

## **Minutes**

**Meeting of the House of Delegates  
Society of Professional Journalists  
September 6, 2014  
Nashville, Tenn.**

### **Meeting Called to Order**

With President David Cuillier presiding, the meeting of the house of delegates of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 3:00 p.m. CT on Saturday, September 6, 2014, at the Opryland Hotel, in conjunction with the Society's annual convention: Excellence in Journalism.

### **Year in Review**

Cuillier asked the delegates to observe a brief moment of silence to honor journalists killed this year and in past years. He then gave a brief year in review of completed initiatives, including the new digital and freelance communities and the Society's advocacy efforts.

### **Rules of the Convention**

Bylaws Committee Chairman Robert Becker read the rules of the convention and voting procedures for delegates.

## **ELECTION RESULTS**

President Cuillier announced election results for the board of directors:

Election Results:

- President Elect: Paul Fletcher
- Secretary Treasurer: Lynn Walsh
- Campus Adviser At-Large: Mike Reilley
- Director At-Large: Alex Tarquinio
- Campus Representatives (2): Jordan Gass-Pooré, Brett Hall
- Region 1: Rebecca Baker
- Region 4: Patti Gallagher Newberry
- Region 5: Deborah Givens
- Region 7: Rob McLean
- Region 8: Eddy Gallagher
- Region 9: Tom Johnson
- Region 11: Matt Hall

## **SWEARING IN NEW OFFICERS**

Newly elected officers and board members were sworn in by President Cuillier.

### **Convention Resolutions**

Resolutions Committee Chairman Sonny Albarado introduced 13 resolutions for the delegates' consideration.

**Upon proper motion by Lauren Bartlett, Los Angeles Pro Chapter, and second by Georgiana Vines, East Tennessee Pro Chapter, the house of delegates agreed to approve all resolutions as a block with the exception of Resolutions 7 and 13. The delegates asked that Resolutions 1 and 2 be read aloud.**

**Mark Pitsch, Madison Pro, asked that Resolution 9 be removed from the block as a friendly**

**amendment. Amendment was seconded by Paul Fletcher, Virginia Pro. Bartlett accepted the friendly amendment.**

Albarado read Resolution 1, thanking Cuillier for his service. Albarado read Resolution 2, thanking headquarters staff for its work throughout the year.

Block of resolutions except 7, 9 and 13 passed.

*RESOLUTION 9 — High school journalism*

Mark Pitsch, Madison Pro, proposed an amendment to the final paragraph of the resolution, adding “the Student Press Law Center.” Motion was seconded by Fletcher.

The resolution, as amended, passed.

*RESOLUTION 13 — Respect and support for the First Amendment Rights of the student journalist*

**Upon proper motion by Bill McCloskey, D.C. Pro Chapter, and second by Hagit Limor, Cincinnati Pro Chapter, the house of delegates agreed to approve Resolution 13.**

*RESOLUTION 7 — Renaming SPJ the “Society for Professional Journalism”*

Eric Francis, Arkansas Pro Chapter, moved that Resolution 7 be approved and was seconded by Carl Corry, Long Island Pro Chapter.

Corry proposed a friendly amendment to remove the line regarding “gnashing of teeth.” Resolution author Michael Koretzky accepted the friendly amendment.

Koretzky proposed asking delegates to postpone the name change until a vote can take place that would include the entire membership. Becker explained that changing the name would require a bylaws change, which would not be able to take place until next year.

Cuillier read straw vote totals regarding the name change that were collected the previous two days. Results: 205 yes votes (34 percent); 345 no votes, (58 percent); 46 no opinion votes, (8 percent).

Irwin Gratz, Maine Pro, proposed a friendly amendment that makes the change contingent on the results of another straw vote. Koretzky accepts and words his amendment as “be contingent upon approval of SPJ membership in a straw vote.” The motion was seconded by Andy Schotz, D.C. Pro.

Danielle McLean, New England Pro, inquired as to why the amendment was needed if delegates are elected to represent the membership of their chapter. Bartlett urged a no vote on this resolution because “democracy and this delegate system works.”

Koretzky reiterated that the delegate system represents people in chapters and asked how the other 43 percent of the membership, who are not in chapters, have a voice. Susan Stevens, Chicago Pro, is concerned about doing a second straw poll regarding the name change. Hazel Becker, D.C. Pro, notes that a similar resolution was brought forth last year and asks that we move forward.

Limor called the question on the amendment. McCloskey seconded the motion on the call to question. Motion on the call to question passed and debate ended.

**The resolution, as amended, did not pass by vote of the house of delegates.**

## **PROPOSED BYLAWS CHANGE**

The proposed bylaws change addresses election procedures that allow staff to do required work before

leaving Indianapolis and heading to the convention site. The SPJ Board of Directors recommended delegates pass this change, though the Bylaws Committee prefers staff find an alternative administrative solution.

**Upon proper motion by Bartlett and second by Mary Wisniewski, Chicago Pro Chapter, respectively, the house of delegates approved the bylaws change.**

## **ETHICS CODE REVISION**

Cuillier explained the most recent parts of the process, including the fact that the committee met with multiple people and chapters over the past two days of convention and worked toward something comprehensive and inclusive.

Limor moved that the delegates accept the most recent draft of the Code of Ethics. The motion was seconded by Bartlett.

Ethics committee member Chris Roberts explained recent changes for delegates.

Cuillier shared the straw poll results, though notes voters were considering a previous version. The results: 436 vote yes to adopt the new code (75 percent), 54 vote no (10 percent), 92 vote no opinion (16 percent).

Limor urged delegates to pass the code, citing new technology and changes. She spoke about the comments accepted by the committee, the rewrites and the newest changes.

Tom Johnson, Rio Grande Pro Chapter, spoke to specific language within the code. He noted that on page 2, line 36, the language refers to public records being open for inspection, but he fears that is too narrow. He proposed an amendment of “public records are open for inspection, retrieval, or copying and duplication.” Sally Lehrman, NorCal Pro Chapter, seconded the motion.

Ben Meyerson, Chicago Pro Chapter, noted that copying and duplication are very similar in context. He also believes that we have made our case quite clear where we stand on public records and proposes a friendly amendment of striking “copying.” Friendly amendment is accepted by Johnson.

Kevin Smith, Ethics Committee Chairman, noted that the document is a Code of Ethics instead of best practices. He cautioned the delegates against trying to include legal issues in a Code of Ethics. Smith also shared information about the repository of information that sits behind the Code to explain additional information and include situational advice or specifics.

Al Cross, Kentucky Bluegrass Pro Chapter, said that he believes this Code pulls together our two main missions. Hazel Becker, D.C. Pro Chapter, asked that the group change the wording to “... open and for public use.” Limor proposed additional wording that “...records are open.” Johnson accepts the friendly amendment.

Deborah Krol, Valley of the Sun Pro Chapter, proposed the wording “...public records are open to all.” She noted that in tribal communities there are challenges with some people getting access because of cultural rules. Johnson accepts the friendly amendment.

Amendment passed.

Discussion continues with the main motion to pass the Code of Ethics as amended. Koretzky asked that both versions are placed on the screen for viewing. Liz Enochs, NorCal Pro, moved that the third bullet point under “Seek truth and report it” be removed because it feels aimed at digital media. The motion is seconded by Becker.

Andrew Seaman, member of the Ethics Committee, requests to speak. Permission is granted by Cuillier. He explains that bullet wasn’t aimed at digital media and represents anything that is an abbreviated

version of any story.

Elizabeth Donald, St. Louis Pro, strongly opposes removing this because most outlets are online and the push for immediate news is important, so it's critical that the Society address that things should be accurate. Koretzky asked if it was possible to remove that bullet and include it in the supporting materials.

Paul Carr, Baylor University, noted that he thinks it is important to spell out for working with students. Tom McKee, Cincinnati Pro Chapter, supports keeping the section in the Code because it reflects the need for accuracy across all formats.

Sheryl Worsley, Utah Pro, called the question. Seconded by Limor. Delegates vote in favor of calling the questions. Debate on this amendment ends.

Amendment failed.

Discussion on the main motion, as amended, continues. Kathryn McCartney, McNeese State University, asks to yield her time to her chapter adviser. She moves to allow Cory Greineisen, who is not a delegate, time to speak. Seconded by Schotz. Passed by delegates.

Cory Greineisen spoke about how his chapter would like the Code of Ethics to be a living document, always open to interpretation and updated. McCartney moved to "amend the Code to add living document to the footnote in the Code of Ethics." Limor seconded the motion.

Eric Francis, Arkansas Pro, compared the Code of Ethics and additional documents to the AP Stylebook and Ask the Editor. Bartlett explained that the wording of the additional documents has not changed. There will be a Code of Ethics that will not change, the additional documentation will change and grow. Schotz and Gratz provided background about the additional documentation section and the thoughts of the committee.

The amendment to add living document back to the Code of Ethics failed.

Joe Walsh, Northwest Arkansas Pro, asked about line 33 and the word "civil" being included. He questioned if we are not supporting the expression of ideas proposed "uncivilly." Fletcher explained that this portion of the Code is tied to a specific situation about anonymous online comments. Joe Meyers, Central Ohio Pro, asked why we removed the section about being sensitive when using photographs or interviews of those in tragic situations.

Bartlett and Fletcher moved to allow Seaman to address the concern, respectively. It passed.

Seaman noted that the first line in the "minimize harm" section addressed the situation in a broad sense without being media specific.

Hazel Becker called the question, but Alex Tarquinio, Deadline Club, was already at the mic. Cuillier allowed her to speak.

Tarquinio proposed a friendly amendment to line 60 to strike "including that from social media." She believed it is redundant and random. She also noted that the term "social media" may be changed in five years, so to allow it to live on, it should be removed. Enochs seconded the friendly amendment.

Bartlett spoke to their concerns, noting that the committee would not oppose removing this. Michael Fitzgerald, New England Pro, said it is his belief that this is useful language to slow people down. Carr said students are still not "there yet," and this line is important. Matt Hall, San Diego Pro Chapter, noted that as the single mention of social media in this document, it should be removed since media is media for the purposes of the Code.

The question was called by Bartlett and seconded by Jane Primerano, New Jersey Pro Chapter. Delegates

voted in favor of calling the question. Discussion ended.

The house of delegates passed the motion to remove the clause regarding social media.

Lehrman said that the preamble removed some important ideals. She moved that the greater goal be included and asked that the preamble return to the original first sentence. Motion was seconded by Tarquinio. A voice vote was close and card voting took place. Eighty-eight voted yes, forty-three voted no. The amendment passed.

Primerano, New Jersey Pro, called the question, in addition to Hazel Becker earlier in the discussion. Koretzky asked to speak. Bartlett seconded calling the question.

Hazel Becker withdrew her motion on calling the question of the original motion. Koretzky pointed out that 43 percent of SPJ's membership is unrepresented and that if the Code of Ethics passes without going back to the general membership, it is unethical.

Hazel Becker called the question and was seconded by Bartlett. The delegates voted to call the question. Discussion ended.

**The motion passed and a new Code of Ethics was adopted by SPJ's House of Delegates.**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Upon proper motion by Bartlett and second by Vines, the house of delegates voted to adjourn the meeting at 4:53 p.m.