

**MINUTES**  
**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**SIGMA DELTA CHI FOUNDATION**  
**SEPTEMBER 19, 2015**  
**MARRIOTT ORLANDO WORLD CENTER**  
**ORLANDO, FLORIDA**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

With President Robert Leger presiding, the meeting of the board of directors of the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation was called to order at 9:03 a.m. Saturday, September 19 at the Marriott Orlando World Center Hotel in Orlando, Florida.

**ROLL CALL**

In addition to Leger, the following board members were present: Vice President Irwin Gratz; Secretary Jane Kirtley; Treasurer Howard Dubin; Directors Dave Aeikens, Sonny Albarado, Rebecca Baker, Fred Brown, David Carlson, Al Cross, Dave Cuillier, Jay Evensen, Paul Fletcher, Steve Geimann, Todd Gillman, Kelly Hawes, Bill Ketter, Sue Kopen Katcef, Al Leeds, Hagit Limor, Bill McCloskey, Gordon “Mac” McKerral, Dana Neuts and Kevin Smith.

Staff members present included Executive Director Joe Skeel, Associate Executive Director Chris Vachon and Fundraising Coordinator Katie Hunt.

**MINUTES**

**Corrections to the minutes were sent from Robert Leger to Chris Vachon, prior to the meeting. Upon proper motion and second by Geimann and Gillman, respectively, the board approved the meeting minutes, with Leger’s corrections, from April 19, 2015.**

**SDX FOUNDATION PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

SDX Foundation President Leger reported that the foundation’s portfolio rises and falls with the stock market. At the end of July, it was valued at \$11.9 million and by the end of August it was valued at \$11 million.

Leger reminded the board that Associate Executive Director Chris Vachon secured \$70,500 from Google to train journalists in using Google tools.

Leger indicated that with a vote to ratify, later on the agenda, two new board members are welcomed at the meeting. Evelyn Hsu of the Maynard Institute and Sonya Ross, The Associated Press’ first ever reporter on race and ethnicity.

Leger shared with the group that Fred Brown, as the publications chair for the foundation, will oversee the history book project.

## **SPJ PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

SPJ President Dana Neuts reported that SPJ’s advocacy efforts have ramped up. The advocacy activities include creating a J-Team with IRE and SPLC; a letter to the White House, which included 53 journalism organizations signing on, as a follow up to last summer’s letter about transparency issues. The White House press secretary has been in touch about setting up a meeting to discuss the issues.

Neuts indicated that she feels the organization’s communication efforts have improved with the addition of the staff communications strategist position and specifically, the addition of Jennifer Royer in that role.

Finally, Neuts discussed the growth of the community concept within SPJ.

## **FOUNDATION STAFF REPORT**

Associate Executive Director Chris Vachon reported that giving from for fiscal year 2014-15 (\$25,514) increased by 8% compared to fiscal year 2013-14.

Vachon, again, encouraged board members to join the 1909 Society.

Vachon indicated the Kiplinger Program will continue its partnership with the JournCamp program for 2016.

Finally, Vachon welcomed newest staff member Katie Hunt, Fundraising Coordinator, to the meeting. She encouraged board members to meet Katie while in Orlando.

## **TREASURER’S REPORT**

Dubin reported the balances of the Schwab accounts:

Pulliam General	\$8,484,928
Editorial Fellowship	\$2,193,453
Quill Endowment	\$426,471
Total	\$11,104,853

Dubin suggested the board consider restricting foundation expenditures to actual income received by changing the funds to pay dividends and interest instead of allowing them to reinvest and grow. Another consideration, offered by Dubin, is to set a bottom figure on the total endowment. A final consideration is to reduce amount of dividends and interest spent from 4% to 3.5%. Dubin and the finance committee are going to meet and make a recommendation to the board regarding these suggestions.

## **PASS-THROUGH CONTRIBUTIONS**

The list below represents the pass-through contribution that have occurred during the current fiscal year. A pass-through contribution is allowed under IRS rules because it falls in line with the Foundation’s charitable purpose: Education and recognizing journalism excellence.

Gannett Foundation to SPJ for EIJ15 support

\$25,000

**Upon proper motion and second by Hawes and Cross, respectively, the board approved the pass-through contribution outlined above.**

#### **BOARD MEMBER ELECTIONS**

The following slate of board members are being offered to the board for three year terms:

- Todd Gillman
- Irwin Gratz
- Alex Jones
- Bill Ketter
- Al Leeds
- Hagit Limor
- Robert Leger

Leger presented Evelyn Hsu and Sonya Ross as possible new board members.

**Upon proper motion and second by Baker and Aeikens, respectively, the board approved the appointments of the board members.**

#### **OFFICER ELECTIONS**

The following slate of officers are being offered for the board's review:

- President - Robert Leger
- Vice President - Irwin Gratz
- Secretary – Hagit Limor
- Treasurer - Howard Dubin

**Upon proper motion and second by Geimann and Albarado, respectively, the board approved the appointments of the officers.**

Leger reported that John Ensslin has decided to step down from the board.

Mac McKerral asked if the board can implement a call for nominations when officer positions need to be filled and when officer appointments end. This process will be initiated beginning with the April 2016 board meeting.

#### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EVALUATION**

**Upon proper motion and second by Baker and Albarado, respectively, the board voted to go into executive session at 9:57 a.m.**

**Upon proper motion and second by Geimann and Cross, respectively, the board voted to exit executive session at 10:15 a.m.**

#### **PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE**

Committee chair Hagit Limor provided an update of the committee's work to create a staff position that would be charged with providing resources and support to journalists in the areas of journalism ethics, rights and responsibilities, and open records. Limor reviewed the revised job description with the board. The board wants to be sure there are no duplication of efforts between the job description and current SPJ staff responsibilities as well as with other resources available to journalists.

**Upon proper motion and second by Smith and Limor, respectively, the board endorses the concept of the position as along as SPJ endorses the concept and with the understanding that more information will be forthcoming at the April board meeting.**

#### **PROJECTS COMMITTEE**

Committee chair Todd Gillman provided a proposal to the board from IRE and the New England Center for Investigative Reporting (NECIR) for \$48,500 to conduct a third year (foundation funded year one and two of this program) of workshops, Watchdog: Raising the Bar. The program includes three two-day workshops followed by two webinars. In addition, IRE and NECIR would host several web hangouts and offer consulting services.

**Upon proper motion and second by Aeikens and Ketter, respectively, the board approved \$48,500 to IRE and NECIR for a third year of the investigative reporting workshop.**

#### **SPJ DIVERSITY COMMITTEE REPORT**

SPJ diversity committee chair, April Bethea, provided information from a survey the committee conducted of past diversity leadership fellows (the program is funded by the SDX Foundation). 45% of past fellows responded to the survey. The results showed that about half of those that responded are still involved in SPJ and most expressed interest in serving as a mentor to other fellows.

#### **PULLIAM EDITORIAL FELLOWSHIP AWARD**

Pulliam Editorial Fellowship chair Todd Gillman reported that the 2015 award recipient is Ronnie Polaneczky of the Philadelphia Daily News. Polaneczky plans to dig deep on the topic of intellectually challenged adults, a hidden population whose enormous needs too often are neglected.

#### **PULLIAM FIRST AMENDMENT AWARD**

Grants and awards committee chair Mac McKerral reported that the recipients of the 2015 Pulliam First Amendment Award are the Columbus Dispatch and the Student Press Law Center (SPLC) for a series of focusing on the sexual assault on U.S. college campuses, FERPA regulations tied to sexual assault and reports on student judicial proceedings that deal with campus sexual assaults and other violent crimes.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

The board discussed the foundation's campaign guideline which states "Sigma Delta Chi Foundation board members are cautioned against actively participating in SPJ election campaigns."

Some board members felt that since it is a guideline, and not a policy, thus unenforceable, the guideline should be eliminated. Others felt that it is important for the board to have a guideline to communicate the board's philosophy.

**McKerral moved to eliminate the guideline. Aeikens seconded. The motion failed. Six voted to eliminate the guideline, three abstained and 11 board members voted to not eliminate the guideline.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Upon proper motion and second by Baker and Gillman, respectively, the board voted to adjourn the meeting at 12:10 p.m.**