

## **IRE Board Minutes**

**Feb. 28, 2008 – 2 p.m. CST**

**2008 CAR Conference; Doubletree Hotel Downtown**

**In attendance:** James Grimaldi, Cheryl Phillips, Dianna Hunt, Stephen C. Miller, Lea Thompson, Wendell Cochran, Manny Garcia, Mark Katches, Lise Olsen, and Alison Young. **Absent:** Renee Ferguson, Marilyn Thompson, Duff Wilson.

**Staff present:** Mark Horvit, Jennifer Erickson and IRE attorney David Smallman.

1. **Call to Order (Grimaldi):** Grimaldi called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. Grimaldi said he and the board are very happy with how smooth the transition has gone with the new IRE executive director.

Grimaldi thanked Lise Olsen and the local Houston conference committee for bringing the 2008 CAR Conference to Houston and for all of their hard work.

Grimaldi said there would be upcoming board meetings in June at the Miami conference and in September at the Missouri School of Journalism.

2. **Approval of Minutes.** Board members reviewed minutes from an in-person meeting on Oct. 5, 2007, in Kansas City and two conference calls: Dec. 4, 2007, and Feb. 7, 2008. Young made a motion to approve all three sets of minutes; Phillips seconded her motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

3. **Executive Director's Report: (Horvit):** Horvit introduced the new IRE Database Library Director, Jeremy Milarsky. Horvit said Milarsky will telecommute from Florida until he and his family are able to relocate to Columbia, Mo. The board members welcomed Milarsky to the IRE staff.

Resource Center: Horvit said he and staff are looking into the possibility of offering IRE's Beatbook series electronically; the publications would be easier to distribute and update. They are exploring options right now and will have a report to the board on e-books in the near future. Smallman said he would assist.

IRE Contest: Horvit said he and staff are considering adding new categories to the contest, including convergence and documentary categories; would help in getting new groups of investigative journalists involved in IRE.

Membership: Currently, membership is up about 4% over last year. Horvit said this is impressive, especially in light of the recent Council of National Journalism Organizations meeting, where member groups expressed concern with shrinking numbers.

Conferences/Training: Horvit reported that we have raised around \$35,000 in conference support for Miami; many other requests are in the works. Horvit said that, as of today, Houston registration has reached 280 journalists; speaker travel has come in under budget.

Five or six training events are coming up in March and a new Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation grant starts in May, with support for ten watchdog workshops. Watchdog attendance figures have gone down a bit overall; San Francisco was an exception with 116 participants. Horvit said that he and staff will more carefully look at locations in the future and evaluate current offerings.

Horvit said that he and staff will rethink the way we raise money for conferences after the Miami conference and the value for such items as vendor and recruitment tables - are we currently undervaluing such items? Cochran said that the staff is doing a great job - the Houston conference is a good example of what they can do - and the staff may benefit from a one- or two-day retreat.

Upcoming 2009 conference locations will include Indianapolis in March and Baltimore in June. Horvit said the site visits have been done. Discussion ensued on possibilities for conference fundraising and ideas for future conference locations.

Centennial Update: Horvit said the fourth quarter board meeting will take place on Sat., Sept. 13, in Columbia. This will coincide with the centennial celebration for the Missouri School of Journalism, the oldest journalism program in

the country. Board members will have the option of taking part in a panel discussion on the topic of watchdog journalism in a high-tech age on the Thursday before the meeting. Hunt encouraged all board members to attend and showcase IRE at the Missouri School of Journalism. Horvit said to email him if anyone is interested in taking part. Discussion ensued.

CNJO Report: Horvit attended the meeting last week on the state of the journalism industry. He said 20 journalism orgs were there. UNITY reported that 50% of previous funders decided not to support their conference this year. According to the other journalism organizations, event attendance is down across the board. Journalists are not getting the time off to attend training opportunities. Members discussed strategies, including raising dues, packages for sponsorships, expanding the types of organizations they'll take money from, and recommending estate planning.

Arizona Project: Horvit said he is taking another look at IRE's policy that allows organizations to view the Arizona Project papers; his goal is to formalize the procedure. Screenwriters and production companies are interested in the story. Discussion ensued.

Web training: Horvit said that he and staff are moving forward with the next phase of NICAR training, starting tomorrow at conference. The plan is to offer Web programming tracks in Houston and Miami, then follow this up with on-the-road training and Web CAR Boot Camps. Young said it's an outstanding idea and important for IRE's future. The board members were very receptive to the idea and praised Horvit, David Donald and staff for being forward thinking.

4. **Public Comments:** The board took public comments from IRE members. Geoff Davidian asked about the Houston conference hosts and sponsors and what the criteria are for accepting funding from news organizations. Grimaldi said that the board has spent hours and hours discussing such issues. He said IRE is comfortable when accepting money from news organizations, regardless of any opinion or bias. Discussion ensued. The board members thanked Davidian for taking the time to comment.

5. **Treasurer's Report (Hunt):** Hunt said the current budget is on target. Hunt asked Horvit how expenses are tracked; she and Cochran find the current system to be difficult to work with. Horvit said he and staff will research different options and report back to the board on cost and alternatives. Cochran said there may be funding and grants available for this.

Hunt said she would like to create a payment plan for replenishing the funding in the reserve fund; \$85,000 has been pulled from the \$200,000 fund to make up for the cash flow issues that historically occur at this time of year. She said the plan is to replenish this funding by the end of the fiscal year. Discussion ensued. Horvit said he would distribute budget materials to board members in the weeks prior to the coming board meetings so that everyone may have time to review budget details.

6. **Committee Reports:**

- a. **Development (Phillips):** Phillips reviewed highlights from the written development report. More than 350 IRE members donated and pledged more than \$87,000 to the endowment fund during the most recent end-of-year drive. Efforts such as the \$25 Club helped IRE raise more than \$700,000 toward its last \$1 million benchmark for the Knight Foundation challenge grant. Phillips thanked all the board members who assisted in this final push.

Horvit reported that the Knight Foundation decided, after reviewing IRE's report on the \$700,000 raised since 2005, to extend the matching grant through Sept. 30, 2008. Therefore, IRE has seven months to raise just under \$300,000. Horvit said he asked Brant Houston, immediate past executive director and current Knight Chair in Investigative Reporting, to join the IRE development committee to help with the final push. Brant agreed, and the board thanked him for his time and commitment.

- b. **Conference (Lea Thompson and Garcia):** Garcia reported that the international and reporting tracks are underway for Miami and complimented Katches on the work he has done on the editor track. Horvit said he and staff are approaching foundations to support business and higher education panels and the mentoring program.

Katches said that the mentoring program is underway. He said there were 65 mentors/65 mentees last year in Phoenix and he has gathered testimonials to help raise funding for the program. Katches also recommended that we offer a new-member reception in Miami.

Lea Thompson said that there will be two showcases on the topics of new media and journalists in peril. Discussion ensued on other plans for Miami. Thompson commended the local committee for their hard work.

Garcia said that several IRE members asked whether the Florida Bar could support the conference. The board members discussed the topic; Grimaldi summarized the discussion and said that all board members are fine with accepting a sponsorship from the Florida Bar.

Other ideas were put forward, including a fundraising auction of prize-winning photography and a raffle of electronics, such as an I-phone. Discussion ensued.

- c. **Audit (Grimaldi):** Grimaldi said there are three members on this committee, two from the board (Grimaldi and Phillips) and one other IRE member (David Dietz). The IRE treasurer may not serve on this committee. Grimaldi said the accountants had one issue with the accounting; as a result, the fiscal officer changed the reporting and accounting structure. The board recommended that the staff sign up for nonprofit accounting seminars.
7. **New Business**
- a. **Coffee Fundraiser (Katches):** Katches reported that IRE plans to sell the coffee at the conference and annually in newsrooms, with proceeds benefiting IRE's endowment fund. Three different blends will be offered this year. Katches asked board members who are interested in helping with the pilot project to contact him. Cochran recommended approaching the Freedom Forum cafes to carry the IRE coffee. Smallman recommended that IRE research the coffee company and make sure the beans are fair trade. He said he would look into liability insurance for the sale of IRE coffee.
  - b. **b. Trademark (Smallman):** Smallman reported that he conducted due diligence on the intellectual property of the IRE logo, and IRE did not own the logo. Smallman has since contacted the designer, has gone to the U.S. patent and trademark office, and has registered the logo domestically. IRE must now use the R symbol in addition to the TM symbol. He said that there are only two trademarks on the use of muckraker; he said it would cost around \$300 to register this.
  - c. **c. Strategic Plan Follow-Up (Grimaldi):** Grimaldi said the Executive Committee is in the process of working on the strategic plan. They will report to the board on progress in the coming months.
  - d. **d. Guidelines for Accepting Financial Support (Phillips):** Phillips said the current procedure is for the IRE executive director to come to the executive committee when he thinks there is an exception to the current rule for accepting donations. Yahoo is an example of a company that IRE may approach under the current rule. Google, however, is not be a media company , but journalists use their products, such as Google maps. The board recommended that we invite Google to serve as a vendor at an upcoming conference.
  - e. **e. New Venture for American University (Cochran):** Cochran said he and Charles Lewis have started a new organization at American University that will conduct investigative reporting workshops with the goal of creating significant national and international investigative journalism. Under the new venture, students and professors will conduct real investigative work. He said the organization wants to avoid competition with IRE and other journalism organizations. He said that they would acquire some of their data from IRE and NICAR and some would be created on their own. This will not be a separate 501(c) (3); Lewis will be the executive editor.
- Discussion ensued. Board members said that IRE and the new organization must be aware of areas of potential conflict. Cochran said there would be no overlap in groups the new organization plans to approach for funding.

8. **Executive Session:** Hunt made a motion to move into executive session; Katches seconded the motion. The meeting went into executive session.
9. **Adjournment:** Young made a motion to adjourn; Phillips seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.