

SPJ Board Meeting Minutes

September 11, 2003 - Tampa, Florida

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

With President Robert Leger presiding, the meeting of the board of directors of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 8:10 a.m. on Thursday, September 11, 2003, at the Hyatt Regency in Tampa, Fla.

ROLL CALL

Secretary/Treasurer Irwin Gratz called the roll. The following board members were in attendance for all or a portion of the meeting:

President Robert Leger

President-elect Mac McKerral

Secretary-Treasurer Irwin Gratz

Immediate Past President Al Cross

Vice President of Campus Chapter Affairs Jim Highland

Director At-Large Jim Parker

Campus Advisers At-Large Mead Loop and David Carlson

Student Representatives Jeff Douglas and Autumn Sanders

Regional Directors: Guy Baehr, Jonathan Hunley, Holly Fisher, Bruce Cadwallader, Vicky Katz Whitaker, Dave Aeikens, Travis Poling, Paul Husselbee, Steve Maynard, Mark Scarp and Clint Brewer.

Executive Director Terry Harper and other staff members as well as members of the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation board of directors and various chapter members and SPJ members also were present for all or portions of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Upon proper motion and second by Highland and Cadwallader, respectively, the minutes of the April 26, 2003, SPJ board of directors meeting were approved as amended.

Upon proper motion and second by Parker and Carlson, respectively, the minutes of the April 26, 2003, joint meeting of the SPJ and Sigma Delta Chi Foundation boards of directors were approved.

SPJ PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Leger referenced his printed report, which was available in the board packets. He asked for questions or comments. Leger's report is attached to these minutes as Exhibit A.

SPJ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Harper referenced his report, which was e-mailed to board members in advance of the meeting. He briefly reviewed SPJ's financial management plans and explained that he was confident in the organization's financial position but that current financial reporting left much to be desired. The financial management has been brought in-house, and that should make the reporting process more manageable. Harper distributed un-audited financial statements and explained that they were for board members' general informational purposes only; the figures would change as the books were closed on Fiscal Year 2003.

Harper reported that he had been notified that SPJ was the beneficiary of the estate of Frederick I. Archibald. The Society's ten percent (10%) share is worth approximately \$76,000 and is to be used to establish a journalism scholarship fund in Mr. Archibald's memory. Harper recommended that the Society gift the funds to the SDX Foundation and administer the scholarship from there. Using the Foundation's five percent spending policy, three \$1,000 scholarships could be made each year.

Upon proper motion and second by Scarp and Highland, respectively, the board voted to gift the Archibald bequest to the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation to set up the scholarship fund and create an ad hoc committee

to be appointed by the SPJ President to establish criteria for awarding scholarships in the future.

The committee will be chaired by Highland, and committee members will include the campus representatives and advisers at-large on the SPJ board.

DISCUSSION ON SPJ FINANCES

Gratz led the discussion, which centered on a memo in the board packets that outlined ideas for improving the organization's financial situation. The group discussed ways to move beyond dues as the organization's primary source of funding.

Items discussed included: investing in the SDX awards through advertising and cash awards; increasing advertising sales, possibly through a fulltime staff person; refocusing Quill to report more on the organization as opposed to the industry; publishing or selling SPJ materials; increased merchandising; establishing a "master journalist" program that would not create First Amendment issues; and reexamining options for using the headquarters building.

The group paused at 8:46 a.m. for a moment of silence to reflect on the events of Sept. 11, 2001, and to honor two journalists and national SPJ members who recently died.

From the revenue discussion, the following issues arose:

- SPJ should carefully examine its core focus before selecting individual revenue projects
- Priorities need to be established for what to explore first.
- Board members would like to see a cost/benefit analysis for a plan to process all dues at one point during the year.
- It was suggested that SPJ measure its success by programs created and quality rather than an increase in membership numbers. If a program is self-financing, it's not as important how many members it brings in.
- For every project, SPJ should have a business plan or a business model that shows the project's sustainability before it is implemented.
- Consider a new convention model that generates more revenue and isn't as dependent on hotels.

The board established an ad-hoc committee to review the financial strategies and ideas and present a report to the Executive Committee in January and to the full board in April. Board members interested in serving on the committee should contact Leger.

CAMPUS CHAPTER AFFAIRS REPORT

Highland reviewed his report, which was available in the board packet. He highlighted recent activities and accomplishments in the campus realm, particularly with regard to First Amendment and free press issues. Highland encouraged continued letter-writing in support of a continuing journalism program to the administration at Texas A&M University.

REPORTS OF THE REGIONAL DIRECTORS

Reports from Regions 2, 3, 5, 10, and 11 were presented in the board books. The Region 6 report was distributed at the meeting. The reports stood as prepared.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

— MEMBERSHIP / CHAPTERS REPORT

SPJ/IRE Better Watchdog Workshops

Board members reviewed the retention rates for members from the SPJ/IRE Better Watchdog workshops. The current retention information was available in the board packets. A question arose about how many of the individuals were already SPJ members before attending the workshops. The group briefly discussed programming efforts, retention efforts and ideas for future programs. One suggestion was to consider requesting those funds to develop local chapter programming rather than national programs.

Membership Committee Update

Membership Committee Chairman Howard Dubin reiterated his request for increased membership

promotion and marketing efforts. He discussed a new mailing currently going out to lapsed members. Another idea yet to be implemented is having local chapters submit names to headquarters, which headquarters will contact with a localized membership pitch.

Council of National Journalism Organizations Survey

Carlson distributed the results of a survey of journalism organizations he conducted for the Council of National Journalism Organizations.

Graduated Chapter Requirements Update

Grimes updated the group on the implementation of the star rating system for professional chapters. The program has created additional paperwork and responsibilities for staff and regional directors, but it has resulted in better information about those chapters that submitted reports. Chapter leaders did a good job evaluating their chapters. The program will now be carried over to campus chapters for 2004. At the 2004 fall meeting, the board will be considering dissolving or revoking chapter charters for chapters that remain noncompliant.

Highland suggested sending a letter to the dean of all schools that did not submit a report this year explaining that the chapter was not in compliance and would be placed on probation if they were not brought into compliance by next year.

Regional Directors asked for a responsibility list for working with one-star chapters in the coming year.

Upon proper motion and second by Whitaker and Highland, respectively, the board voted to revoke the charter of the Central Illinois Pro Chapter.

FOI REPORT

Freedom of Information Committee Chair Ian Marquand presented his report, which was included in the board packets. Marquand mentioned past year's highlights, including the establishment of the State Open Government Hall of Fame. He pointed out that there had been few Legal Defense Fund requests in recent months. Marquand's term as FOI Chair will end at the convention. The committee will be lead by co-chairs Charles Davis and Joel Campbell.

Bruce Sanford of Baker & Hostetler distributed the B&H annual report. He recognized Marquand's excellent work in the past few years. Sanford, too, mentioned the LDF and suggested the group seek out a high-impact issue that SPJ is willing to pursue. He suggested a focus on privacy issues that would be beneficial to the public (not just journalists). Sanford reiterated his firm's willingness to participate in local chapter programs based on a selected issue. The key would be advanced scheduling.

The group briefly discussed current HIPPA legislation. Davis has a comprehensive file on the subject. The message here should be that there is a very high cost to misguided expectations with regard to privacy. Sanford suggested SPJ work with other groups also interested in these issues. It was pointed out that this was a concern for members of the clergy because they were unable to visit their church members.

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee Chair Sally Lehrman discussed her report, which was included in the board packet. Lehrman mentioned SPJ's diversity teaching module, which was presented at a recent AEJMC conference. The Diversity and Journalism Education committees will be making revisions to the module and preparing it for distribution. The Rainbow Sourcebook is gaining popularity, and The Whole Story, SPJ's diversity newsletter has been popular. Both require an ongoing commitment. Lehrman reminded board members that SPJ's commitment to diversity is just starting to show and must be maintained.

Lehrman shared with the board a proposed change to SPJ's Bylaws preamble to add diversity and freedom of information commitments to the preamble.

Upon proper motion and second by Poling and McKerral, respectively, the board voted to support the bylaws change proposed by Lehrman.

McKerral mentioned that he will be meeting with committee chairs during the weekend, and will ask them to each be involved in projects in the coming year that will result in physical, tangible things journalists can use.

The remaining committee reports stand in written form. Other committee reports included in the board packet were: ACEJMC, Chapter Doctor, Ethics, International Journalism, Journalism Education, and Project Watchdog.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Governance Committee Chairman Reginald Stuart distributed his committee's report at the meeting. A copy of the report is attached to these minutes. Board member Christine Tatum joined this discussion via phone. The committee made several observations but no recommendations that required board votes at this meeting.

General Observations:

- Board size should remain the same. The President should assign specific board members to serve as active members of each committee to ensure that committee work is represented during board discussions.
- No recommendations were made to create board positions based on media type.
- The committee recommended sticking with the current delegate voting system.
- The Executive Committee acts in absence of the full board of directors. The committee should fully communicate its actions to the board as soon as possible.
- Region Directors are responsible for their regions but must also think and act with the best interests of the entire organization in mind.
- Consider increasing the stipends for regional directors and board members.
- Directors at large positions need to be carefully thought out. They need specific responsibilities each year, depending up on the person in the position. It is the responsibility of the Nominations Committee Chair to seek out individuals for these positions.
- Regional conferences are important SPJ tools. The board should set a goal to improve the regional programs. Consider setting a common theme each year to build every conference around. Consider helping regions secure funding and speakers and preparing marketing plans and materials.

The board discussed each of the above issues and others related to governance. Some board members felt strongly that the group should still consider decreasing the size of the board and looking at ways to better serve local chapters and members. Others expressed displeasure with maintaining the regional system, saying the geographic regions were too constricting.

The group agreed that it was important to keep these discussions going. The committee's report, along with alternative notes compiled by McKerral, Tatum, Hunley and Brewer, will be distributed to all chapter presidents and advisers. Discussions should be scheduled at each regional conference, with a follow-up discussion at the April board meeting.

CONVENTION REPORTS

2003: Tampa

McKerral pointed out that things are running as smoothly as possible. The group was close to its fund raising goal of \$75,000 as the convention opened. He asked board members to make notes about suggestions for next year.

2004: New York

Convention planner Betsy Ashton distributed her report and reviewed fund raising commitments and visits to date. The committee's goal is \$200,000, and they are planning for 1,200 in attendance. Ashton discussed confirmed and potential keynote speakers as well as major events being planned. Sanford offered to assist with organizing panels for the convention.

Ashton introduced Amy Lemel, publisher of The Journalist, the 2004 Convention magazine. The Executive Committee in July approved initial plans for this magazine, but completion will require securing

a loan for work done prior to the magazine's publication.

The group discussed the risks of the project and determined the potential value outweighed those risks. The program could "redefine" the organization and the convention.

Upon proper motion and second by Parker and Scarp, respectively, the board voted to seek a loan from the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation to fund the development of The Journalist. The board authorized a loan of up to \$180,000 for this purpose.

2005: Las Vegas

Harper discussed difficulties in finding adequate hotel space on the Las Vegas strip using SPJ's current weekend day pattern. Consensus was to consider an early week convention in Las Vegas.

Future Conventions

Harper suggested that planning logistics and programming for future conventions should reside with the national staff, with assistance from the national Professional Development Committee. HQ would create the structure, make the plans and involve those necessary to successfully complete the program.

Upon and proper motion and second by Carlson and Gratz, respectively, the board directed headquarters staff to plan and execute future conventions, including convention programming.

Hunley recommended involving headquarters more in regional conference planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON SDX FOUNDATION GRANT REQUESTS

Upon proper motion and second by Parker and Cadwallader, respectively, the board voted to recommend for funding by the SDX Foundation only the \$10,000 request from the SPJ FOI Committee, New Jersey Foundation for Open Government and NFOIC.

NEW BUSINESS

Responsibilities of the Resolutions Committee

Cross asked the board to review the responsibilities of the Resolutions Committee. Should the committee have the power to refuse to present proposed resolutions to the convention delegates? Or, should it simply review the language of the resolutions and make recommendations to the delegates? Consider developing a basic standard for proposed resolutions.

The Resolutions Committee should formalize what it believes its role to be and present that to the full board for review.

OTHER BUSINESS

Leger named Fisher, Sanders and Baehr as vote counters for the general elections.

Leger named the following board members as sergeants at arms for the delegates meetings: Cadwallader, Douglas, and Aeikens.

Leger named the following individuals to the Credentials Committee during the convention: Maynard, Scarp and Chapter Doctor Kyle Niederpruem.

Leger appointed the follow officers to conduct elections in the following regional meetings: Region 2, Leger; Region 8, Leger; Region 3, McKerral; Region 11, McKerral; Region 6, Gratz; Region 10, Cross; and Region 12, Highland.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the board of directors and upon proper motion and second by Carlson and Scarp, respectively, the meeting was adjourned at 12:59 p.m. on Thursday, September 11, 2003.