

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
SEPT. 21, 2015
ORLANDO, FLA.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

With President Paul Fletcher presiding, the meeting of the board of directors of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 9:05 a.m. on Monday, Sept. 21, 2015, at the Orlando World Center Marriott in Orlando, Fla.

In addition to Fletcher the following were present: Immediate Past President Dana Neuts; President-elect Lynn Walsh; Secretary-Treasurer Rebecca Baker; Vice President for Campus Chapter Affairs Sue Kopen Katcef; Directors at-Large Bill McCloskey and Alex Tarquinio; Student Representative Kate Hiller; Regional Directors Andy Schotz, Michael Koretzky, Patricia Gallagher Newberry, Deborah Givens, Joe Radske, Eddy Gallagher, Tom Johnson, Matt Hall and Amanda Womac.

Staff members present for the meeting were Executive Director Joe Skeel, Membership Strategist Tara Puckey and Communications Strategist Jennifer Royer.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Newly elected President Paul Fletcher welcomed and recognized the board.

President-Elect: Lynn Walsh

Secretary-Treasurer: Rebecca Baker

Immediate Past President: Dana Neuts

Vice President, Campus Chapter Affairs: Sue Kopen Katcef

Directors At-Large: Bill McCloskey and J. Alex Tarquinio

Campus Representatives: Monica Dattage and Kate Hiller

Campus Advisers At-Large: Mike Reilley and Rebecca Tallent

Region 1 Director: Vacant

Region 2 Director: Andy Schotz

Region 3 Director: Michael Koretzky

Region 4 Director: Patricia Gallagher Newberry

Region 5 Director: Deborah Givens

Region 6 Director: Joseph Radske

Region 7 Director: Rob McLean

Region 8 Director: Eddy Gallagher

Region 9 Director: Tom Johnson

Region 10 Director: Ethan Chung

Region 11 Director: Matthew T. Hall

Region 12 Director: Amanda Womac

PRESIDENT'S GOALS

Fletcher briefly highlighted four initiatives he plans to have SPJ work on in the coming year: FOIA and Fix FOIA by 50; Continuing the roll out of the Code of Ethics; Fixing the 41 percent issue; and membership.

COMMITTEE CHAIR APPOINTMENTS

Fletcher said he has only one new appointment – that of Jonathan Anderson as chair of the FOI Committee. Anderson is a reporter in Wisconsin and a FOIA rock star, Fletcher said. Fletcher added that Andy Schotz, proposed chair of the Awards Committee, now has a new full-time job and congratulated him.

Upon proper motion by Neuts and second by Kopen Katcef, the board ratified Fletcher's appointment of Jonathan Anderson as FOI Committee chair.

BOARD EXPECTATIONS

Fletcher discussed board expectations, mainly for the new members of the board. He asked that everyone please take time to read the board packets before meetings. There are interim board meetings via Skype and he asked that members please also attend those. Schotz added that the board's Skype calls are also public, just so everyone is aware. The president usually writes a recap of those meetings and it is posted on the president's blog.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

Fletcher explained that the Executive Committee is comprised of the President; President-Elect; Secretary-Treasurer; Vice President, Campus Chapter Affairs; Immediate Past President; and two at-large members elected by the board of directors. Two seats are vacant on executive committee.

Upon proper motion by McCloskey and second by Schotz, Radske was nominated to serve on the executive committee. Under proper motion by Radske and second by Schotz, McCloskey was nominated to serve on the executive committee. Following no discussion, the board approved both nominations.

SIGMA DELTA CHI FOUNDATION BOARD APPOINTMENTS

The SPJ president may appoint as many directors to the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation as he/she desires, so long as the number of independently elected directors is more than the SPJ appointments. In addition to himself, Fletcher appointed Lynn Walsh, Rebecca Baker, Dana Neuts, Sue Kopen Katcef, Patti Gallagher Newberry and Bill McCloskey

Upon proper motion by Gallagher and second by Hall, the board approved the SDX Foundation board appointments.

RATIFICATION OF SIGMA DELTA CHI BOARD ELECTIONS

The SPJ Board of Directors ratifies the independently elected officers and directors of the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation. The four officers are: Robert Leger, president; Irwin Gratz, vice president;

Hagit Limor, secretary; and Howard Dubin, treasurer. New members of the board are Evelyn Hsu and Sonya Ross.

Upon proper motion by McCloskey and second by Tarquinio, the board ratified the SDX Foundation board elections.

FINANCE COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

The Finance Committee is comprised of the president, president-elect, secretary-treasurer, vice president of campus chapter affairs, immediate past president and two at-large members appointed by the president and ratified by the Board of Directors. Fletcher appointed McCloskey and Gallagher.

Upon proper motion by Neuts and second by Kopen Katcef, the board ratified Fletcher's appointments of McCloskey and Gallagher to the finance committee.

RURAL COMMUNITY

Puckey explained that member Al Cross submitted an application for a new community – the Community Journalists Community, which would allow community journalists to share the challenges of community journalism and gain strength from each other.

Cross said in the application that through his work, he knows there are thousands of very good rural journalists, but sometimes they are the only person in their newsroom who fits that description. A community for community journalists – rural, urban and suburban – would give them a new support system.

Community Coordinator Alex Veeneman submitted a petition of 50 SPJ members who support a community for rural and community journalists.

During discussion, Neuts said Cross very enthusiastically gathered names for this community – more than they've had for any other community petition.

Motion was made by Sue Kopen Katcef to approve the Community Journalists Community. Patti Newberry seconded

Johnson asked if people get confused by SPJ having committees and communities. Neuts agreed that the names can be confusing, but explained the concepts are really different. A committee is a small group of people who work on a specific task. Communities provide a way to engage a larger group of people interested in a specific topic

Schotz asked about the creation of communities. Are we looking for new communities and hoping to find them, or are we hoping people will come up with ideas for new communities and come to us with those ideas? Fletcher said he believes we ought to let them develop and not look

to start communities for the sake of starting them. Neuts added that it has to come from members. “If we don’t have a strong leader of a community, it won’t work,” she said.

Upon proper motion by Kopen Katcef and second by Gallagher Newberry, the board approved the petition of the Community Journalists Community.

WORK VISA POLICY

Skeel explained that SPJ HQ receives requests from immigration attorneys for letters stating we endorse foreign journalists applying for work in the United States. The recent practice of the Society has been to decline providing those letters, as the Society hasn’t been comfortable endorsing people if it can’t vet them.

Skeel asked for the board to adopt an official position.

Upon proper motion by McCloskey and second by Walsh, the board voted to continue the practice of declining work visa letters.

WELLS KEY SELECTION

The executive committee used the new system approved by the board in April to select the Wells Key recipient. The new system says that the full executive committee will choose the winner, then provide reasoning for that selection to the full board after convention. Fletcher shared that Sue Porter was selected, and explained the reasons for that selection.

Gallagher Newberry asked how board members can nominate people for the Wells Key. Skeel explained that a call for nominations goes out via Leads, social media and other communications channels.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Skeel asked board members to read, sign and turn in conflict of interest forms that were shared prior to the meeting.

ACEJMC MEMBERSHIP

Fletcher explained that since the mid-1990s Steve Geimann has held SPJ’s seat on the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. Because he is moving to London for three years, Geimann cannot continue to serve. A seat on the council involves payment of an annual fee by SPJ and expenses to council meetings, which Geimann has largely funded out of his own pocket. SPJ has always paid the \$3,500 annual membership fee.

Fletcher said a new appointee should not feel compelled to pay the extra \$1,500-\$2,000 per year for travel costs – as Geimann had done. Through a resolution passed by the House of Delegates, the board was directed to continue support of ACEJMC. McCloskey asked if the resolution said SPJ should pay all expenses, or can the board put a cap on expenses. Fletcher explained that the resolution states the board will pay the annual membership fees and travel expenses.

Fletcher has a member in mind who needs to get the OK from his employer. Geimann laid out procedures for selection of the appointee – a three-year term ratified by the board – but it needs to be formalized. Fletcher said he would present the process and candidate to the board later this fall for a vote.

RECOGNITION OF PRESIDENT NEUTS

Koretzky made a motion to recognize Neuts, saying in the past year she's lost sleep for SPJ and worked way too hard, but she has been the most open-minded president he has worked with. He wanted to first, recognize her as president and second, order her to bed for a week.

Upon proper motion by Koretzky and second by Gallagher Newberry, the board recognized Neuts for her service.

EIJ GOVERNANCE SCHEDULES

McCloskey moved that the board direct staff to include governance meetings in all EIJ schedules. If it is going on at EIJ, as far as governance, it should be printed and easily accessible, he said.

Upon proper motion by McCloskey and second by Schotz, the board voted to direct staff to include all SPJ and SDX Foundation governance meetings in pre-convention and on-site printed, online and other (e.g. hotel video screens) schedules.

RESOLUTIONS

Gallagher Newberry said the resolutions deadline is too slack. Puckey said resolutions are usually done on deadline and timing is a challenge when edits are being made by people who also have to attend meetings. Taking them to the printer also takes time. Koretzky said there is no reason the resolutions committee can't meet virtually and have them done 10 days in advance, sent to delegates in advance, printed in advance. He also said that at the beginning of the closing business session the resolutions are always funny, congratulatory, with a lot of inside jokes many people don't understand. He would hope leadership would flip those to the end, so the substantial resolutions are considered first. Gallagher Newberry agreed that she doesn't think we set the right tone for the closing business session by joking around.

ASSOCIATION LEADERSHIP MEETING

Walsh asked if they could discuss the so-called "secret meeting" that was held for journalism organization leaders during EIJ. Skeel explained that ACES president Teresa Schmedding rekindled a group called the Council of National Journalism Organizations last year. They wished for a second meeting this year. Skeel explained that the meeting is not EIJ-related. It is a meeting that happens to occur at EIJ because they have asked us for space. Skeel said he's not sure it makes sense to include it on the EIJ schedule.

Skeel explained that the meetings is for staff and presidents to discuss organizational issues. He is fearful of losing that purpose if it becomes open to everyone. McCloskey asked if they objected when some SPJ members showed up to the meeting. Skeel said no, but if we advertise the meeting as public, the group may decide to meet elsewhere.

Koretzky agreed that the best thing to do is say there is a meeting. If it is closed, fine. But he would recommend having at least some time for public discussion. If there are sensitive issues, kick people out, but it is good to see organizations meeting like this and sharing information. McCloskey suggested saying that meeting is “by invitation.”

Skeel said he would discuss publicizing the meeting with leaders from the other journalism associations. At the very least, he said, the meeting could be listed in program materials – even if other groups requested that it be invitation only.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR CAUCUS REPORT

Gallagher Newberry said because Baker was elected secretary-treasurer, a new Region 1 Director must be appointed. Skeel explained the current practice of filling board vacancies: Staff does a call-out for interested candidates. The information is collected and the board chooses from that pool.

Gallagher Newberry shared that one of the RD Caucus’ lower-level priorities is to review the annual report form. She also asked how we assess EIJ programming, etc., each year. We often hear there are too many offerings per hour and it dilutes the crowd. Skeel explained that there is a post-convention survey that is sent to all attendees right after EIJ. Staff members Chris Vachon and Scott Leadingham receive the responses. They then share them with the programming committee selecting programs the following year. Skeel explained that we offer so many concurrent sessions at EIJ because SPJ is the most broad-based journalism organization in the country. It is an effort to have something for everyone.

CONFERENCE DISCUSSIONS

Gallagher Newberry said she thinks we end up with too many programs that overlap and attendees can’t go to every session they want. Walsh said IRE’s conference is very similar, and it is one of the best conferences around. One thing they do very well, she said, is make sure every session is livestreamed, and/or put online for viewing later. That way if you attend one session, you can go back and watch the one you missed later, or view the tip sheet and teach yourself whatever was covered.

McCloskey asked if there is a report produced from the survey results. Skeel said there was, although it may not be a formal report. McCloskey said he would be interested in a report that shows what people think of the landlocked hotel, for example, etc. Gallagher Newberry agreed that a report would be valuable.

Gallagher Newberry pointed out that RTDNA has its two big awards – Paul White and John Hogan awards. They are usually given to big names who fill a room. She asked about the history of SPJ doing a similar award. Kopen Katcef added that she has been attending the SPJ convention off and on since 1975. Keynotes, luncheons, etc., cost money and as they are eliminated, there are fewer opportunities to bring in a big speaker. During presidential election years we tried to bring in presidential candidates, she said. It’s a hit and miss. McCloskey said he thought when RTDNA began giving those awards at EIJ, the beauty of it was that they could bring in the big-name broadcasters and everyone would benefit by being able to attend the event.

Schotz said he heard from some people who were confused and perhaps a little frustrated about what the programming process is and who is in charge of it. He would like to make it easier for people to offer ideas and feedback for programming they would like to see. Fletcher added that some instruction on how to put together a good session proposal would be helpful.

NON CHAPTER-AFFILIATED MEMBERS

Tarquinio talked about the task force charged with looking at the 41 percent of SPJ members who are underrepresented at EIJ because they are not member of (and therefore represented by) chapters. The task force met three times over the summer. The task force includes Baker, Lauren Bartlett, Michael Fitzgerald, Radske, Schotz, Walsh and Tarquinio. They conducted a survey of unaffiliated members and did comparisons of governance structure of other professional organizations. Six of eight task force members prefer a regional delegate system, which is one of six options being considered at this time. The task force still has more work to do and wants to create a report for January meeting.

Johnson asked if we have information on the number of SPJ members who are members of other organizations. Skeel said no, but the topic of dual memberships did come up at the journalism leaders meeting.

GAMING JOURNALISM CONTEST

Koretzky provided an update from Region 3’s Airplay event in Miami, which he said was an ethics outreach program during the spring conference. He wants to reach out not only to gaming journalists, but readers as well. Because more money is spent on video games than movies, and journalists have a long history of being movie reviewers, he wants to create a video gaming journalism award. It could be set up similarly to SPJ’s New America Award and could administered by Region 3, but run through SPJ proper. He would like a one-year commitment and “if it is successful, great. If not, we can say we tried.” Does not think a vote is needed now, but will put together a proposal that can be considered during the next board meeting. Fletcher proposed that Koretzky work with the Awards and Honors Chairman so it is in line with other SPJ awards.

BOARD MEMBER CAMPAIGNING

Schotz proposed the board think more closely about elections and board members supporting particular candidates. He said we need to decide if guidelines are enough, or if rules need to be

put into place, with sanctions if they are broken. Guidelines currently state board members should remain neutral, but there may also be a policy. Fletcher asked Schotz to research it and report back. Schotz also recommended a short session at EIJ where candidates could delve more deeply into issues and perhaps a moderator could ask questions.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon proper motion by McCloskey and second by Baker the board voted to go into executive session at 11:05 a.m. to meet with legal counsel regarding personnel and board training.

Upon proper motion by Johnson and second by Gallagher, the board voted to exit executive session at 11:40 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon proper motion by Kopen Katcef and second by Hiller, the board voted to adjourn at 11:40 a.m., Sept. 21, 2015.