

SPJ Detroit board meeting 8am 9-11-24

Attending: Marty Fischhoff, Christine Ferretti, Walter Middlebrook, Tracy Wolf, Jeffrey Payne, Peg McNichol, Annalise Frank, Monica Williams, Mark Lee, Beth Konrad, Vince McCraw, Rob Davidek and Administrator Marcia Hart.

The meeting started at 8:03 a.m.

Marty Fischhoff gave his President's report and congratulated Mark Lee for being honored by Crain's Detroit Business as a Notable Black Leader. Beth Konrad also offered congratulations.

Peg Nichol moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting; Beth seconded. Motion was approved by all.

Program Committee Report: Marty said the Happy Hour event at Bookies was very successful. He counted 25-30 people attending. Tracy Wolf said there was a good turnout and thought it went well without a program. Others agreed it was a worthwhile event.

Tracy updated the group on the Journalist Election Prep (JEP) virtual event coming up on Monday, September 16 at 7 p.m., which is being organized in partnership with MAB, Detroit NABJ, MSU School of Journalism and the main organizer, former Channel 4 reporter Paula Tutman who first discussed offering this training to reporters while at a conference on Mackinac Island in mid-August. Tracy said the event would likely cost under \$500 but wasn't sure about the amount.

Marty has passed the information about the event on to several contacts, including the national SPJ organization, various local SPJ chapters, journalism schools, college newspapers and other groups. Peg Nichol said she would forward the information to GVSU and Hope College, and Tracy said she would do the same for the South End and Wayne State. Beth was going to send the flyer to Lisa McGraw of the Michigan Press Association.

Tracy reported that 72 people had registered, including people from Grand Rapids and other states such as Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, New Mexico, New York and Kentucky, as well as Buenos Aires.

Beth offered kudos to those organizing the event and said that having Ro Coppola involved was an excellent idea.

Tracy said she had ideas for other future programs but wanted to wait until after the JEP event. Marty asked the board to send any ideas to Tracy.

FOIA Report: Beth said she was planning to attend a Michigan Municipal League conference on Mackinac Island, at which FOIA reform would be up for discussion. The public officials there might have a different perspective on the issues. Beth said she would talk to Lisa McGraw for an update on FOIA.

Elections Report: Marty said ballots for board elections should be emailed to the membership in late September or early October, in order to have the new board installed by the November meeting. He said Kat Stafford had completed her fourth term in office and thus had to retire from the board. He suggested honoring her with a certificate of appreciation. Kelley Root also expressed her desire to step down from the board, and Marty still had to confirm Ro's wishes vis a vis the board.

Those deciding to run for re-election included Nicole Avery Nichols, Jeffrey Payne, Peg McNichol, Rob Davidek, Mark Lee, Annalise Frank and Beth Konrad.

Marty said that he had spoken to Kennan Oliphant, the News Director at CBS Detroit-TV, who expressed interest in serving. A number of board members said he would be a good addition to the board. Beth also spoke highly of him, saying he is the nephew of longtime local TV news reporter Al Allen.

Marty mentioned Briana Rice from Michigan Public as a possible candidate, as would be a replacement from The Detroit News for Kelley as she departs from the board. Rob mentioned Bob Ellis from Channel 4, Laura Moore or Sean Lee from Fox 2 and Marie Osborne or Lloyd Jackson from WJR. Christine Ferretti suggested freelance reporter, Eleanore Catolico. Mark asked about Paula Tutman, and Vince McCraw mentioned Erin Perry at Outlier Media. Marty encouraged people send him or Walter names to consider in the next week.

Contest Report: Marty discussed the A-Mark Prize for Investigative Journalism. He has talked to other organizations that have been working with its funding organization, the A-Mark Foundation. Both the Los Angeles Press Club and Florida SPJ spoke favorably about their interactions with the foundation.

A sum of \$13,000 in prize money would go to winning reporters and their news organizations: first prize -- \$5,000 reporter + \$2,000 publishing outlet; second prize -- \$2,500 reporter + \$1,500 publishing outlet; third prize -- \$1,000 reporter + \$1,000 outlet. For its efforts, SPJ Detroit would receive \$1,500, with up to \$2,000 being available to publicize the competition.

Marty reported that although SPJ Florida had decided to include the A-Mark Prize as part of its regular annual competition, he suggested SPJ Detroit consider making it a separate contest. If it was folded into the Excellence in Journalism competition and announced at the annual banquet, it might seem strange to provide cash rewards for this category but not for other top awards (Sojourner Truth, Journalist of the Year, etc.). Beth mentioned the Chicago Headliner Club did something similar and kept it separate. Vince said he liked the idea and suggested that the awards be announced at a separate event, maybe not a banquet but a more modest reception, an idea that Tracy liked. Walter Middlebrook said that we would have to recruit our own panel of judges for the A-Mark Prize in that case.

Marty said he would arrange a meeting with the A-Mark Foundation to further discuss these details.

Membership Report: Rob wasn't sure if we had gained any new members from the Happy Hour event, but said he would contact Chrystal O'Keefe at SPJ National for an updated membership roster.

Communications Report: Filling in for Kelley, Marty suggested that the chapter publicize its new, improved website, which now includes a jobs board. Monica Williams has offered to work with our webmaster, Dorothy Hal, to keep up to date.

Financial Report: ((I need to get the totals. His phone was cutting out. Checking had \$11,456.97, 2nd account had 3,278.76, E Trade 11,959.05, PayPal \$2,557.39 for a total of \$29,...(didn't catch the exact amount) Walter said we are okay, but he'd like to see the account grow.

New Business: Marty said that the U-M Wallace House Center for Journalists announced it was receiving a major grant to establish a Great Lakes Local News Initiative and wondered if there might be a way for the chapter to be involved.

On a somber note, Jeff mentioned that Gordie Wilczynski had passed away and paid tribute to his years of service at the Macomb Daily. Peg also praised his long journalism career.

In closing, Marty said he was thrilled and grateful for all those who had decided to stand for re-election to the board.

The next meeting will be set for Thursday, October 10 at 8 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 a.m.