

# MINUTES

## SPJ Detroit Chapter Board Retreat

### Saturday, Aug. 22, 2009

**Location:** The home of Jack Harned.

**Present:** Colleen Clement, Jack Harned, W. Kim Heron, Walter Middlebrook, Gloria Olman, Steve Raphael, David Sachs, Tom Stanton, Ann Zaniewski and administrator Donna Remer.

**Absent:** Andy Chapelle, Janet Mendler, Jim Schaefer and Jerome Vaughn.

Clement called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

#### **Overview – Clement**

Clement provided a packet that included contact info for board members, an annual calendar of events, information on SPJ's annual report requirements, and various other items. The purpose of the retreat, she noted, was to explore chapter goals, objectives, possible programs, membership growth and finances.

#### **Objectives – Harned**

Using SPJ's mission statement as a guide, Harned proposed a set of objectives for the chapter:

- Promote professionalism and good journalism. Help journalists do their jobs. Provide programs and educational opportunities for area pros, members and students.
- Recognize good journalism.
- Promote relationships among journalists. Create a sense of community. Fulfill the purpose that the Detroit Press Club used to serve.
- Reach out to the community at larger to support journalism. Educate leaders and readers on the importance of quality journalism.

The objectives prompted discussion. Noting that much journalism comes from non-traditional sources, such as citizen bloggers, Remer wondered whether SPJ membership should aim to bestow a certain level of professionalism – a sort of seal of approval. Raphael said that would be difficult to police. Heron said that many bloggers see themselves as separate from the journalism community and don't want to be part of it. Harned felt it was enough to promote standards and let those who wish to embrace them do so.

#### **Leadership institute – Zaniewski**

Zaniewski shared a variety of ideas she gathered at the 2009 Ted Scripps Leadership Institute. She said there is a push to diversify revenue sources beyond membership fees. Some possibilities include benefit roasts, paid seminars, silent auctions and 50-50 raffles. Clement said the chapter has avoided paid programming thus far. Remer liked the idea of charging for some programs. Board members generally seemed in favor of a tiered approach, with non-members being charged for attendance at some events (or charged more than members). Several members thought the silent auction could be part of other events, such as the JOY banquet or other programs. The chapter has held roasts in past years with varying degrees of success. Related to holding a raffle, Stanton said it would likely require a state license.

#### **Programming – Clement**

Considerable time was spent brainstorming ideas for programs. Clement noted that SPJ National likes for all chapters to host programs related to diversity, FOIA, ethics and Project Watchdog, an

effort to reinforce with the public the importance of free and ethical journalism. Numerous ideas were discussed:

- A law school of journalists, which has been tentatively set for a Saturday in October.
- A reception for Pulitzer winners who live in the region or won the award while working in the Detroit area. Various members will be sending out invites to Pulitzer honorees and checking on potential locations for a Sept. 24 or 25 event.
- Journalism innovation, a panel focusing on the different journalism business models being tried in Detroit, Ann Arbor and Flint.
- Citizen journalism training, which could deal with FOIA, ethics, credibility, accuracy, standards, opportunities, etc.
- The role of citizen journalism in society.
- The prevalence of celebrity coverage.
- Freelancing opportunities, which might be attractive to many unemployed journalists.
- A hands-on convergence workshop, similar to a popular offering two years ago.
- “Who’s Checking the Facts,” about accuracy in a time of newsroom cutbacks.
- A celebrity roast of Dick Purtan, Carmen Harlan or another media figure.
- An FOIA workshop, possibly led by Jane Briggs-Bunting.
- A diversity workshop for which the chapter would team up with local members of the Asian American Journalists Association, the National Association of Black Journalists and other groups.

#### **Budget and treasurer’s report – Remer and Olman**

Remer noted that income is about \$4,000 below the projected amount of \$19,900. She said the chapter has kept expenses in check, meaning there is not deficit. Olman added that the chapter’s accounts are in good shape and that the Laurain Scholarship CD has been renewed.

#### **Website – Remer**

Remer has been working on a new website for the chapter. She showed the tentative design and asked for suggestions and input. Remer felt the chapter logo needed revision, and Middlebrook offered to have a coworker do the work.

#### **Membership – Zaniewski**

Zaniewski said the board needs to do a better job of communicating regularly with members. She said we should aim to send out an email newsletter once a month. Stanton volunteered to create a Facebook group for the chapter.

#### **Next meeting – Clement**

Chapter officers will be elected at the next board meeting, set for Wednesday, Sept. 9, at 8:30 a.m. at the Jewish News.

Before adjourning, board members thanked Jack and Eileen Harned for hosting the retreat and supplying breakfast snacks and lunch. Meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

#### **Respectfully submitted,**

Tom Stanton  
Detroit SPJ Secretary