

Minutes
IRE Board of Directors
June 9, 2020
Video Call

With IRE Board President Cheryl W. Thompson presiding, the meeting of the IRE Board of Directors was called to order at 12:08 p.m.

In addition to Thompson, the following board members were present: Vice President Lee Zurik, Secretary Jill Riepenhoff, Treasurer Jodi Upton, Nicole Vap, Steven Rich, Matt Dempsey, Jennifer LaFleur, Jodie Fleischer, Bethany Barnes, Cindy Galli and Brian Rosenthal. Norberto Santana Jr. joined at 1:14 p.m.

Staff members in attendance: Executive Director Doug Haddix, Deputy Executive Director Denise Malan and Financial Officer Heather Feldmann Henry.

Motion and second by Upton and Fleischer to approve the Jan. 14, March 11 and April 14 minutes with the following amendments:

Adding the names of those of who moved to adjourn the Jan. 14 meeting. In March 11 minutes, adding additional context to a comment by Barnes on IRE response to the coronavirus case at NICAR and changing a statement from Upton to a question about COVID-19's impact on IRE revenues. In the April 14 minutes adding the phrase "pending board approval" to comments about use of reserve funds to repay PPP and to add the following statement in the minutes: "There was discussion on whether IRE members would be comfortable taking government money. Haddix pointed out that most IRE members would be taking stimulus money individually, and Haddix would be happy to talk to anyone about it."

Motion carried.

There was a question for Haddix about how much should be captured in the minutes and whether email votes should be reflected in minutes. Haddix said that minutes are not meant to be a complete transcript of the proceeding but rather a summary of discussions around key topics.

Email actions taken:

April 7: The majority of members of the public engagement committee recommended that the IRE board sign onto a letter written by Pen America to encourage Congress to include local new organizations in stimulus funding. The board voted against signing the letter 8-4. Voting against it: Thompson, Zurik, Riepenhoff, Upton, Vap, Santana, Galli and LaFleur. Voting in favor: Barnes, Dempsey, Fleischer and Rosenthal. Rich did not cast a vote.

June 3: The board received and forwarded to the public engagement committee a letter asking for IRE's support in a letter to call for an end to violence against journalists during the protests over the killing of George Floyd. The public engagement committee recommended that IRE write and post its own letter condemning these attacks. The board voted 13-0 to approve the letter penned by the public engagement committee.

Don Bolles Medal

As recommended by former IRE board member Phil Williams and the public engagement committee, the following individuals are recommended to receive this year's Don Bolles Medal: investigative reporters Chris Ingalls of KING 5 in Seattle, Jeremy Jojola of 9News in Denver, A.C. Thompson of ProPublica, and columnist Leonard Pitts Jr. of the *Miami Herald* -- for their courage in standing up to white supremacist groups who attempted to suppress the truth with threats of violence aimed at the journalists, their families and their colleagues.

Thompson said that Williams made a strong case for each of the nominees.

Motion and second by Dempsey and LaFleur to award this year's Don Bolles Medal to investigative reporters Chris Ingalls of KING 5 in Seattle, Jeremy Jojola of 9News in Denver, A.C. Thompson of ProPublica, and columnist Leonard Pitts Jr.

Motion carried 12-0. Santana was not yet in attendance.

Vap thanked the committee and the board because it's been a rough year on Jeremy, Chris and their families.

The award typically is presented at the June conference. Given that the conference has been moved, the board asked Haddix to make an announcement this month and to ask the award winners make video speeches, which will be posted on the IRE website. They also will be honored again at the IRE conference in 2021.

Executive director's report

Haddix said that he wanted to give the board a chance to ask questions about the budget scenarios presented for 2021 in advance of the annual meeting.

Zurik thanked Heather for her hard work on the budget and said that we're in much better financial shape than anyone imagined. Prior to our meeting next week, he suggested posting a blog about where IRE stands financially for fiscal year 2020.

Motion and second to move into executive session by Zurik and Fleischer at 12:45 p.m. to discuss a contract. Motion carried 12-0.

Motion and second by Vap and Rich to end executive session at 1:22 p.m. Motion carried 13-0.

Motion and second by Santana and Thompson to authorize the IRE staff to proceed with plans to hold the IRE conference as a virtual event Sept. 21-25. Motion carried 13-0.

Haddix said that he and Heather will revisit and revise the budget after the virtual conference. LaFleur asked if the PPP enabled IRE to end the 2020 fiscal year with a surplus. Haddix said that was the case.

Haddix said that we needed PPP to help shore up the budget because the conference was moved from one fiscal year to the next.

Feldmann Henry said that all the paperwork is in order to prove that IRE spent PPP on salaries and that no staff were furloughed.

Motion and second to adjourn by Dempsey and Upton at 1:32 p.m. Motion carried 13-0.