

Society of Environmental Journalists Board of Directors
April 23, 2016 Meeting
Hilton Anatole Hotel, Dallas, Texas

Members Present: President Jeff Burnside, Christy George, Randy Loftis, Douglas Fischer, Lizzie Grossman, Meaghan Parker, Roger Witherspoon, Nancy Gaarder, First Vice President Jennifer Bogo, David Poulson, Secretary Bobby Magill and Second Vice President Kate Sheppard. Also present: Executive Director Beth Parke, Associate Director Chris Bruggers and Annual Conference Director Jay Letto.

9:10 a.m. — Call to Order

Jeff thanks Trammell Crowe for hosting the SEJ Board in Dallas and announces that minutes of the January 2016 board meeting will be deferred.

• Jeff asks for an up-or-down vote to approve members of the Stolberg Committee. All vote in favor.

Executive Director's Report

Beth discusses the opportunity to vie for an unrestricted grant and discusses funding for the SEJ annual conference in Sacramento.

• Motion for the board to meet in executive session to discuss executive director succession planning.

Christy moves, Bobby seconds.

Vote: All approve. None oppose. No abstentions.

Motion Passes.

9:26 a.m. — Board Meets in Executive Session

10:10 a.m. — Board Ends Executive Session

Jeff asks anyone with potential interest in applying for the executive director position to step out of the meeting.

• Motion to resume executive session to discuss succession planning.

Bobby moves, Roger seconds.

Vote: All approve. None oppose. No abstentions.

Motion Passes.

10:11 a.m. — Board Meets in Executive Session

12:05 p.m. — Board Ends Executive Session

Succession Planning

Bobby updates the board on the succession communication plan and Christy provides an update on executive director job ad possibilities. Board discusses executive director succession financing and whether the board can tap SEJ's endowment.

• Motion to authorize Beth Parke to approach SEJ donors to release up to \$70,000 from donor-restricted funds beginning immediately for executive director transition-related expenses.

Douglas moves, Roger seconds.

Vote: All approve. None oppose. No abstentions.

Headquarters Location

Board members discuss the process for determining the future location of SEJ's headquarters and the request for proposal SEJ members plan to send to universities and other institutions that may consider housing SEJ's headquarters. Members debate whether the headquarters location should be determined prior to hiring a new executive director, or whether the location should be determined after the new ED is hired.

2:35 p.m. — Board Breaks for Lunch and Committee Meetings

3:59 p.m. — Board Meeting Returns to Order

Finance Committee Report

Nancy reports that the committee is considering moving ahead with soliciting donations to SEJ made in Beth's name. The committee requests that SEJ finances be kept in mind as the Board moves ahead with its headquarters search.

Future Sites Committee Report

Douglas reports that the committee is proposing to change SEJ financial policy to add a new exception to restricted sources of income to make a further exception for sponsors of national and regional conferences. The exception would allow SEJ to take money from anyone for national and regional conference sponsorship. Donations would be transparent and approved by the board. SEJ would retain full editorial control of event content and speakers. For example: A tech company could underwrite SEJ conference Wi-fi with board approval.

Board members discuss proposal. Beth suggests such sponsorship funding may be needed for the Sacramento conference.

• ***Motion to amend existing SEJ policy on acceptability of income sources under B2, middle paragraph, strike the words “but excluding food and drink” and add a new paragraph that says the board will review this policy annually in light of conference needs.***

Christy Moves. No second.

Motion fails.

• ***Motion: Future Sites Committee recommends that the board approve the following changes to SEJ’s Financial Policies to allow in Section B sponsorships at our national and regional conferences and to fix in Section I a typo in Section II of i:***

— Sponsorships of national and regional conferences. Donations must be transparent and follow the sponsorship plan as approved by the board. Sponsorship funds can be used for any conference expenses and can be applied to future SEJ conferences and events. SEJ retains full editorial control of event content and speakers.

Douglas Moves. Roger Seconds.

• ***Motion to amend the above motion to add one sentence:***

The Board will review this policy annually.

Christy Moves, Nancy Seconds.

Douglas and Roger accept the change to the original motion.

Voting In Favor of Motion and Amendment: Jeff, Jenny, Kate, Nancy, Elizabeth, Randy, Roger and David.

Voting No: Christy

Abstention: Bobby

Motion Passes.

Programs Committee

Jenny and the board discuss proposed changes to SEJ publications. Board members agree to defer a decision until July Board meeting.

Membership Committee

Kate discusses a proposal to fund the board’s current complementary membership program:

The membership committee would like to formalize and extend the board comp membership program started in 2015 as an effort to recruit promising new members to SEJ. To do so, we must create a pool of money specifically designated to cover the cost of first-year members, a value of \$40 per new member. The board thus creates a specific pool of

voluntary contributions to be collected from board members on a regular basis. Board members who feel like they can contribute more than \$40 should; those who cannot give at the level should give at the level they feel comfortable. The total number of comp memberships given out in a calendar year should not, however, exceed the capacity of the funds in this pool.

• ***Motion to approve Board Comp Program language.***

Bobby moves. Randy seconds.

Vote: All approve. None oppose. No abstentions.

Motion Passes.

Jeff discusses the Hot Sheet and the next board meeting planned for July 23, 2016 in Flint, MI. Board discusses which members plan to run for reelection and which plan to step down. Beth thanks the board for its hard work on succession planning. Lizzie thanks Dave for his work on emerging journalists. Jeff exclaims about today's board meeting being truly momentous.

• ***Motion to adjourn.***

Bobby moves. Roger seconds.

Vote: All approve. None oppose. No abstentions.

Motion Passes.

5:10 p.m. — Meeting Adjourns.