

# **SPJ Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**

## **January 18, 2003 - Austin, Texas**

### **MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

With President Robert Leger presiding, the meeting of the executive committee of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 9:28 a.m. on January 18, 2003, in the offices of The Austin American-Statesman.

### **ROLL CALL**

In addition to President Leger, the following were in attendance for all or a portion of the meeting:

Mac McKerral, President-elect  
Irwin Gratz, Secretary/Treasurer  
Jim Highland, Vice President for Campus Chapter Affairs  
Al Cross, Immediate Past President  
David Carlson, Adviser-At-Large  
Mark Scarp, Region 11 Director  
Terrence G. Harper, Executive Director  
Julie F. Grimes, Deputy Executive Director  
Kevin Carmody, The Austin American-Statesman.

### **REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT**

Leger discussed his report, which was e-mailed to committee members earlier in the week. The report also was delivered to the full board of directors and should be distributed to the full membership.

### **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Harper discussed his report, which was e-mailed to committee members earlier in the week. Harper reviewed SPJ's current financial position and the organization's position at the end of the previous fiscal year. He anticipated a \$28,000 surplus on the 2002 convention and noted that the host chapter has now received its 15 percent incentive. Harper distributed a current financial statement and memo from SPJ's accounting firm.

He also noted that the Scripps Howard Foundation will again be funding the Ted Scripps Leadership Training Seminar. This year's program will focus on individual leadership development as well as chapter management.

Cross noted SPJ's recent publicity in Editor & Publisher magazine and commended Leger for keeping the organization "out front" on journalism issues.

### **REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT CAMPUS CHAPTER AFFAIRS**

Highland reviewed campus press cases where SPJ had been involved in the last six months. His original report was distributed in committee packets. An updated report was provided at the meeting. Highland reviewed cases at Tennessee State University, Murray State University, Southern Utah University, and Miami University.

### **GRADUATED STUDENT CHAPTER REQUIREMENTS**

Highland distributed a proposal for a system of graduated student chapter requirements, similar to the professional chapter requirements adopted last year. The committee instructed Highland to further develop the proposal for a presentation at the spring board meeting.

### **ETHICS BOOK UPDATE**

Harper explained that Pearson Education currently holds the book's copyright and has agreed to return the copyright to the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation. The organization must agree to forgo any remaining royalties (currently about \$6,000). Once the copyright is returned, SPJ and SDX will discuss future uses

for the book.

It is added parenthetically to these minutes that one of the authors of the ethics book has demanded that the copyright be returned to the creators of the work and not the Society or the Foundation. The matter has been placed in the hands of the Society's legal counsel, Baker & Hostetler, for resolution.

### **JOURNALISMTRAINING.ORG**

Grimes explained the terms of the Knight Foundation grant for journalismtraining.org. Knight funded the grant in the amount of \$200,000, slightly less than the requested amount of \$216,000. The grant is for two years, after which, SPJ and the Council of National Journalism Organizations will need to determine how to fund the site maintenance.

### **BETTER WATCHDOG WORKSHOPS**

The group discussed SPJ's partnership with Investigative Editors and Reporters to produce the Better Watchdog workshops. There have been some snags while holding these in conjunction with regional conferences. Harper noted that he hasn't seen any SPJ presenters in the speaker lineup. SPJ has gained between 300 and 400 new members through these programs, and retention of these members will be an important issue.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Harper updated the group on current membership efforts, including plans for a letter that will be mailed to members after three months of membership. Plans also are underway to add a form to the web site where members can recommend prospective members. Membership Chairman Howard Dubin is planning a lapsed member mailing.

### **MARK OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS**

Harper reported that this year's contest drew about 100 fewer entries than last year, and revenue is expected to come in about \$4,000 under budget. Despite the dip in entries and revenue, expenses were significantly lower than budgeted. The group agreed that the Jan. 2 deadline worked and should be continued. Any proposals for awards changes should be sent to Awards and Honors Chair Todd Gillman.

The group briefly discussed concerns about a low number of online entries -- there were only 106 entries nationwide in 10 different categories. The consensus was to give the contest another couple of years.

### **CHAPTERS**

The group briefly discussed developing procedures for implementing the new four-star chapter program. Chapter Doc Kyle Niederpruem and Grimes will develop implementation plans.

Grimes noted that several recent new chapter inquiries had brought up the question of whether SPJ should continue to require participation by three fulltime faculty members in order to start a new chapter.

Motion by Cross to refer this matter to Campus Chapter Affairs Committee for a recommendation at April board of directors meeting. Second by Carlson. Motion carried.

### **GRADUATED CHAPTER REQUIREMENTS-CAMPUS CHAPTERS**

Highland reviewed his proposal to establish a set of graduated chapter requirements for student chapters. The group instructed Highland to share the proposal with regional directors, who should discuss it during regional meetings. The final proposal should be presented to the board in April for implementation with the 2004 annual report submissions.

### **CONVENTION DISCUSSION**

#### **2003: Tampa**

McKerral distributed a fund raising update and a programming report. The Tampa group plans to raise the profile of the Mark of Excellence Luncheon at the 2003 convention. They will be adding a visual presentation that volunteers in Tampa will edit. It will include interviews with award winners and visuals of winning work. Only award winners who are present will be announced. A full list of all winners will be

available.

The group discussed devoting a convention headliner spot to a broadcast journalist whose travel fees and honorarium would be paid through the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation's Taishoff Fund.

#### **2004: New York City**

The group discussed two possible options for hotel space in 2004: the Marriott Marquis and the Grand Hyatt. Despite the Marriott's preferred location, the Hyatt's much lower room rate makes it the staff recommendation.

Motion by Cross to proceed with plans for holding the National Convention at the Grand Hyatt. Second by Scarp. Motion carried.

The group briefly discussed a proposal to develop a magazine in conjunction with the convention. It would be a fund raiser for the convention. Harper will get more details from Beverly Campbell, who proposed the project.

#### **Future Conventions**

Possible sites for the 2005 and 2006 conventions include Chicago, New Orleans, and Las Vegas. Staff members are currently looking at each location for potential meeting space. The Louisville Pro chapter may be interested in the 2006 convention.

#### **CONVENTION SPONSORSHIP COMMITTEE**

McKerral reported on the establishment of a committee to prepare recommendations for how and when the Society accepts sponsorship money and in-kind contributions and how to disclose those contributions. Gratz is chairing the acceptance section of the committee, and Peter Sussman is chairing the disclosure section of the committee. Both committees will have presentations for the board meeting in April. Gratz briefly reviewed his committee's work.

The group took a lunch break at 1:15 p.m. and reconvened at 2:15 p.m. At this point, agenda items were reorganized for time purposes.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Motion by Carlson to appoint Travis Poling as Region 8 Director to fulfill the remainder of Todd Gillman's term. Second by Scarp. Motion carried.

#### **STUDENT MEMBER RETENTION**

Scarp briefly discussed ideas to increase the retention rate of student members after graduation. He suggested an e-mail to all students asking them to update their addresses and provide SPJ with permanent contact information. He suggested budgeting for a printed mailing in the future.

#### **REGIONAL REALIGNMENT**

Scarp reported that the regional realignment committee was addressing an issue that was raised during the 1999 strategic planning process. Scarp explained that realigning regions and shrinking the number of regional directors had the following potential benefits: evens out the work load of all directors, provides greater flexibility for national stipends, reduces the size of the board and addresses difficulties with finding regional directors.

The group discussed whether geographic representation remains the best method for selecting board members. Leger will appoint a committee to review Scarp's proposals and make additional suggestions for the April board meeting.

#### **REGIONAL CONFERENCE INFORMATION**

Staff will be providing the following information for all 2003 regional conferences: membership applications, Quill magazine, SPJ Fact Sheets, SPJ Code of Ethics, and convention information. Leger and McKerral also will compile a national update to be discussed at each regional conference.

## **MARKETING SPJ**

The group discussed SPJ's current marketing efforts and messages. Internal communications suggestions included a better use of e-mail to reach current members. Other suggestions: a redesign of Quill and a reexamination of the magazine content.

Leger appointed a committee to prepare a job description and responsibility list for the Publications Committee. Ad-hoc committee members are Gratz, Cross, Harper, Joe Boyce and Quill Editor Jeff Mohl.

Regard reaching new markets, the group asked the following: who should SPJ be reaching, and what is the message to present? Consensus was the message should be about the organization's accomplishments as opposed to general awareness that SPJ exists.

Committee members discussed a public service campaign focused on freedom of information issues. ASNE and APME already have created a series of print advertisements on the issue. SPJ should consider a broadcast format with a similar message. This might involve partnering with RTNDA.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION OF KOREA**

The group discussed a possible SPJ trip to Korea. Information about the trip was included in the board packet.

### **COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS SURVEY**

Carlson is directing a survey of journalism organizations sponsored by the Council of National Journalism Organizations. The response deadline was Dec. 13, and 15 responses have been received to date.

### **FRONT LINE EDITING WORKSHOP**

Harper reported that the recent program had approximately 40 participants. Evaluations were very positive, and the program did provide a revenue source.

### **TIM RUSSERT EVENT IN D.C.**

The group discussed the Legal Defense Fund event scheduled for the spring in Washington, D.C. Tim Russert will be the guest of honor at a reverse press conference. Jim Bohannon will emcee the event. Once the costs of the event are covered, the remaining funds will be directed to the SPJ Legal Defense Fund.

It is added parenthetically to these minutes that the event was subsequently cancelled due to severe winter weather in Washington, D.C. and the surrounding areas.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

The group discussed SPJ's recent statement about protesters and protest signs. SPJ's position was that limits on this were a violation of the First Amendment right to free expression. An SPJ member had raised concern about the organization's involvement in the issue. Consensus was that the First Amendment applies to everyone; therefore, it was appropriate to be involved.

## **PRESSNOTES**

In December 2002, SPJ experienced the first month with a net loss in the number of PressNotes subscribers. The group discussed ways to increase the content of PressNotes and provide members with a better daily news summary.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the executive committee, Leger declared the meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m. on Saturday, January 18, 2003.