



MEETING MINUTES
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

DATE: SEPT. 2, 2021
TIME: 11 A.M. EDT

Meeting Called to Order

SPJ National President Matthew T. Hall called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m. EDT, with journalists in mind, including those covering the California wildfires, Hurricane Ida in New Orleans, flooding in the northeast and elsewhere. He urged all journalists to keep in mind, while they're covering school board meetings, city hall, etc., that they are covering these things so people can better understand what is happening in the world around them.

Roll Call

Secretary-treasurer Ivette Davila Richards called roll. Those present were: Hall, Davila-Richards, Rebecca Aguilar, Lauren Bartlett, Jerry McCormick, Rafael Olmeda, Claire Regan, Bey-Ling Sha and Yvette Walker. Staff present were John Shertzer, executive director; Jennifer Royer, director of communications and marketing and Jake Koenig, controller.

Approval of Minutes

Bartlett made a motion to approve the minutes from the Aug. 21, 2021 meeting. Walker seconded. Olmeda said he would like to add a friendly amendment regarding the bylaws amendments and SPJ21. He expressed the position that chapters acted within their rights and that everything Hall did was within his right as an SPJ member, a board member and president. Olmeda said the board members who voted for an all virtual conference were vindicated in their expectation that it was too soon to meet again in person. Bartlett said she would like to also add a friendly amendment that those who voted in favor of a virtual conference were not vindicated because canceling that early would have cost SPJ \$150,000. The right decision was to handle it as it was handled, because the conference ended up being canceled anyway and SPJ did not have to pay a penalty. In addition, Regan requested an e be added to the end of her first name in the minutes. Bartlett and Walker accepted the friendly amendments. Motion passed.

Public Comment Period

Hazel Becker of the freelance community said the freelance corner had to be created outside the conference app and populated with resources for freelancers. Leaders of the Freelance Community have worked so hard to get done what needed to get done and she wanted to say she appreciates them.

Andrew Seaman said as a member, he appreciates the great year Matt Hall has had as president and he thanked Hall and staff for rolling with the changes to conference and everything else they have had to deal with this year.

President's Report

Hall said the board met 12 times and not once in person, which is amazing. He said it was an emotional year and he wants to thank all the board members, committee and community members, chapter leaders and members, every SPJ member, every journalist around the world their work this year. He thanked staff by name for keeping the ship going all year.

Executive Director's Report

Shertzer said the board dealt with unprecedented challenges this year. It was very difficult, but he is impressed that the organization is stronger than it was a year ago. Events pivoted, but the decisions that were made had a positive impact on the organization, he said. He quoted the book Governance as Leadership, "Board members need to come prepared, rise to the occasion, work diligently as a group and expect to be intellectually taxed by complex and consequential questions." He thanked Sha and McCormick who are retiring off the board, and said he looks forward to tapping into the wisdom of Bartlett and Walker for years to come. And to those coming back to the board, he said, "let's get to work." He said he expected SPJ21 to go very well. A lot of registration numbers were added in the last week, the pre-conference session the night before was well done and attended. He said our hearts go out to our friends in New Orleans and we feel bad that we are not bringing funds into the city because of COVID and now Hurricane Ida.

Treasurer's Report

Jake Koenig summarized the 6-month financial report and answered questions. He said the finances are much better than they were at the end of 2020. Hall thanked both Koenig and Shertzer for their handling of the finances in a difficult time.

Committee and Community Reports

Hall referred to many of the reports being in the board packed and thanked everyone who continued or stepped into their role at a difficult time and did incredible work. The members and leaders did amazing work through the year on a wide range of subjects.

Schotz spoke briefly about the Awards Committee, saying after the awards are given out each year, the committee and staff decompress and then begin a deep dive in looking at all our contests from top to bottom. It was a thorny year, he said, between COVID, adding new categories, finding more judges who had a lot to learn very quickly. The next awards season will begin again in November.

Becker said the Bylaws Committee's work has to be done before July 1 so nothing new has happened since the last board meeting. He reminded everyone that the committee's meetings are open to the public.

Aguilar mentioned the Dori Maynard Diversity Leadership Fellows are attending the conference and she was able to spend the morning with them as they listened to a guest speaker who was inspiring and empowering them. She added that if anyone is interested in being on the Diversity and Inclusion Committee to let her know.

Walker thanked the Journalism Education Committee and said it met monthly all year. The Press4Education program continued to be a success and the committee shared new, innovated ideas. She said she will continue to serve on the committee.

Regional Coordinator Caucus Chair Joe Radske said they have received zero chapter grants applications for August and are hoping people apply in October. He thanked Jennifer Ellis for her help

Hilary Niles, Freelance Community chair said she would let the report speak for itself. She added that the Freelance Corner had to be created outside the Chime app and invited everyone to join them.

Appreciation for Retiring Board Members

Retiring board members and those staying on the board were thanked for their service. Hall thanked Bartlett, Walker, Sha and McCormick for their incredible work, particularly in the name of students. Aguilar asked Hall to open a gift from the board – a "Teamwork makes the dream work" sign and Amazon gift card. The board then toasted Hall.

Shertzer said all retiring board members will receive a certificate suitable for framing in the coming days and thanked the board from staff for their work. We understand the pressures of serving on the volunteer board while also having day jobs.

Regan thanked Hall and Shertzer and staff for steering SPJ through choppy waters this year. She thanked departing board members for inspiring her.

McCormick thanked everyone and said he was proud to have been a part of such a diverse board.

Olmeda thanked Aguilar for encouraging him to run for the board when his background and experience had been with other organizations. The experience has been life changing for him, he said, and he is looking forward to what comes next. He thanked Hall for his guidance, Shertzer for his responsiveness and members for making their voices heard.

Sha said this might be the most diverse board in SPJ history and she thanked Hall and fellow board members because they not only did the work of the Society in a ridiculously difficult year, but modeled how to have difficult and uncomfortable conversations in a democratic society.

Shertzer said this board met more than any other board in SPJ history, but never in person. He thanked Hall for being a good coach to him and pushing him to think about things that may not always be top of mind and helping to keep the organization focused. Staff and the organization appreciates his service, Shertzer said.

Adjournment

Bartlett made a motion to adjourn. Sha seconded. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 12:01 p.m. EDT.