



**Board of Directors Call
February 6, 2018**

In attendance: Matt Goldberg, president; Cheryl W. Thompson, vice president; Andrew Donohue, treasurer; Ellen Gabler, secretary; Lee Zurik, executive committee; Ziva Branstetter; Sarah Cohen; T. Christian Miller; Steven Rich; Jill Riepenhoff, Nicole Vap and Phil Williams

Not in attendance: Matt Appuzo

Staff in attendance: Doug Haddix, executive director and Amy Johnston, membership & registration coordinator.

Meeting called to order at 1:04 p.m. by Goldberg.

Previous Minutes

Goldberg asked if there were any questions or issues regarding the minutes from the September 15-16, 2017 Board of Directors retreat and the October 26, 2017 board call.

Motion to approve both sets of minutes made by Thompson and seconded by Branstetter. Unanimously approved.

Meeting went into executive session at 1:05 p.m. to discuss a complaint regarding a member.

Executive session ended at 1:11 p.m.

IRE Principals – Goldberg

We have been looking at the IRE principals over the last few months to make sure it meets all of the organizations need. We met with our attorney and a specialist that Stephanie Klimstra met at an event planning conference. In the email that was sent to the board, we laid out three things that we want to look at. Does anyone have any questions about this so far? There were no questions.

Real Time Complaints & Post Event Complaints

Real-Time Complaints: We were given legal advice that during conferences and events it's appropriate for IRE staff to handle complaints about conduct. We were also told it's helpful to bring a board member with the IRE staff member to talk to the person accused of misconduct. We propose following this guideline and advising staff to include a board member anytime a real-time complaint is made at an event.

Post Event Complaints: We propose setting up the following protocol to receive and investigate complaints: the complaint should be taken by a current board members and forwarded to the executive committee to investigate. The board president will lead the investigation and conduct any necessary interviews with the accused. If action is necessary, the executive committee will partake in any hearing or deliberations and will ultimately make a decision regarding membership.

Miller asked what happens if it's a workshop where there isn't a board member present? Goldberg replied that the staff would then handle it. Miller asked if it would be necessary for a board member to be prepared to jump in. Haddix replied that typically at workshops we have a trainer, Denise Malan, Cody Winchester, Mark Walker, Sarah Hutchins and we have an IRE support staff member, Stephanie Klimstra, Heather Feldman-Henry, Amy Johnston or Chis Vachon. We would always have two staff on site at these workshops. For workshops I don't think it's necessary to have a board member on that.

Miller asked if it is a concern that we think is necessary. Goldberg replied that as Haddix had said if it's something of a serious nature then we hope that the authorities would get involved. If it's something that can be handled by the staff, it would move into a post event issue.

Haddix noted that most of the workshops are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and don't include any mixers or meetings afterward.

Cohen asked if there should be a designated board membership on call each night of the conference in case there are any issues.

Gabler said that she thought that Goldberg's point of it rolling over to the executive committee was a good point.

Riepenhoff asked how this would work during a bar situation at the conference, say around 8 p.m. at night. Goldberg replied that it would depend on the situation. If it's not an issue where authorities needed to get involved then we would pull the person aside and have a discussion with the accused. What we were told by the lawyer is that we should take the accused aside and remind them about the code of conduct, etc.

Miller said he liked Cohen's idea of having a board member on call. As for the on-site, if we say that a board member will be on-site to hand these things and we put that in writing and then we don't have someone from the board to handle this, won't that be an issue? Branstetter asked if the staff couldn't just forward it to the board member. Goldberg agreed and said that it would then become a post event issue.

Gabler noted that there is no way to plan for every contingency and instead they need to make this the best they could. Goldberg said he didn't think that there would be many real-time complaints at the events. He said he thought most of the complaints would be post event complaints.

Haddix said that when they talked with the lawyer they discussed two different situations, the real-time and the post event. The lawyer said during real time events it's entirely appropriate for the staff to handle these complaints and if a board member could be present it would be good. With events outside of the IRE event, it's more the boards responsibility.

Miller said he just wanted to make sure that what we are putting in writing is accurate and not going to come back and bite us later. Goldberg replied that this discussion is so that we can update the principals.

Goldberg asked if anyone had any questions about the real-time or the post event complaints. He then reread the proposals.

Donohue said he thought it was good and thanked the group for their work on this. He went on to say that looking at an even bigger picture that it's important to make sure that we as a board and the staff are looking at this as a big picture.

Vap noted that the board will need to talk with new board members about this as soon as possible after the election, just in case there is an issue right away.

Miller asked if the executive committee thought there needed to be special training on this. Goldberg replied that it would be good for the board and that it was something they could follow up with the lawyer about. Goldberg went on to say that they were advised that the circle of people handling this needs to be small, which is why the executive committee would be the ones looking at the complaints.

Cohen noted that right now people are complaining in a way that they never have before. She then asked if we are keeping confidential files on any complaints we receive so that there is a history. Haddix said yes we do. Goldberg asked if there were any other questions.

IRE Principles

We were told that we need to tighten up the IRE principals. In the past we had a phone number listed. To make sure things are being sent where they need to, us verses the authorities, we propose changing the IRE principles to read:

Investigative Reporters & Editors is committed to providing a friendly, safe and welcoming environment for all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical ability, age, appearance or religion.

IRE supports vigorous debate and welcomes disagreement, while maintaining a civil and respectful community.

IRE may take any action it deems appropriate to deal with those who violate our principles, including exclusion from our events, forums, listserves and the organization itself.

Concerns should be brought to the attention of IRE board members or staff.

Anyone who feels threatened or in immediate jeopardy during an IRE event should call building security (provide specific number) or local police by dialing 911.

Miller asked if a number a different number would be provided at each event. Goldberg said that we will remove the IRE number that we currently list and instead encourage them to contact authorities and then contact a board member. Miller asked why are removing the phone number. Goldberg replied that we want people to take responsibility for their actions. We are not an enforcement agency. If it's an incident in a bar we want them to treat it like they are in a bar. Haddix noted that the IRE phone number has been in place for several years and they we have not had any calls. He went on to say that by having our number listed it sets us up as the enforcer. If they would call late at night and there is a delay in responding then that person could be in more danger. Instead they would need to call the authorities, who would be able to respond quicker.

Miller said his concern was that we are encouraging members to contact a board member but we aren't providing a way for them to contact us. Haddix replied that the conference is staffed and we have specific areas where staff is located from about 7:30 a.m. until 6 p.m. and that it's very easy to locate a staff member or board member. After hours then they should contact the authorities.

Donohue said he agreed that we need to at least give them an outlet or way to contact the board. Riepenhoff asked if it was possible to create an email, since if its urgent people won't take the time to send an email.

Cohen suggested changing the wording to say something like if you are in immediate danger...etc. Gabler said she thought Cohen's idea was good and that she thought she could write something like that.

Goldberg asked Gabler to make the changes to the IRE Principles and then circulate it via email so that they could get this in place before the CAR conference.

Goldberg asked if everyone was ok with the real-time complaints and post event complaints proposals. He then asked Haddix if they needed a motion. Haddix replied that he didn't think they needed a motion. Miller asked if they wanted to make the changes that Cohen suggested for the real-time complaints.

Goldberg asked Haddix to give a quick update on the conference and sponsorship.

Executive Director Update – Haddix

The CAR conference is shaping up to be massive. The largest CAR conference was the 2016 Denver conference with 1,046 attendees. The current conference is running about 100-150 registrations ahead of the Denver conference. Currently we have about 645 people registered for Chicago. I think that we will exceed 1,000 and maybe even 1,100.

The schedule has been put together and people are currently nominating session for Lightning talks.

We are right on target for sponsorship. The board approved \$55,000 and we look to be on track to meet that and maybe exceed that once we get the Google money.

Goldberg asked about the IRE conference. Haddix said they had received a lot of great ideas from the staff, board and members. He said that we are currently half way there on sponsorship and fundraising. Fundraising is chugging along and our goal is to have that lined up by mid-March. Goldberg asked if we have any new money lined up. Haddix replied that Sinclair will be coming for the first time, which means that they will be bringing a fair number of attendees to the conference. He also noted that we are trying to work in some sponsorship with that.

Someone asked how the fund raising for Chicago is going. Haddix replied that it's going well and that while we have kind of a verbal agreement for the Google money, we are waiting to secure that. He noted that Chris Vachon has contacted a number of people in Chicago but was turned down and is contacting more people about that. She is reaching out to companies like Tronc, to see if we could do a dual sponsorship for the conferences. Haddix asked for other questions.

Goldberg asked where things stand with the website upgrade. Haddix said that we had hit a little bit of a snag which has led to about a month delay. We are just now getting the logins, so that staff can go in and test things. We currently have two different systems, a back end and a front side. We are planning on waiting until after the Chicago conference before we go live with the changes. We are concerned that if we go live right before the conference and there are any issues, that it could be a problem.

The speaker demographics form asks the speaker to self-identify. We are getting almost full compliance from our 340 speakers and will likely have a similar or higher number of speakers for the IRE conference. Stephanie and her staff are adding that information to the database as it comes in. That is one of the things that the new system will allow us to track, people will of course have the option to decline providing that information.

Branstetter said she was glad that we are doing this and that people will have the option not to answer if they don't want to.

Goldberg asked if there were any new items.

Cohen replied that she wanted to make sure everyone is working on identify potential board members. She reminded everyone that the election is coming up in the next few months and offered to help recruit since she is leaving the board.

Miller said he wanted to compliment everyone that worked on the principals and noted that he thought it strikes the right balance. He went on to thank them for all of their work.

Miller made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Donohue seconded. Unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 1:58 p.m.