

SPJ minutes – June 13, 2024, via Zoom

In attendance: Marty Fischhoff, Kelley Root, Rob Davidek, Beth Konrad, Tracy Wolf, Mark Lee, Annalise Frank, Vince McCraw, Christine Ferretti, Jeff Payne, Nicole Avery Nichols, Kat Stafford; Administrator Marcia Hart

Absent: Ro Coppola, Mary Zatina, Walter Middlebrook, Monica Williams, Peg McNichol

Marty Fischhoff called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

President's Report – Marty Fischhoff

- Marty mentioned that the SPJ annual report is due by July 19. He is working on it and may need additional information from board members.

Mark Lee made a motion to approve the May meeting minutes. It was seconded by Rob Davidek and approved by all.

Banquet – Tracy Wolf

- Marty said he heard the banquet went well.
- Tracy Wolf said that the increased board participation helped make it a success and praised Mark Lee for his great job as emcee. He helped keep the programming flowing and regularly promoted the silent auction, which raised approximately \$500. Mark also commended the award presenters. Kelly Root said that involving board members in the program allowed local journalists to see who is behind SPJ Detroit.
- Marcia Hart thought everything went well from her perspective. And moving up the time of the dinner was a good idea.
- Vince McCraw felt that limiting the time allotted to introducers helped tremendously and gave more time to the honorees.
- One of the few issues: the microphones malfunctioned again.
- Marcia reported that 196 people attended the banquet; of those 175 were sold.
- There ensued a discussion about where to hold next year's banquet. Marcia noted that during tickets sales some outstate journalists complained about how far they had to drive and that perhaps a venue on the westside of town would be an option. Beth Konrad said that Detroit is on a roll, and we might want to hold the next banquet in the city. Mark agreed, saying that the chapter should consider spreading the love by changing venues. Tracy reminded the board that the price at San Marino would be hard to beat, as is the parking.
- Beth suggested that we ask our membership and the those attending the banquet for their thoughts on the venue. Rob Davidek offered to send a survey on the subject to our membership.
- Marty reported that he heard that a couple attendees questioned why three of the four racial justice winners in the print category were white men. First place went to a female reporter of Palestinian descent. Kat Stafford said that we might want to make a conscious effort to reach out to news organizations when we see them produce high quality stories and suggest they enter them in our contest as a way to showcase their work. There were also requests from free-lance journalists for a discount on the contest entry fees.

FOIA – Beth Konrad

- Beth reported that there wouldn't be any movement on FOIA legislation until the fall session in Lansing, especially as attention turns to the upcoming elections.
- Rob suggested we hold a Candidates Night and ask those running for office their position on FOIA reform. Everyone says they are in favor of it, but nobody pushes the legislation forward.

Programs – Tracy Wolf

- Kelley suggested that we host a program on election coverage. She reported that a program at the University of Michigan on the safety of reporters during election coverage was a valuable experience. SPJ Detroit had worked with the UM Wallace House to recruit journalists for the event, which was conducted by the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. Marty said that we might want to consider organizing a similar event to reach even more journalists. Beth suggested we create a safety toolkit for reporters.

Membership – Rob Davidek

- Rob is sending a note to non-members who attended the banquet and suggesting that they join SPJ Detroit.

Communications – Kelley Root

- Kelley noted that we have contracted with Dorothy Hall to redesign and manage our website; she has designed the excellent Detroit NABJ website, which is how the chapter knew about her. Kelley commented that it is a good time to freshen SPJDetroit.org. Dorothy is asking for suggestions and ideas on the new site.
- Board members offered a variety of suggestions:
 - Include updated photos and bios for board members, along with their email addresses and cell phone numbers. Make the board mugshots and the length of the bios more uniform. Include the terms of board members
 - Create a resources page for journalists with links to useful information
 - Create a FOIA page, with a template for submitting FOIA requests
 - Provide links to other local and national journalism organizations
 - Create a Jobs board with links
- Besides a revitalized website, it was agreed that the chapter should be more active on social media and we need board members to contribute posts.

Financial – Walter Middlebrook

- No financial report this month. Walter is on vacation. We are working on banquet financials.

New Business

- Beth said that someone connected with the Detroit Writing Room asked if there were any summer programs for student journalists. The Michigan Interscholastic Press Association was suggested, as it offers programs for both students and teachers. Nicole Avery Nichols discussed the long-standing Free Press apprentice program and its late summer boot camp. She commented that the newspaper receives few applicants from Detroit for the program. The Free Press contacts are herself and Jewel Gopwani.
- It was reported that Ro Coppola was leaving WDIV and might have more time to devote to SPJ Detroit.
- M.L. Elrick had requested funding from the chapter to support the pressroom at Detroit city hall. Nicole reported that the lease on the current pressroom had been extended, with both the Free Press and The News covering the cost. They are hoping other news organizations will partner with them. Board members expressed support for the pressroom but didn't think the chapter should contribute funding for the operations of local news organizations.

Rob made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and approved by all. The meeting was adjourned approximately 9:06 a.m.

Next meeting: Thursday, July 11 at 8 a.m.

Committee Assignments (chairs in bold text)

- Programs: **Tracy Wolf**, Katrease Stafford, Walter Middlebrook, Beth Konrad, Ro Coppola, Mark Lee, Monica Williams
 - Membership Outreach: **Rob Davidek**, Marty Fischhoff, Walter Middlebrook
 - Communication Committee: **Kelley Root**, Rob Davidek
 - FOIA: **Beth Konrad**, Ro Coppola, Kelley Root, Mary Zatina, Peggy McNichol
 - Banquet: **Tracy Wolf**, Marcia Hart, Monica Williams
 - Campus Outreach: **Beth Konrad**, Kelley Root
 - Finance/Fundraising: **Walter Middlebrook**, Marty Fischhoff
 - Bylaws and elections (nominating committee): **Walter Middlebrook**, Beth Konrad, Marty Fischhoff
 - Contest: **Walter Middlebrook**
 - Scholarship: **Kelley Root**, Beth Konrad, Annalise Frank
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