

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

October 26, 2022  
Grand Hyatt Washington, D.C.

**Call to Order**

Rebecca Aguilar, President of the Society of Professional Journalists, called the meeting to order in person in Washington, D.C., at 10:08 a.m. EDT

**Roll Call**

Claire Regan, President-Elect, took the roll. Attending the meeting were:

Rebecca Aguilar, President  
Claire Regan, President-Elect  
J. Israel Balderas, At-Large Director  
Emily Bloch, At-Large Director  
Daniela Ibarra, At-Large Director  
Rafael Olmeda, At-Large Director  
Cheryl Smith, At-Large Director  
Danielle McLean, At-Large Director, via phone

Ivette Davila-Richards, Secretary-Treasurer, was absent.

Aguilar named Balderas as the parliamentarian.

**Approval of Minutes**

Edits were made to the July 23, 2022, minutes as follows: Nominations should be applications, it should be noted that SDX and MOE Awards were revamped and a video was produced. Bloch made a motion to amend, which was seconded by Israel Balderas. Approved unanimously.

Bloch motioned to accept the July 23 minutes and Aug. 20 minutes. Ibarra seconded the motion. Approved unanimously.

**President's Remarks**

Aguilar welcomed the new chapters created in 2021-2022. She thanked the committees and highlighted their working including the programs created by the Journalism Education Committee and the creation of a new Sports Journalism Committee.

She thanked the Multimedia Journalists taskforce for their quick work in helping produce two webinars with SPJ Georgia and highlighted their work creating the first ever MMJ guidelines which were released about one week prior to this meeting.

Aguilar also thanked Irwin Gratz, president of the SPJ Foundation, and Hagit Limor, vice president of the SPJ Foundation, for their leadership of the Foundation.

### **Staff Introductions**

Jennifer Royer, interim executive director, introduced the SPJ staff.

Aguilar thanked Royer for her leadership during this transition period.

### **Public Comment Period**

Hazel Becker, acting as a represent of the Freelance Community, Thanked SPJ for it's support. The Community has almost 500 members and welcomed its first Freelance Fellows to the convention this year. Aguilar shared some highlights from the Freelance Community's work this year. Aguilar and Smith thanked the Freelance Community for their work.

### **Interim Executive Director's Report**

Royer shared updates on the membership database including ongoing issues, training she and the staff are undergoing. She said after convention she plans to dig deeper into the database. She noted that the staff is working to fix the issues but it's a struggle.

Aguilar is concerned that SPJ is paying a lot for the database but Impexium staff isn't helping with troubleshooting. She said the problems need to be solved, and that maybe staff should begin looking into other options and the staff and board could make decisions based on what they find. Olmeda noted that we're putting our all into getting it fixed.

McLean asked if an outside consultant is needed and Royer said that may be helpful. Balderas noted that there are databases that have apps and donor engagement. He would like SPJ to try to have something to engage the donors and broaden our horizons. Royer explained that part of issue is system but also the information put in system. A lot of data was lost in the database transition. Chapters are concerned about membership database

Royer shared an update on MediaFest22. There are over 700 attendees registered with SPJ, CMA/ACP has over 1,000 people registered and we are expecting a lot of walk-ups as well. This is very good attendance. Royer highlighted the important events happening during the convention. She discussed and thanked the sponsors. She noted that the convention app is great and allows good communication and fun.

### **Executive Director Search Report**

Ashanti Blaize-Hopkins, chair of the Search Committee, had her flight delayed flight so Aguilar shared her report. The Search Committee found three options for consultants. They are keeping to a timeline and they are an efficient committee. The decision will be left to the next board.

Balderas is concerned about the financial incentive to go with a search firm because firms often have an incentive to prolong the search process. He advises scrutinizing the contract.

### **Finance Report**

Royer presented the financial report and answered questions about SPJ's finances. She said the SPJ went with new auditors this year and the gave the organization a clean audit that has been reviewed by accounting staff. The check signing issue was fixed and more signatories were added; there is no indication of abuse. Balderas asked how many checks were signed over \$10,000 and who received them.

Aguilar noted that there is no finance report because controller has been on leave, but there are no financial problems, however, if there were they would be made public. Royer explained that the 2023 budget would not be discussed for this reason, but staff would begin to work on it soon.

Balderas suggested SPJ consider the future by looking at statements and budgets as they relate to inflation and the recession. He said we need to look at how SPJ will be impacted. He is concerned about there not being enough cash equivalent on hand. Royer shared that she is also concerned but the organization has had a lot of changes, and this is something that will be worked on. She said she is already looking at cost cutting methods.

Royer and Balderas shared how SPJ will raise money for the Legal Defense Fund during MediaFest22.

Olmeda said the board members should think of themselves as a fundraiser. He highlighted the Florida Pro Chapter's Hand-Up Fund, which was made into a Region 3 fund. As of now, it has distributed \$1,200. It was inspired by SPJ Oregon and now more chapter have similar funds. The board and Royer discussed how to fundraise and appeal to sponsors.

### **Farwell to Departing Board Members**

Aguilar thanked the staff and board. She noted that the 2021-22 board has been SPJ's most diverse board. She encouraged the continuing board members to think of the members they serve and believe in yourself.

Balderas, Regan and Smith praised Aguilar and thanked her for her leadership this year.

### **Adjournment**

Olmeda made a motion to adjourn at 11:31 a.m. EDT. The motion was seconded by Smith.  
Approved unanimously.