

SPJ Detroit Minutes – October 9, 2025, via Zoom

Attendees: Marty Fischhoff, Rob Davidek, Tracy Wolf, Mark Lee, Peg McNichol, Walter Middlebrook, Beth Konrad, Annalise Frank, Mary Zatina, Briana Rice, Christine Ferretti, Jeremy Allen; Marcia Hart, Administrator

Absent: Kennan Oliphant, Nicole Avery Nichols, Jeff Payne, Anna Clark, Vince McCraw

Marty Fischhoff called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m.

Minutes – Rob Davidek made a motion to approve the September minutes. The motion was seconded by Tracy Wolf and approved by a unanimous vote of the board.

President’s Report

- Marty Fischhoff will attend the SPJ National Media Fest 25 next week, October 15-18 in Washington D.C.

Program – Tracy Wolf

- Tracy noted that she met with the Program Committee.
- Plans have firmed up for the Google Tools workshop on November 12, a hybrid event that journalists can attend in person at the WWJ offices or via Zoom.
- A virtual event is being planned for Beth LeBlanc to discuss her award-winning series on the dubious practices of legislative earmarks to take place in November or early December. It could be the first of a possible series called Beyond the Headlines, which would give journalists an opportunity to explain how they approach their work.
- The committee is also considering an event with local food journalists in early 2026, which could be hosted at a restaurant suggested by the panelists.
- Mark Lee has proposed a program on how news organizations can reach a younger audience. He and Jeremy Allen recently met with students at Eastern Michigan, who reported that they preferred obtaining their news from social media rather than traditional sources. As one student put it, “You have to meet us where we are.”
- A lively discussion ensued on the topic. Walter Middlebrook suggested a workshop on converting content to social media and stressed the importance of teaching media literacy. Christine Ferretti expressed the need to leverage influencers and how SPJ could be such a force to elevate the great work of our profession. She also suggested that we might want to involve Bryce Huffman who has an initiative for reaching young people. Peg McNichol said that she is able to promote SPJ Detroit on our social media platform more than she can her own newspaper, which has corporate rules. Rob Davidek proposed creating SPJ Detroit accounts on Instagram and TikTok.. Mary Zatina mentioned Story Fest that evening, which features journalists and others telling their personal stories. Those were just some of the comments. Mark said this was an opportunity for SPJ to be a leader in this transformation.

Membership – Rob Davidek

- Membership increased to 54 with planned outreach to people who attended the A-Mark Prize awards reception.
- Rob also intends to contact Michigan SPJ members who do not belong to the Detroit Chapter to encourage them to join.

Banquet – Tracy Wolf

- Tracy led a discussion on venue options for the annual awards banquet, a topic that comes up every year, with people advocating for a move to Detroit or a more convenient location. There was interest expressed in surveying members about their preferences for such factors as location, affordability, etc.
- The San Marino Club has advantages, such as the best pricing, their willingness to work with us, and easy parking.
- Tracy said she would continue exploring possibilities.

Contest – Walter Middlebrook

- Marty said that the Content Committee should meet to discuss the current categories in the annual Excellence in Journalism competition. In particular, he had received feedback from Phoebe Wall Howard about the Digital categories, which seemed quite out of date. She offered to serve on the committee.

Campus Outreach – Annalise Frank

- Annalise said she is hoping to reach out to college programs to form partnerships.
- Marty reported that Wayne State is planning to revive its SPJ Campus chapter. In addition, Michigan State and the University of Detroit Mercy are also considering organizing chapters.

FOIA – Beth Konrad

- Beth reported that there are plans to revive the Michigan Coalition for Open Government. She will keep us posted on such developments.

New Business

- Beth reported that the Michigan Journalism Hall of Fame is accepting nominations, with entries due by January 20. Compiling the materials needed for a nomination is quite a lengthy and time-consuming process.

Financial – Walter Middlebrook

- Walter reported that as of September 30, total funds were \$56,796.51.

Next meeting: November 6 at 8:00 a.m. via Zoom

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 a.m.

Committee Assignments (chairs in bold text)

- Programs: **Tracy Wolf**, Walter Middlebrook, Beth Konrad, Mark Lee, 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
- 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**, Jeff Payne, Phoebe Wall Howard, Marty Fischhoff