

# **SPJ Executive Board Meeting Minutes**

## **July 12, 2003 - Washington, D.C.**

### **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 12:20 p.m. on July 12, 2003, at Hilton Garden Inn at Franklin Square in Washington, D.C.

### **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  
Micca Leppert, SDX Foundation Coordinator  
Bobby Deckard, SPJ Awards Coordinator.

Also present for a portion of the meeting was SDX Foundation board member Betsy Ashton.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Upon a proper motion and second by Highland and Scarp, the committee voted to approve the minutes of the Jan. 18, 2003, Executive Committee Meeting in Austin, Texas. No corrections were noted.

### **SDX AWARDS BANQUET REVIEW**

Deckard reviewed the previous evening's banquet. Forty-two of 49 award recipients were represented at the dinner at the National Press Club. Deckard discussed the problems with the awards video and explained how he would be changing the process in the future. The group consensus was that future programs focus on the work of the award winners and not on general journalism issues.

In general, the committee agreed that the event should remain separate from the national convention. They'd like to see a prominent journalist as a keynote speaker at future events and would like to see C-SPAN cover the awards dinner.

Staff should consider adding a professional development feature to future awards presentations, with award winners leading sessions before or after the event.

### **REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT**

Leger discussed his report, which was e-mailed to committee members earlier in the week.

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

Harper presented his report, which will be distributed following the meeting. A brief look at finances showed that SPJ was operating at a near-break even level. Financial statements will be delivered to board members in the next few days. Harper said that personnel turnover had been low during the past year.

He also updated the group about SPJ's partnership with Investigative Reporters and Editors and the latest workshops held by IRE. Harper also has a meeting planned with the Foundation for American Communications to discuss another potential partnership.

Regarding the recent Ted Scripps Leadership Training weekend, Harper said these changes are under

consideration: including more advisers in the retreat; and opening the conference with SPJ materials on Friday evening, rather than with general leadership materials, which would be held on Saturday.

### **COMMITTEE CHAIR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The group discussed the need for committee and committee chair job descriptions. McKerral said he was planning a 30-minute orientation meeting for all committee chairs during the SPJ National Convention. Each committee should provide a one-page briefing document and should outline at least one project for the coming year that is tangible and documentable.

Leger planned to e-mail to all current committee chairs asking them for a bullet-point list of the minimum expectations of their committee (board members will be asked for this also).

### **CHAPTER REQUIREMENTS REPORT**

Grimes distributed statistics about chapter compliance with annual report submission deadlines. Upon a proper motion and second by Gratz and Scarp, the committee voted to extend the annual report submission deadline. Staff should personally contact each noncompliant chapter and notify them that their report must be received by July 31. Chapters not submitting reports by July 31 will not have voting rights for the annual convention.

Professional chapters will be ranked this year using the new star system. Staff should prepare a list of one-star chapters for review during the September board meeting.

### **2003 CONVENTION UPDATE: TAMPA**

McKerral reported that \$65,000 has been raised toward the \$75,000 convention fund raising goal. Committee members still are looking for a printer for The Working Press and an honoree for the Legal Defense Fund Luncheon. Programming is almost complete, and the Friday night event should be the Battle of the Media Bands, sponsored by the Mid Florida Pro Chapter.

### **2005 CONVENTION UPDATE: LAS VEGAS**

Harper reported that no hotel contract has been signed for this event, but one possibility is a Marriott Resort in Henderson, Nev. Board members suggested contacting Bill McCloskey, who has a good public relations contact for several major Las Vegas hotels.

Committee members noted that SPJ's preferred convention meeting time is early October, but in recent years, the convention has been held in September because hotels have offered more economical rates.

### **FUTURE CONVENTIONS**

Staff should prepare a list of potential convention locales for discussion at a future meeting. Be sure to consider a mix of large and mid-size cities, along with cities in various geographic locations.

### **2004 CONVENTION UPDATE: NEW YORK**

SPJ member Betsy Ashton updated the group on planning for the 2004 SPJ National Convention. Most keynote speakers are already confirmed, including Lou Boccardi; Ellen Levine (the first woman to head Good Housekeeping); Clarence Page; Walter Cronkite (honorary convention chairman); Bill Moyers; and Brian Williams.

Ashton distributed a proposal for a convention magazine -- The Journalist. The magazine is a risk and involves significant upfront costs, but has the potential to be a significant money-maker and an excellent marketing tool for the organization.

Upon a proper motion and second by Cross and Gratz, the committee voted to move ahead with the proposal and authorized Harper to negotiate a contract with the proposed publisher.

After a five-minute break, Leger reordered agenda, and the meeting continued.

### **FALLEN JOURNALISTS FUND**

The committee discussed a proposal by SPJ member Liisa Hyvarinen to create a Fallen Journalists Fund to raise and provide financial resources for the families of journalists killed while working abroad. These funds would be used to return the bodies of the journalists to their families.

A motion to establish such a fund died for lack of a second. The group discussed other ways to honor fallen journalists, including some time of memorial during the SPJ National Convention. Proposals included: a convention resolution; creating a bookmark about the value of journalism, with the names of fallen journalists; and written tributes to the journalists.

Upon a proper motion and second by Carlson and Highland, the committee voted to invite Ms. Kelly, wife of fallen journalist Michael Kelly, to speak at the opening business session of the 2003 SPJ National Convention. Gratz and Cross will draft a resolution proposal honoring the fallen journalists to be presented to convention delegates for a vote.

### **FOI COALITIONS**

Leger referenced the written report in the board packet and indicated that the informational report would stand as submitted.

### **NOMINATIONS UPDATE**

Cross reported that Highland would be seeking an additional term as vice president for campus chapter affairs. There is no candidate for the adviser at large position and several regional director spots. Cross will continue to fill in the nominations slate as the convention approaches.

### **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE**

It was reported that the Governance Committee was off to a slow start but was to make some progress. There was concern that it might not be the current governance systems that are a problem for the organization, but that the problem might be more in the areas of planning and implementation of programs.

### **AWARDS**

Helen Thomas Lifetime Achievement Award

Upon a proper motion and second by McKerral and Highland, the committee voted to present a Helen Thomas Lifetime Achievement Award to Charles E. "Ed" Barber.

Distinguished Teaching in Journalism Award

Upon a proper motion and second by Highland and McKerral, the committee voted to present SPJ's Distinguished Teaching in Journalism Award to Sue Kopen Katcef.

Outstanding adviser award

Upon a proper motion and second by Highland and Carlson, the committee voted to present the David Eshelman outstanding adviser award to Richard Johns. (Johns also received the award in 1985.)

Howard Dubin Outstanding Professional Member Award

The committee decided to obtain more information about past Dubin award recipients prior to making this award. A final decision should come from the committee within two weeks.

Julie Galvan Outstanding Graduate Award

Upon a proper motion and second by McKerral and Carlson, the committee voted to present the Julie Galvan Outstanding Graduate Award to Erin Fillah.

Ethics Award

Upon a proper motion and second by Cross and Highland, the committee voted to present an Ethics Award to Jason Rodack.

Upon a proper motion and second by Cross and Highland, the committee voted to table discussion about an Ethics Award for Dale McConnaughay.

## Regional Director of the Year

Upon a proper motion and second by McKerral and Carlson, the committee voted to present the Regional Director of the Year award to Holly Fisher.

## Fellows of the Society

Upon a proper motion and second, the committee ratified the earlier selection of SPJ Fellows. The 2003 SPJ Fellows are Hodding Carter, president and chief executive officer of the Knight Foundation; author and journalist Stetson Kennedy; and Cynthia Tucker, opinion page editor of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Highland briefly discussed the proposal at Texas A&M University to eliminate the university's journalism program. Highland is in communication with the university and local journalists about the issue and will keep the committee updated.

## **WALL SURVEY**

Upon a proper motion and second by McKerral and Carlson, the committee voted not to participate in this survey, as outlined in committee packet materials. The group decided this was more appropriate for news outlets than journalism groups.

## **INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISM ISSUE**

The group discussed an e-mail from International Journalism Committee Chair Maria Trombly. Trombly has asked SPJ leaders and members to participate in a letter writing campaign on behalf of journalist William Nessen. Committee members agreed to participate in this effort and directed staff to put information on the web site and ask members to send letters.

## **DOING ETHICS IN JOURNALISM**

The group discussed ways to revive SPJ's ethics textbook, *Doing Ethics in Journalism*. An Executive Committee member will contact Bob Steele, one of the book's authors to continue discussions.

## **FINANCIAL REPORTING**

The Executive Committee discussed the importance of getting monthly financial statements to the Finance Committee for the SPJ and SDX Foundation boards of directors. The reports need context, including columns for actual, budgeted amounts, and percentage of budget used to date, as well as a narrative explaining issues of importance.

## **COLLEGIATE INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

Harper explained the Collegiate Institutional Membership appeals would go out by mid-August to colleges that are part of AEJMC.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

The committee restated its commitment to regularly reviewing the organization's strategic plan. This could be done through a scheduled conference call or e-mail discussion. Points from the plan need to be prioritized. McKerral and Gratz will review the plan, draft a priority list and schedule a call to discuss the issue further.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 5:30 p.m., the group adjourned to executive session to discuss the Wells Key award. The meeting ended after that discussion.