



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

DATE: SEPT. 18, 2021  
TIME: 1 P.M. EDT

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

Meeting was called to order by President Rebecca Aguilar at 1 p.m. EDT.

**ROLL CALL**

Secretary-treasurer Ivette Davila Richards called roll. Those present were: Aguilar, Davila-Richards, President-elect Claire Regan, board members Emily Bloch, Daniela Ibarra, Rafael Olmeda, Bey-Ling Sha.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Olmeda made a motion to approve the minutes of the Sept. 2, 2021, board meeting. Bloch seconded. Motion passed.

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Member Michael Drudge said he wanted to recommend Tom McKee for the open at-large director seat on the board.

SPJ Foundation Board President Irwin Gratz said in executive session the board will be considering a motion to ratify the nominees approved for the SPJ Foundation Board of Directors. Nominations for those positions come from non-SPJ Board Members of the Foundation. He said they look forward to the slate's approval and hearing the SPJ Board's nominations for joining the Foundation Board.

Member Sonny Albarado asked why nominations for the boards will be in executive session.

Aguilar said she is following what Immediate Past President Matthew T. Hall did last year, discussing the nominations in executive session and coming out of executive session to vote. She said the discussion of nominations can be sensitive and include discussion of private information.

Former Foundation Board President Robert Leger encouraged the Board to not go into closed session, saying SPJ always pushes government to be open and because of that, SPJ has a duty to be transparent. Closed sessions create suspicion, he said.

Aguilar said let's not start a narrative of any conspiracies or rumors about the board going into executive session. She said she respected the executive director's suggestion to discuss nominations in closed session, but voting in public. She assured everyone there is nothing negative going on.

Member Hazel Becker said we are journalists and as journalists we have spent a lot of time making governance happen in the sunshine. She said it just feels wrong to her to have discussion behind closed doors.

Aguilar said when it concerns anything that could be sensitive, she has to be protective of members.

Regional Coordinator Jennifer Ellis said she agrees the discussion should not be in executive session and she made the same argument last year when it happened. She said she doesn't believe anything nefarious will happen, but she does believe the discussion should be open.

Past President Alex Tarquinio said there is precedent for nominations being discussed in executive session. Sometimes the board has discussed names of people who didn't even ask to be considered, much less in public, she said. Discussing the merits of people is not something that should be done in a public meeting. She said it is about protecting the organization and by having those conversations in public it does leave SPJ open to legal action. She said the board can explain why they made the decisions they did when they come out of executive session.

## **SPJ PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Aguilar thanked headquarters staff and Executive Director John Shertzter for their outstanding work before, during and after the SPJ21 conference. Attendees left informed and inspired, she said. She also thanked the conference planning committee, SPJ News students and diversity fellows. She said she will make sure board meetings are informative and fairly short. She wants to lead and look at issues through the eyes of journalists, educators and student journalists. She wants to focus on helping all chapters grow and expand, make sure communities are strong. She announced new committee chairs:

Brian Collister – Awards and Honors  
Adam Sennott – Membership  
Eleanore Vega – Diversity and Inclusion  
Alex Tarquinio – Bylaws  
Duane Pohlman – Ethics  
Haisten Willis – Freedom of Information  
Yvette Walker – Journalism Education  
Ashanti Blaize – Nominations  
Michael Savino – Resolutions  
Israel Balderas – Legal Defense Fund

## **ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Davila-Richards made a motion to enter executive session. Ibarra seconded. Olmeda requested a friendly amendment for Shertzer and Gratz to join in executive session. Davila-Richards and Ibarra accepted the friendly amendment. Motion passed. The board entered executive session at 1:30 p.m. EDT.

#### **EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The board exited executive session at 2:45 p.m. EDT.

Davila-Richards made a motion to approve the nominations to the SPJ Foundation board. Sha seconded. Motion passed.

Sha made a motion to appoint Sonny Alberado to a third three-year term as the SPJ representative to AEJMC. Bloch seconded. Motion passed.

Ibarra made a motion to appoint Danielle McLean to fill the board seat vacated by Claire Regan. Bloch seconded. Motion passed.

Bloch made a motion to appoint Israel Balderas and Cheryl Smith to one-year term as the appointed at-large directors on the board. Ibarra seconded. Motion passed.

Aguilar said she has not yet determined a list of SPJ board members to appoint to the Foundation board and she will be doing that soon and making it public.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Davila-Richards made a motion to adjourn. Olmeda seconded. Meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m. EDT.