

**MINUTES
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
SEPTEMBER 25, 2011
NEW ORLEANS, LA**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

With President Hagit Limor presiding, the meeting of the board of directors of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 9:01 a.m. on Sunday, September 25, 2011, at the Sheraton New Orleans., in conjunction with the Society's annual convention at the Excellence in Journalism conference.

In addition to Limor, the following were present: Immediate Past President Kevin Smith; Secretary-Treasurer John Ensslin; Vice President for Campus Chapter Affairs Neil Ralston; Director at-Large Bill McCloskey; Director at-Large Lauren Bartlett, Campus Advisers at-Large Kym Fox and George Daniels; Student Representatives Tara Puckey and Taylor Mirfendereski; Regional Directors Luther Turmelle, Bill Oates, Brian Eckert, James Pilcher, Liz Hansen, Amanda Theisen, Kelsey Volkman, Scott Cooper, Don Meyers, Jodi Cleesattle, Dana Neuts and Sonny Albarado.

Staff members present for the meeting were Executive Director Joe Skeel, Associate Executive Director Chris Vachon and Director of Communications Scott Leadingham.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Upon proper motion and second by Cooper and Turmelle, respectively, the board approved meeting minutes from the February 17, 2011 and April 16, 2011 meetings.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Limor began her report by introducing Bob Butler of the National Association of Black Journalists. Butler wanted to extend the greetings of NABJ and gave perspective on the recent Unity-NABJ split.

Limor gave a report on training session held by SPJ since the April board meeting and reported on the legislative and governmental affairs issues SPJ has been tracking in the past six months. She expressed sadness over the deaths of three former SPJ presidents in the past year — Phil Record, Ernie Ford and Jean Otto.

SIGMA DELTA CHI FOUNDATION REPORT

Steve Geimann submitted his report on behalf of the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation.

ACEJMC FALL REPORT

Steve Geimann submitted his report as the SPJ representative on the ACEJMC accreting body.

STAFF REPORT

Skeel delivered the report of the executive director and reported that in the most recent fiscal year SPJ had outperformed its budget by \$216,000, helped by and effort to exceed revenue projections and cut expenses. SPJ had outperformed its membership revenue projection by \$6,000.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR CAUCUS REPORT

Albarado gave a report on behalf of the regional directors. He reported about a concern from RDs about a "discouraging effect" the star-ranking system has on volunteer-led chapters. He recommended that SPJ drop the star-ranking system and recommended a less complicated "pass/fail" system.

A discussion ensued about the pros and cons of the system and whether it should be abolished or replaced or changed in any way.

Bartlett said she believed there needs to be a set of rules and that the star system is set up to provide flexibility. She believe what RDs are proposing is a “slippery slope.”

Ensslin said if he is elected as president he would appoint a committee to do a top to bottom review of the ranking system. He said he believes the chapter doctors should be more about “preventative medicine.”

McCloskey said that he is not in favor of the star system.

Pilcher said he feels there should be at least an appeal process in place so chapters can appeal rankings that they believed aren’t deserved.

Ralston said he hopes the board does not continue to flip-flop on this issue and said just because people complain doesn’t mean it’s a worthless system.

Daniels said he feels there is a fair discussion about options and perhaps the course of action should not be to take away another system. He recommended studying the implications of removal or keeping the system before taking any action.

Upon proper motion and second by Albarado and Cooper, respectively, the board voted to abolish the star-ranking system and establish a pass/fail system requiring three professional development programs per year for chapters. The final vote was 12 to 8.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

DUES INCREASE

Limor said that the board had discussed a dues increase at the April 2011 board meeting and decided to wait until this meeting to discuss again and get feedback from members and chapters.

A discussion ensued about the pros and cons of a dues increase and how members and chapters felt about such an action.

Turmelle said he had heard from people who said they love SPJ but could not join because of the cost. Meyers aid chapters have said dues should be lowered, not increased.

Cooper said there is a perceived dichotomy between asking for a dues increase but still offering the free six-month membership for members who have lost their jobs.

Albarado said he is sensitive to the potential cost issues have been given furloughs, but understands why such an increase is necessary and helpful.

Joe Skeel explained that because membership revenue is a the one constant form of revenue that can be counted on for budgeting reasons, it is the only way to predict how a budget will rise or fall in the next year.

Mirfendereski asked if the increase would affect students.

The increase would affect membership categories in the following way:

Pro: \$3; Retired: \$1.50; Household: \$150; Post Graduate: \$1.50; College: \$1.50; Associate: \$94

Upon proper motion and second by Bartlett and Puckey, respectively, the board voted to implement the proposed dues increase on January 1, 2012.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR ASSISTANCE

Ensslin said he feels some sort of way of reaching new RDs and helping them excel in their role is needed.

Meyers said part of the concerns of why RDs did not react positively to the initial proposal, though it

begins with the best of intentions, is the idea of star rankings being a punitive system.

Upon proper motion by Turmelle and Cooper, respectively, the board rejected a requirement that the person appointed as Regional Director coach be a previous Regional Director. The final vote was 10 to 7.

CMA CONVENTION

Puckey talked about her experience at the College Media Advisers convention and said that it is important to keep the SPJ presence at the annual conference.

Upon proper motion and second by Puckey and Mirfendereski, respectively, the board voted to continue supporting SPJ involved in the CMA convention by approving travel funds for SPJ student reps and other designees to attend the annual CMA convention.

DEACTIVATING CAMPUS CHAPTERS

Ralston introduced a proposal regarding student chapters.

Upon proper motion and second by Ralston and Turmelle, respectively, the board approved the recommendations of Ralston about the process of deactivating campus chapters.

Ralston further explained the need need to change the process for approving student chapters through a “provisional year” should be abolished.

Upon proper motion by Ralston and Eckert, respectively, the board voted to approve the proposal and eliminate the provisional year requirement for all chapters.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

DATABASE/WEBSITE UPDATE

Pilcher gave a report about the progress of the special committee looking at the database and integration with the website.

A discussion ensued about concerns over the system used to submit reports and problems encountered in the process.

Neuts said that it would be helpful that whatever system is used, regional directors be copied when reports are submitted so they can better keep track of their chapters’ activities.

SURROGATE DELEGATES

Bob Becker, Bylaws Committee Chairman, introduced a proposed bylaws amendment to clearly allow surrogate delegated and to discuss what limits would be put on these items.

A discussion ensued with the hopes of exploring this topic at another meeting.

Becker said that the hope is to have feedback to discuss at the January 2012 meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Daniels made a quick addendum to the previously supported the Journalism Education committee proposal.

Limor recognized three members leaving the board and thanked them for their service. The board members were Bill Oates, Tary Pucky Kevin Smith.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon proper motion and second by Ensslin and McCloskey, respectively, the board entered

executive session at 12:05 p.m.

Upon proper motion and second, the board exited Executive Session at 12:17 p.m.

Upon proper motion and second by Bartlett and Pilcher, respectively, the board voted unanimously to extend a contract extension offer to Skeel for three years, with options for both parties for a fourth and fifth year. Annual salary increases for each of the three years were set at 89K, 92K and 96K.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, President Limor adjourned the meeting at 12:22 p.m. on a motion by Smith, seconded by Bartlett.