



**MINUTES**  
**SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

DATE: MARCH 20, 2021

TIME: NOON EDT

**Meeting Called to Order**

President Matthew T. Hall called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m. EDT.

**Roll Call**

Ivette Davila Richards called roll. Those present were: Hall, Rebecca Aguilar, Ivette Davila-Richards, Lauren Bartlett, Rafael Olmeda, Claire Regan and Bey-Ling Sha. McCormick and Walker were not present.

Hall greeted the attendees and explained that this meeting is singularly focused on the strategic plan, to assess how we're doing.

**Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**Overview of SPJ's Strategic Framework**

Hall said there has been a lot of progress made regarding the strategic plan and there is still a lot to do. This is a foundational year and there are a lot of initiatives underway, including a focus on diversity and campus life. A task force was formed to identify and help start 10 new campus chapters, including a focus on HBCU and Hispanic-serving institutions of higher education. The new Student Trustee Council has been created. Former journalist on call Rod Hicks is refocusing

his efforts on ethics with the support of Craig Newmark. And lastly Hall said this is a time and year for us all to stick together as journalists, with SPJ and other groups, especially AAJA and AAPI journalists in particular after the recent events. He thanked everyone on the board, in SPJ and in the country for supporting journalists this week and encouraged them to continue every week.

### **Progress Review on SPJ's Core Four and Annual Plan**

Shertzer reviewed the Core Four of the Strategic Plan and called on staff members and leaders to share details. The Core Four pillars for the organization are aspirational and the organization is moving in the direction of these four identifying statements, Shertzer said. Committee have been empowered to give updates, staff will give updates and the board will contribute thoughts and suggestions. There can be overlap at times, so he stressed the importance of paying attention to what others are working on so we are working efficiently toward the goals we want to achieve. He also explained that while staff is deployed to help carry out goals of the strategic plan, they also have daily and yearly activities to carry out which may not be in the strategic plan.

#### **Pillar 1: Champions for Journalists**

Updates were given on awards and education by Lou Harry, Andy Schotz and Karyn Nishimura Sneath.

Sneath gave updates on SPJ21 convention programming, Student Leadership Institute, Future Leaders Academy and Journalism Education Committee activities.

Schotz and Harry gave updates on Mark of Excellence and Sigma Delta Chi Awards including new categories and pointing out that entries are up this year from last year.

Shertzer added that staff training on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is being planned with the idea that once staff is trained, then it will permeate the organization. Policies for inclusivity will be reviewed and there may be more to come from that goal.

Other things being planned include launching three new communities, a new and improved J-Store and starting a podcast.

#### **Pillar 2: Fighters for the First Amendment**

FOI Committee Chair Haisten Willis submitted the committee's report and committee member Michael Savino gave the report. The committee focused on algorithmic transparency for Sunshine Week and hosted a forum on Thursday that was educational for both journalists and the public. The committee also announced the Black Hole Award winner.

Savino added that discussions are happening about the Press for the First program which provides advocacy and lobbying training. And there is a cost/benefit analysis occurring regarding a Washington, D.C.-based advocacy team.

Hall added that Shertzer created a Past Presidents Council that has been discussing advocacy in D.C. The council is valuable in its institutional knowledge, knowing what SPJ has done and what we can do.

### **Pillar 3: Stewards of Ethical Journalism**

Shertzer called on Rod Hicks to give an Ethics Response Program update. Hicks said he will likely begin interviews for an ethics and diversity assistant in the coming week. There were 32 applicants for the position. He said there will be a big focus on getting newsrooms and journalists in general to think more about diversity and the reasons why it is important. He said the Race and Gender Hotline has been receiving two or three questions per week, but there were five or six this week. Most of the questions are about race, but a couple this week were about gender.

Shertzer said the Ethics Committee is considering pushing Ethics Week to later in the year because April is so busy. The committee hasn't chosen a date yet, but they will select one soon.

### **Pillar 4: Producers of Journalism's Future**

Updates were given on the Campus Task Force, Membership Committee and Diversity Committee. The campus task force is focused on forming three new student chapters in 2021, and is especially looking at HBCUs and Hispanic-serving institutions. Membership Committee Chair Emily Bloch discussed the Paper Money program which helps student news outlets improve their ad revenue. She said the program could dovetail with AACP and become a membership perk for those who join SPJ.

### **Impexium and Database Migration Update**

Shertzer asked Caroline Escobar and Billy O'Keefe to give an update on Impexium and the database migration. There are still things that are in progress, they said, and that was expected. They have received great feedback and want to know if something isn't working as expected so they can take that feedback and make improvements.

Hall said it has been a tough week, but it is good to be inspired and see that SPJ is receptive to people's concerns and responsive to people's questions. He thanked everyone for doing so much work and thanked each staff member by name. Shertzer said it is easy for staff to do their work when they have a board like this one. With so much happening, he said it is a good time to be an SPJ member for sure.

### **Adjournment**

Olmeda made a motion to adjourn. Aguilar seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned at 2:13 p.m. EDT.