 31 meetings. Walker seconded. Motion passed. Sha and McCormick abstained since they were not members of the board when those minutes were taken.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Hall introduced new board members Bey-Ling Sha and Jerry McCormick. He said the first student summit was a success and Dave Jorgenson, The Washington Post TikTok Guy, was a great featured speaker. Hall asked that everyone share the news of SPJ efforts on Giving Tuesday, Dec. 3, and to give themselves if they have the means to do so. Hall asked the board members to introduce themselves, then Shertzler introduced himself and other staff on the call. Sha and McCormick introduced themselves.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Savino, president of the Connecticut Pro Chapter, expressed his concerns about the Region 1 coordinator, saying she was sworn in and then immediately asked for three chapter presidents in the region to resign. She has accused journalists of stealing her work, she has used social media to go against SPJ's stance that anyone can be a journalist, and she has touted her position as an RC and is using the SPJ logo to tout her position. Savino asked that the board take action and take the concerns seriously, since she has been in the position for two months, but there are numerous escalating problems already.

Andy Schotz of the awards committee brought attention to changes and updates being made to awards, including the addition of a COVID category. He asked for volunteer judges, adding that judges do not have to be SPJ members. Judging occurs in groups and Schotz said there is a good process in place and it is not a big time commitment.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

- a. APPROVAL OF 2021 BUDGET
- b. Q3 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Hall said thanks to staff and also, sadly, the pandemic, we have put a situation to good use and can pass a balanced budget. Shertzer explained the budget is a management tool, or road map, of the Society's finances. He briefly reviewed the budget. Koenig reviewed the Q3 financials. Bartlett made a motion to approve the budget. Davila Richards seconded. Motion passed.

2022 CONVENTION SITE DISCUSSION

Hall asked to splinter conversation to discuss bids in executive session. Bartlett made motion to move some discussion to executive session. Olmeda seconded. Motion passed. Shertzer discussed working with a consultant and the planning of the next conference, scheduled for September in New Orleans.

OUTREACH TO NEW WHITE HOUSE ADMINISTRATION (DISCUSSION)

Hall said as the Biden administration transitions to the White House, SPJ has a unique opportunity in coordination with other journalism organizations to communicate what we hope to hear from the new administration and how we can influence discussions surrounding issues at the federal level such as journalists at the border, law enforcement and protests, whistleblowers, FOI requests, etc. Hall said the Obama administration was difficult too, it is not just the Trump administration. And we did meet a few years ago with the Obama administration.

Sha asked about FOI committee report and whether the highlighted Press the Flesh program is really a lobbying program because that requires journalists to register as lobbyists, or do we really mean advocacy? She also questioned if Press the Flesh is really the best name for the program in the current Me Too era.

Region 3 director Michael Koretzky explained that the program hired a lobbyist to teach journalists how to lobby their legislators. He added there are chapters that actually want to register as lobbyists and want to know if they wanted to have a lobbyist, how would they do that.

Savino said it is his understanding that journalists can do lobbying as long as it is done ethically and within the Code of Ethics. If journalists aren't advocating for FOI, press freedom, freedom of information, it will be difficult getting others to do it for us, he said.

Aguilar said she agrees with Sha on the name being inappropriate.

They returned to the convention site discussion and Shertzer introduced consultant Katie Riggs. Shertzer went through the presentation about SPJ22, SPJ23 and SPJ24. They discussed having the conference in Washington, D.C., for multiple years and the possibility of asking other groups to join us.

Bartlett made a motion to explore partnerships for Washington, D.C., in 2022 and evaluate being in DC regularly thereafter. Sha seconded the motion. Walker asked for a friendly amendment to add that we will explore partnerships with other affinity groups. Bartlett said she did not see the motion being exclusive of other groups, but she is open to the friendly amendment. Sha seconded. Motion passed.

IMPEXIIUM MEMBER DATABASE LAUNCH (DISCUSSION)

Shertzer explained the migration to Impexium for new board members. He said Monday we should be ready to send logins to members and have them set up their profiles in the new member database.

STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW AND PREPARATION FOR 2021 (DISCUSSION)

Hall shared the strategic plan and core four. He said we will hit the ground running in January and even earlier on advocacy, diversity, calling more attention to the Code of Ethics and helping campus chapters.

ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION

Bartlett made a motion to go into executive session. Walker seconded. Board entered executive session at X:XX p.m. EST to discuss the executive director evaluation and personnel matters.

EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION

The board exited executive session at X:XX p.m. EST.

ADJOURNMENT

Bartlett made a motion to adjourn. Aguilar seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m. EST.