

SPJ minutes – December 12, 2024, at the Atwater Brewery

In attendance: Marty Fischhoff, Rob Davidek, Beth Konrad, Tracy Wolf, Mark Lee, Annalise Frank, Mary Zatina, Christine Ferretti, Peg McNichol, Brianna Rice, Jeff Payne

Absent: Walter Middlebrook, Monica Williams, Nicole Avery Nichols, Anna Clark, Kennan Oliphant, Vince McCraw

Marty Fischhoff called the meeting to order at 5 p.m.

President's Report – Marty Fischhoff

- Marty discussed the importance of board members volunteering to serve on at least one committee. He went over a document he drafted with descriptions and needs of each committee. We need to identify new chairs for the Communications, Contest and Membership committees. Peg McNichol offered to chair Communications. Marty suggested that we also encourage the full membership of the chapter to become involved in committee work.

Beth Konrad made a motion to approve the November meeting minutes. It was seconded by Rob Davidek and approved by all.

Programs – Tracy Wolf

- Tracy discussed the most recent meeting of the Program Committee and the upcoming program on issues surrounding DEI, from the macro level where there seems to be a lessening commitment from corporations, universities and other organizations to how that is affecting both the composition of newsrooms and the content they produce. As far as the format of the program, the board reach a consensus that it best be held in person even if that meant taking more time to plan. It was agreed that it could be delayed until February or even March. Tracy said she would consult with the program committee to advance planning.

FOIA – Beth Konrad

- Beth reported that the two open records bills, which were passed earlier in the year by the Michigan Senate, could be taken up for a vote by the lame duck session of the House, but that had to be accomplished before the legislature ends its session next week. She proposed that the board send a message to House Speaker Joe Tate urging him to bring up the bills for a vote, and she circulated a draft of such a message for the board's consideration. With minor modifications, the board approved the language for the email, which was to be signed by the chapter's president, with the concurrence of the full board. Marty promised to send it to Tate's office that evening.

Contest – Walter Middlebrook

- Marty said he would check with BetterBNC, which provides the judging platform for our annual Excellence in Journalism contest, about whether our contract allows us to use that platform for more than one contest a year. If not, we will have to meld the A-Mark Prize into our annual competition.

Membership – Rob Davidek

- Rob continues to work with the national SPJ office to clear up our membership records. People continue to complain about challenges in joining the organization. Marty said he would contact Chrystal O'Keefe of the national office and suggest that she provide instructions for us to offer prospective members.

Communications – Open Chair

- Marty reported that Dorothy Hall, who does an excellent job with our website, offered to redesign our newsletter for approximately \$200-300. She could manage that newsletter for us, as she does with the website, or teach us how to use the template as needed.

Banquet – Tracy Wolf

- The San Marino Club is offering a 15% discount on catering services if we sign a contract to hold our annual banquet there in 2025. Beth suggested that we also consider hosting the banquet at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial and said she would investigate that possibility.

Other Business

- Jeff Payne announced that Michigan APME will be donating \$3,000 for the SPJ Detroit scholarship fund. Board members expressed their gratitude.
- The Share the Love fundraiser was held on November 26 at the Lager House. So far, the fund has managed to provide financial assistance to three journalists with financial needs.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:45 p.m.

Next meeting: Thursday, January 9, 2025, at 8 a.m. via Zoom.

Committee Assignments (chairs in bold text)

- Programs: **Tracy Wolf**, Walter Middlebrook, Beth Konrad, Mark Lee, Monica Williams, Briana Rice, Anna Clark
- Membership Outreach: **Rob Davidek**, Mary Zatina, Walter Middlebrook
- Communication Committee: **Peg McNichol**, Christine Ferretti, Tracy Wolf
- FOIA: **Beth Konrad**, Mary Zatina, Peg McNichol
- Banquet: **Tracy Wolf**, Marcia Hart, Monica Williams
- Campus Outreach/Scholarship: **Annalise Frank**, Kennan Oliphant, Christine Ferretti, Briana Rice, Anna Clark and Beth Konrad
- Finance/Fundraising: **Walter Middlebrook**, Marty Fischhoff
- Bylaws and elections (nominating committee): **Marty Fischhoff**, Mark Lee, Rob Davidek, Peg McNichol, Walter Middlebrook
- Contest: **Walter Middlebrook**, Marty Fischhoff