

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
MAY 23, 2016
ZOOM CONFERENCE SERVICE

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

With President Paul Fletcher presiding, the meeting of the board of directors of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 1:05 P.M. ET on Monday, May 23 Via Zoom conference service.

In addition to Fletcher, the following were present: President-Elect Lynn Walsh; Immediate Past President Dana Neuts; At-Large Directors Alex Tarquinio and Bill McCloskey; Campus At-Large Representatives Becky Tallent and Mike Reilley; Regional Directors Jane Primerano, Andy Schotz, Michael Koretzky, Patti Gallagher Newberry, Deborah Givens, Joe Radske, Stephanie Wilken, Eddy Gallagher, Tom Johnson, Matt Hall and Amanda Womac.

Staff members present for the meeting were Executive Director Joe Skeel and Membership Strategist Tara Puckey.

BOARD RESTRUCTURING

Fletcher asked Koretzky to speak to his proposal.

Koretzky said he had a hard time responding to notions that the chapter system will be destroyed under this proposal. Or that it's difficult for members to get to regional conferences and pick up Mark of Excellence certificates, which were other concerns raised by members.

Koretzky said he has held a Region 3 conference not in the spring, not in his region and it wasn't a full-blown conference. And, it went well.

Koretzky said we are talking about dots on a map. It won't affect everyone in the way they think it will.

Some were also concerned about changing the Scripps Leadership program.

Koretzky said if the board is going to make decision that has some reward, it is going to come with some risk. If it doesn't go right, we can change it right back, he said.

Fletcher said regardless of what happens with this proposal, he will put together a task force to research the issue of governance.

Schotz addressed the idea that people can go to any regional, but said the organization has never explained that. But there is a legitimate issue about MOE awards given out at regional conferences. If people can go to whatever conference they want, they would need to enter into whatever region they want.

“If we have solutions, we need to flesh it out and explain it. We can’t just dismiss that,” Schotz said.

Gallagher Newberry asked for an update on the recruitment for the three RD vacancies.

Givens said they had a candidate for Region 5. Wilkens said they didn’t have a candidate for Region 7 yet.

Gallagher said her chapters were concerned about distance and reducing the number of regions. Local leaders also felt the board was not too large – and more voices were needed. By doing away with RDs and campus advisors, we were losing voices for people that don’t always have enough. Chapters like the idea of RDs making personal contact with leaders.

Hall said he was an early supporter of the proposal, but definitely on the fence. He talked to all of his pro chapters and one supports it. The others didn’t respond or suggested they were OK with this. But in talking with Utah, he doesn’t agree with chapters being “dots on a map.” They have strong relationships with chapters they want to maintain. And, where I start to oppose this idea, is regional travel and cost. Not from the RD perspective, but from chapter members that travel to regional conferences. It’s a big deal for the students. There is a camaraderie that I think we are minimizing. We could redraw it, but that would mean changing relationships.

Womac said the grass-roots representation is what’s important for folks in her region. They are in favor of looking at ways to restructure the board, but not this proposal.

Johnson said all three of his chapters are pretty strongly opposed to changing the regions. It seems that lumping whole states together doesn’t make sense in planning. Seems the board does function pretty well given its size. He said he doesn’t know that the board would gain faster decisions by knocking down the number of board positions.

He went on to say that if the regions are going to be redesigned, he thinks the organization should be using other criteria that states. He does like giving additional financial support for RDs. He is opposed to the proposal today.

Radske said: In Region 6, this has made sense for us. We already partner with chapters in the proposed regions. If we do this, we do need to respect what Tom just said. Maybe there are some adjustments that need to be made. And I think that reducing the student adviser position is a mistake.

Koretzky said that irrespective of the vote, he would love to know how many board members is enough members. If there is going to be a task force, he said, we could have the regional directors be more like city commissioners, where we don’t represent specific regions. In this new media era, one thing we need to talk about is being less rigid.

Koretzky said the board is going to have to figure out a way to respond quicker, take risks and fix those risks. Regardless of what happens with this proposal, we need to fix this. I hope that becomes part of this discussion.

Schotz said we could help ourselves by bringing people in during the process. He said we could eliminate RDs from the board but keep that level in place, with regions intact.

Fletcher said what Schotz is proposing is the kind of thing that the task force would be considering.

McCloskey said it seems that this is a solution looking for a problem. Part of what Michael is proposing is that Michael has more money. That's a wonderful idea. That can be done through the budget process. Some chapters choose not to charge dues. Some charge dues and don't spend it. I think we are talking about money, and not geography. We can reallocate money right now if that's the problem, he said.

Walsh said she doesn't think this plan is perfect. But she appreciates Michael proposing it because it has started the conversation. To her, this proposal is a step toward a larger direction. "I'd like to see us vote today to remove the positions, but let's have a task force or staff look at the issues more in depth." She said.

Givens agreed with McCloskey. Chapters in Region 5 didn't understand the need. And as a new board member, she didn't see the size being problematic.

Koretzky moved that the proposal below be adopted – with the amendment that Utah and Colorado be in the new Region 8. McCloskey seconded for the purposes of discussion.

Motion 1

Effective Sept. 19, 2016, SPJ shall have nine regions, with their borders defined as:

- **Region 1:** Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont
- **Region 2:** Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia
- **Region 3:** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands
- **Region 4:** Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio
- **Region 5 (formerly 12):** Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee
- **Region 6:** Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin
- **Region 7 (formerly 8):** Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

- **Region 8 (formerly 10):** Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming
 - **Region 9 (formerly 11):** Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Nevada, Mariana Islands, Utah
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Motion 2

The SPJ board of directors requests the Bylaws Committee draft a resolution to the delegates to the convention, “the supreme legislative body of the organization,” that will change to Article 7 Section One of SPJ’s bylaws to remove one campus chapter adviser from the board (change in italic):

“The board of directors shall be composed of the national officers, the immediate past president, one regional director for each region established by the board, and six directors to be elected at large: *a campus chapter adviser*, two student members, and two professional members.”

Schotz said he doesn’t feel like the board should be making this decision on the fly. He would like to see the board spend more time and research it first.

Johnson said diving by state is illogical and counterproductive.

Walsh calls the question.

The board voted 13-3 against the motion. Those voting yes included Koretzky, Walsh and Radske. Neuts abstained.

Gallagher Newberry said she thinks there are a lot of admirable parts of Koretzky’s proposal. She voted no because she felt we were rushing it. It became a lot more complicated as we received feedback from members.

As the task force leader, she asked Lynn and Paul for guidance and deadlines. She doesn’t want the work to take two years to issue a report.

Fletcher said that if we took a vote, there might be a majority that we need to do something different. If nothing else has been accomplished, that is now on the table.

Walsh said she would like to get with Tara, Skeel and Fletcher and would like them to be very closely involved in this. Although it's very important, she doesn't know that she want volunteers carrying too much of the load. We (*Lynn and Paul*) will follow up via e-mail.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon proper motion by McCloskey and second by Wilken the meeting was adjourned at 1:48 p.m. Monday, May 23, 2016.