

MINUTES
SPJ Georgia Pro Chapter Board of Directors Meeting
October 18, 2017

MEETING: Meeting held by Conference Call at 8:02 p.m. President Ellen Eldridge called the meeting to order at 8 p.m.

PRESENT: Ellen Eldridge, Dan Whisenhunt, Lou Phelps, Julius Suber

ABSENT: Mark Thomason, Haisten Willis, Jennifer Matthews. Willis and Matthews emailed in their votes on Agenda items.

OLD BUSINESS:

Motion to Amend minutes of Sept. 20, 2017 Quarterly Board Meeting, held at CNN in Atlanta. Lou Phelps made motion to change date at top of minutes to the correct date (typo). Ellen Eldridge made motion to Amend minutes to reflect that the Board voted to approve the expenditure of \$500, funds in the treasury had been left to the Chapter with a specific purpose of encouraging student journalism. Money was spent on last weekend's "Breaking News Contest" for students at Harrison High and North Cobb High School, Saturday, Oct, 14. Motions to amend seconded by Jay Suber. Passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Treasurer Dan Whisenhunt provided Board with update on balance in checking account after all expenditures, including the \$500, which was used to help cover cost of gift cards for prizes at Oct 14 event.

Ellen Eldridge informed board about her efforts to improve the server and email strategy of the Chapter, may result in possible small expenditures that new Board may want to make in 2018. No changes were recommended by her at this time beyond efforts she has already undertaken to change the Chapter's email server. Currently, the average open rates of emails are running 30 to 34 percent. On emails to Paid Members, there was a 39 percent open rate on last email sent about the upcoming election.

Ellen Eldridge then made a motion to support the suggestion by Lou Phelps that the Chapter honor Carolyn Carlson's more than 40 years of service to the Georgia Chapter at the annual meeting, including the expenditure of funds to purchase a plaque. Language for the plaque was then dictated by Eldridge. Phelps has agreed to be responsible for ordering the plaque.

Ellen next moved the Motion by Lou Phelps to Amend the current Operating Budget to provide funds for mailing postcards to Chapter members for key events up on the Agenda, submitted to the Board last week in her monthly report. The motion was to spend \$104.50 to design, print, label and mail a postcard to all paid members no later than Nov. 20, 2017 announcing: the slate of officers and board members for 2018; explaining how to vote using the Survey Monkey app that will be employed to conduct the electronic vote; information on the Annual Meeting Dec. 9, 2017 from 6 to 7 p.m. at Taco Mac in Atlanta, and an invitation to the holiday party immediately to follow at 7 p.m. Highlighting the Chapter's web page and Facebook page will also be included. Jay Suber seconded the motion. In discussion, Jay Suber explained to the Board his concern that it was very important that every member be reached about the upcoming election, and a 39 percent open rate through the use of email was less

than what was necessary. After further discussion, Dan Whisenhunt agreed that it was very important that all efforts to be made to reach members on the election, and that he supported the motion. The vote was 4-0 of those in attendance.

There was no further action on motion to but for other postcard mailings in the future. It was agreed to leave this to the 2018 board.

FREELANCE COMMITTEE REPORT was mailed to all Board members and is contained in official record of the Board Meeting below. The committee is Chaired by Mark Woolsey.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT: The Board then moved into EXECUTIVE SESSION to hear a portion of Jay Suber's Nominating Committee Report. The Board returned to open session at 8:54 p.m.

In open session, Suber, as Chairman of the Nominating Committee, gave an update on the work of the committee to develop a proposed slate for the Dec. 4 – 6 annual election. Jay and Lou Phelps have been meeting for eight weeks to review where they are, write letters, develop nomination forms, send emails and talk with members. The committee has not received a high level of interest to date on serving on the Board. "We need to begin to aim our guns outside the fort, and not inside. We need to begin to work as a team," he said, and to focus on member engagement. He also stated, "This election must happen, and there is a price to voting," including mailings and the cost of time. "It's a project. It's not just send out an email. If there has not been ongoing correspondence with members, then response is going to be hit and miss at best. In order to generate response on what's going to go on, you've got to build a structure for measurement. Phone calls might help. The board members could agree to volunteer on a Saturday and divvy up the paid members, and make calls, talking to them about voting. It's an opportunity for marketing. But, what the board is trying to do is reach down in to the membership and have the membership reach back to us, and that's a big step." He added that in this process of working on the nominating committee, "there is a history worth telling, we have to do a better job. At least a cost in time, not just for two people, for the entire Board."

UPCOMING EVENTS: Oct 25, Lunch n Learn with Bethea at WSB; and Savannah Wine & Cheese for area members on Oct. 25 at Lou's home.

HOLIDAY PARTY/MIXER is set for Dec. 9 at Taco Mac with AABJ, AAJA and maybe AHCI, from 7 to 10 p.m.

ANNUAL MEETING of Members from 6 to 7 p.m. Event will include recognition of service of Carolyn Carlson, introduction of new Officers and Board for 2018, and a 'Year in Review' presentation by Ellen Eldridge. Carolyn Carlson will be retiring in May 2018 as head of the Journalism Program at Kennesaw State University and moving to North Carolina. The week of our Annual Meeting will be her 55th anniversary as a member of SPJ, and as a founding member of Georgia Chapter. She has served the Chapter as President, been National President, been a member of the Board, and has been active on many committees over the years, including attending the National Convention for 54 years in a row.

NOVEMBER BOARD MEETING: Weds Nov 15 at 8 p.m. by Conference Call. All meetings are open to paid members. Members interesting in joining the Conference Call should email Board Secretary Lou Phelps at louisedphelps@gmail.com to receive access code.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1.) FREELANCE COMMITTEE REPORT: The Committee met October 11, 2017. Adina Solomon, Haisten Willis and Mark Woolsey were in attendance.

“We are still looking for a venue for our photography workshop in January. Mark has been back and forth with a coop workspace place called the Elevator Factory which our guest suggested. Mark has found them difficult to reach but he may finally be getting some pricing information. Mark, Haisten and Adina are going to look for other venues if the E-factory doesn’t work out. Several suggestions were made in regards to possibilities. We need to have a decision by next month. The workshop is set for Jan. 17 and our featured presenter is Maura Friedman, who has shot for several major publications. Our guest has not asked for a speaker fee. Adina indicated she’d favor one. No decision was arrived at. The pricing structure is planned at \$20 for non-members and free for members. Haisten may check with the press club on how they differentiate between members and non-members in registering online. We may have to do it manually, with Ellen sending names and our checking them out against our database. We plan to solidify where it will be held soon and start promoting it next month.

The Board set a May 5, 2018 date for the second annual freelance job fair. Ellen knows someone who’s offered to provide free headshots for attendees either at the photography workshop or the job fair. The group felt the job fair would be a better place, so as to avoid having a second photographer at the workshop designed to showcase another one.

The group decided that free headshots would be a great benefit for attendees, and would be an additional activity that would decrease the amount of standing around we had last year. Along the same line, we talked about having a certified resume writer there. Maybe he or she would do a presentation then talk to people individually. Another workshop might be “Talk to a Freelancer.” Haisten was willing to pitch in.

The freelancer monthly unstructured “lunch bunch” is growing. About 10 people attended the last one in late September. Adina says they’re rotating it around three different venues. The Committee talked about ways we could promote it.

2.) REPORT FROM LOU PHELPS, Board Secretary: CONSIDERATION OF THE USE OF USPS MAIL.

In working through the Nominating Committee process, I have had the opportunity to talk with several of our members recently. I am sorry to report that they state that they do NOT believe they are hearing from our Chapter, and are not aware of all of our activity, even though we know we’re doing a lot! While we on the Board are communicating with Ellen and each other a great deal, our members report that they are not seeing emails from our Chapter (they say that they see emails from National and from Region.

Many of our members are older. They are also not engaged with the website, our Facebook page, or even with the Newsletter that Ellen has been sending out.

We use email, primarily, to communicate with our members. It may be that it’s hard for OUR emails to compete with the two other emails coming from ‘SPJ’ sources – Region 3 and National. Also, emails often go into spam, and people do not read emails as much as they used to.

The predominate ways to break through currently are TEXTS and USPS ... snail mail is back.

Therefore, I would propose the following:

AGENDA ITEM: A.) Consider a Revised Budget for 2018, to be approved at our October meeting, that includes more usage of USPS postcards to PAID MEMBERS about key events.

- Postcards will always promote website and Facebook.

- Budget for six mailings a year (two would be the Election and the Annual Meeting)

- We have a decent balance, and will see at least \$1,000 more next year from membership.

TOTAL BUDGET Line Item: \$750

AGENDA ITEM: B.) Mail a preprinted postcard to all members about the Election Dec. 4 – Dec. 6, telling them where to go online to vote. Mail drop should be NO LATER than Nov. 20. Cost: \$54.50 plus \$25 for postage. \$25 for design. Total cost \$ 104.50.

AGENDA ITEM: C.) Mail a preprinted postcard SAVE THE DATE and INVITATION to the Annual Meeting Dec. 9, highlighting that Carolyn Carlson will be honored, that the new Board of Directors will be introduced, that Ellen Eldridge will give a 'Year in Review' presentation. Mail NO LATER than Nov. 3.

Cost: \$54.50, plus \$25 for design and \$25 for postage.

Each mailing would be a full 4- color postcard on one side, black on mailing label side with our logo and return address, 100 printed in total; size 7" x 5" – from VistaPrint. Turnaround is 8 business days.