

Asian American Journalists Association
SUMMER 2009 ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Aug. 15, 2009

Seaport Hotel, Boston

MEETING MINUTES

SATURDAY, AUG. 15, 2009

PRESENT:

Officers: Sharon Chan, national president; Janet Cho, national vice president for print; George Kiriya, national vice president for broadcast; Candace Heckman, national treasurer; Doris Truong, national secretary.

Board members: Abe Kwok, Arizona; Tomoko Hosaka, Asia; Jacqueline Gullledge Howard, Atlanta (proxy for Kim Bui); Lorene Yue, Chicago; Paul Cheung, Florida; Stanley Lee, Hawaii; Leezel Tanglao, Los Angeles; Frank Witsil, Michigan; Nancy Ngo, Minnesota; Tara Arden-Smith, New England; Bob Der, New York; Cheryl Tan, New York; Roxanna Haynes, North Carolina (proxy for Ellen Sung); Steve Bien-Aime, Philadelphia; Amy Hsuan, Portland (proxy for Jason Lim); Bobby Calvin, Sacramento; Don Chareunsky, San Diego; Matt Dunn, San Francisco / Bay Area; Ellen Lee, San Francisco / Bay Area; Athima Chansanchai, Seattle; Chris Nishiwaki, Seattle; Thomas Huang, Texas; Sherri Ly, Washington, D.C.; Lu'isa Mataele, at large.

Staff: Maya Blackmun, interim executive director; Janice Lee, deputy executive director; Antonio Salas, membership and chapter development manager; Albert Lee, professional programs coordinator; Annabelle Udo, events and fundraising coordinator; Nao Vang, student programs coordinator; Glenn Sugihara, accountant.

Guests: Gil Asakawa, president of AAJA's Colorado group; Sangita Chandra, Boston convention co-chair; Dinah Eng, ELP director; Angie Lau, J Camp co-director; Thomas Lee, AAJA-Minnesota president.

ABSENT:

Board members: Kim Bui, Atlanta (Gullledge Howard was proxy); Jason Lim, Portland (Hsuan was proxy); Ellen Sung, North Carolina (Haynes was proxy).

1. Call to Order (Chan)

Meeting called to convene at 9:31 a.m. Eastern time.

2. Roll Call (Truong)

Roll call was conducted. Quorum was met.

3. President's Report (Chan)

- [See document "AAJA Advisory Board Meeting: President's Report — August 15, 2009" submitted by Chan.]
- We need to move aggressively to build a strong, stable financial future for this institution because we're facing the worst financial conditions in our lifetime; some funding sources are never coming back.
- We need to think about we're going to find new sponsors by focusing on AAJA's unique value proposition.
- Our two choices: Cut costs dramatically or develop new funding.
- Chan spent the convention working on funders and explaining why recruiters should come to the career fair even if they're not hiring. She also met with funders for ELP and J Camp.
- Eng, Jeannie Park and Anne Marie Cruz are working with Chan on a VIP reception that includes Boston community leaders as a chance to thank people and talk about community relationships, too.
- Power of One fundraiser continuing.
- Let's embark on fundraising to coincide with 30th anniversary of AAJA in 2011
 - Park talked with Juju Chang about hosting a party in NY with potential funders. How can other chapters put their spin on a similar fundraiser?
- Executive Director search
 - Search committee in place. Members are former AAJA national president Mae Cheng, Joe Grimm, Heckman, Keith Kamasugi and former AAJA national VP-broadcast Randall Yip.
 - One of the top goals for new ED is going to be fundraising/grant writing.
 - Chansanchai: Have we thought of consulting with an HR specialist who works with nonprofits?
 - Chan says the consultant used in the previous ED search slowed the process. We do still have the results of surveys with the Governing Board.
 - Udo: Wants to clarify that absent a full-time ED, she has been fulfilling her responsibilities as a fundraising coordinator and has

been working on locking in money. She says we need a certain logic in how the staff roles will evolve.

- Search committee has been creating a focus for the roles of each member. The committee will assist in recruiting and IDing candidates, vetting them and delivering the top three to the executive officers for another round of interviews. The officers will determine whether anyone should be brought in to meet with staff or if the search needs to continue.
- Chan says everyone in AAJA, especially members, needs to think about who would be best in the role and encourage an application.
- Primary skills for the ED: fundraising and operational management, and ability to implement the next five-year strategic plan.
 - A journalist could probably fill the role, but we're looking for someone whose skills are not necessarily transferrable from journalism.
- E. Lee: How did the job description change since the last search?
 - Chan: We're looking for only an ED going forward (no deputy will be brought in to replace J. Lee).
- Tight timeline as we want new ED in place by Nov. 30, with plans to have the top candidates meet with the Governing Board and staff in early November.
- Ly asks how we're going to avoid philosophical differences from not showing up in the vetting.
 - Heckman says we'll be significantly more thorough with vetting, and intense recruiting is a crucial part of the process.
- Cheung suggests explaining the entire process in detail to the membership, including which core competencies are needed.
- Calvin says members have been expressing frustration about the lack of transparency in former ED Ellen Endo's departure.
 - Ly says announcement was a surprise to Advisory Board and that's not the way it should work.
 - Cheung suggests one person working with the A-Board to communicate as we move through the process.
- Ly: Can we get a blind read on the finalists' résumés?
- Der suggests allowing the A-Board to have more input on the job description, especially with the perspective that AAJA is a business venture and the challenges today might not be the same as the ones we'll face next year or further down the road.

- Witsil: Will we consider reinventing our organizational model simultaneously with the search? That would perhaps affect the skill sets we're looking at.
- Chan: Our mission's importance resonates. AAJA is receiving \$10,000 to build an endowed scholarship in Detroit and perhaps work with Vincent Chin's family.

4. Treasurer's Report (Heckman, Sugihara)

- [See document "AAJA treasurer's report, Aug. 15. 2009," submitted by Heckman.]
- All the chapters presented their midyear financial reports before the convention this year. Allowed Sugihara to get accurate snapshot of chapter-level financial health.
- Chapters need to be (re)told that this is a single organization: The chapters are a part of national and have a strong fiduciary responsibility to the national organization.
- Governing Board approved a \$38,000 budget deficit in 2008 for fiscal 2009, knowing that we have a healthy savings account (i.e., the national endowment), but the industry downturn meant pledges disappeared and some funders may not come back. We will have a significantly higher deficit than projected.
- Heckman thanks Sugihara for sticking by AAJA in this uncertain period.
- Sugihara presents
 - Wife Karen couldn't come because of new grandchild.
 - We're at 58 percent of grants: \$241,000 budgeted (\$140,000 received — some sponsors their pledge amounts significantly)
 - 37 percent of membership dues (expecting \$112,000, \$42,000 received).
 - Convention line items
 - 42%
 - sponsorships (\$400 - \$191, maybe \$196)
 - hoping to have \$25 from silent auction
 - registration about 62% including on site
 - job fair: \$35 (60%)
 - overall: \$51 (44%)
 - rely on convention to help other departments with deficit and to help with cash flow for next year
 - loss of \$75K in '09

- cutting costs for next year's convention (\$165 already trimmed from 2010)
 - hotel contract: 2,115 rooms renegotiated to 1,536
 - built-in attrition amount means we should have 1,305
- have cut costs at national (fewer handouts to save on printing/ shipping)
- expect to make \$160,000 lose \$75,000; \$234,000 cash flow swing
- Ly asks whether we might want to shorten the length of the convention to save money
 - J. Lee says that contracts being signed 3 years ago means that numbers were pretty locked in
 - the number of convention days helps us meet room block
 - Blackmun says we have tried to lower room rate and were somewhat successful
 - Glenn: hotel under no obligation to renegotiate
 - FNB needs (banquet)
- org not used to hosting a loss, so we need to work together to find new sources of funding
- total assets: \$1.8M; money thanks to endowment fund
- perspective: in '82 tax return, we had \$15K; convention expense less than \$300
- endowment is restricted, so we're borrowing to track on balance sheet
- \$240K loss (maybe \$300K) in 2009
- Tan says that borrowing from endowment sends a bad signal because we worked so hard to build it up; she suggests each chapter be told this is a wakeup call and have a fundraiser before end of 2009
- Cheung asks how we compare with other unity orgs
 - Blackmun says she talked with Ivan Roman (NAHJ ED) about how they are rethinking fundraising
 - chan says nahj doesn't have chapters or local leadership
- Witsil asks about worst-case scenario
 - glenn says endowment reserves could last aja for 2 years but says we're smart and creative, so we won't get to that point

- Sugihara is not too discouraged by this year's loss
- Chan says we don't have convention just to bring in money but are serving members through programming, etc. would have lost much more \$ canceling

5. **National Office Report** (Blackmun, J. Lee)

- [See document "Executive National Office Report," submitted by J. Lee]
- Blackmun is in a half-time position according to her contract.
- Seaport hotel dispute re FNB count; held firm on contract on not upping minimums
 - Arden-Smith says a negotiating tactic in the future should be to ask for room service and other FNB billed to AAJA room block should count toward minimum (not successful this year but hotels are trying to be more competitive)
- Cho: took on the Wm Woo internship fund to raise \$5K for matching grant. sold out the 30 books that were brought to convention. journalism schools might use the books in the curriculum (royalties go back toward scholarships). Selling lapel pins to help general funds.
- J. Lee's last day is Aug. 14.
- Udo has taken on much of the convention sponsorship.
- Red Sox ticket fundraising: \$3,642 to be split between national/New England chapter.
- Thanks to the chapters that helped support J Camp (about \$8K)
- Staff will be handling the completion of the 2009 annual report.
- J. Lee thanks AAJA for allowing her to be the deputy ED for more than 5 years.

6. **AAJA Groups in Pre-Certification Period**

- A. Colorado (Gil Asakawa, president; Joe Nguyen, vp)
 - The application was for Colorado, but the group has been referring to itself as "Denver."
 - Not much has been accomplished since Unity.
 - Some discussion of withdrawing the application.
 - Planning events to rally the existing members in the area and do further outreach to schools.
 - considering an award ceremony fundraiser akin to NABJ Colorado group.
 - could easily do training for journalists on skill sets
 - Lost 2 members because of Rocky Mountain News's closure.
 - Different leadership team has hindered the implementation of the original ideas.

- Organized a candlelight vigil for Laura Ling and Euna Lee.
- Mixer attendance was at least 12 students but the previous leadership was pessimistic.

7. Convention Updates

- A. 2009 Boston Convention (Smith)
 - Reg numbers higher than expected.
 - Shirley Leung and Sangita Chandra are happy and proud of having pulled off the convention.
 - Suggests working with city's CVB to help with hotel negotiations.
 - Chandra singles out J. Lee and Udo in particular for their work.
 - This year's co-chairs are writing a report to pass along to the LA organizers with key recommendations on targeting funders (nonmedia especially)
 - Heard that the lunch panel sponsor is interested in a repeat in 2010.
- B. 2010 Los Angeles Convention (Tanglao)
 - Aug. 4-7, 2010 in Renaissance Hotel in the heart of Hollywood
 - 3 prelim sponsors: SoCal Edison (\$25), NBC-Universal (unsure of what), anon (\$25)
 - Board members have agreed to approach funders
 - Darleene Powells has agreed to co-chair. Second not ID'd
 - Tentative theme: "A Spotlight on the Future"
 - Kick-off event still under consideration. Probably not in November because of prep for Trivia Bowl on Oct. 9.
- C. 2011 Detroit Convention (Witsil)
 - Have been talking about connecting L.A. (our birth) to Detroit (our 30th anniversary)
 - Ideas: Producing a 30th anniversary booklet for sale? Anniversary of Vincent Chin.
 - Have had Arab Americans translate the theme.
 - Bien-Aime recommends translations into Farsi and other languages.
 - "Reverse mentorships" to combine ELP-J Camp
 - Chan met with Paul Anger, who is excited about having AAJA in Detroit.

9. Old Business

- D. ELP Report (Eng)
 - difficult year for the program as much as anyone else
 - had agreement with Gannett to be hosted in McLean HQ but was told at last minute that deal was off. space was offered at facility gratis but \$15K

sponsorship and meal provision didn't happen. jeannie park did last minute fundraising.

- had 21 in Class of 2009
- in this year's advanced session, 18 (no drop-off from normal years)
- no reception because no sponsor this year
 - people from individual classes organized their own gatherings
- positive comments about programming (your own brand, dealing with stress)
- future funding
 - McCormick grant, which has sustained ELP for several years, is giving us a farewell grant (org needs have changed)
 - crafted a proposal to celebrate 15th anniversary of ELP by putting together a media demo project to address components of different kinds of media to maintain an API voice
 - received 2-year grant from mccormick after revising the grant proposal
 - wants a closing summit in June 2011 in Chicago and opened the door to a request for a grant to sponsor that
 - prelim \$200K over two years to cover intro session in NY in 2010 plus the project going forward
 - will need money for the 2011 intro ELP session
 - optimistic about securing other sponsors to also help
 - Gannett's Kate Marymount suggested a listserv tracking the progress toward the summit; this could be a revenue generator.
 - Detroit was chosen specifically for its arab american population; we chose LA and NY as the coast cities in terms of where we had the largest numbers of members (not just ELP) to help. Katharine Fong is going to help spearhead the Detroit portion.
 - the project involves middle school (Emil Askari)
 - strictly to deal with arab americans and how they deal with media
 - Tan says she wants to ensure that with summit prep we don't get off track of what the focus of ELP is. could some of the money go toward j camp or other programs?
 - Eng says the grant doesn't allow you to redistribute the money
 - Chansanchai: what about cutting costs for the program?
 - No trainer dinner. Eng paid for AV at the advanced session.
- E. J Camp Report (Lau, Justin, Angeles)

- Lau: being new co-director has been an honor and privilege
- ninth year of program
- 42 students
- Richard Lui of HLN came for his first time as faculty
- graduates of the program are fulfilling their mission by staying involved with AAJA: going on to Voices, then becoming AAJA members, then becoming working journalists who will eventually become newsroom leaders.
- we need to work as unified group and collaborate to build the brand of AAJA
- 2010 is 10th anniversary of j camp
 - want to have alum return
- Always open to conversations about how to step up fundraising efforts.
- Yue: how can we successfully track the students and get them into the AAJA loop instead of in independent silos
 - technology has made it possible to keep the network going (FB, etc.)
 - Vang: J Camp alumni Web site created this year to allow the alum to update AAJA on where they are, what they're doing
- Tima says the J Camp reception is a highlight of the convention.
- Lau: No one is paid. Speakers and faculty volunteer and pay for own travel.

10. New Business

A. Student Projects Proposal (J. Lee, T. Lee)

- Context: If you're not able to raise the money to sustain the project, here's a proposal for a Plan B or C. Supports Voices.
 - "AAJA Convention Student Scholars Program"
 - select a number of students whose convention expenses are all paid.
 - Voices kids can't replicate the convention experience. they can get newsroom experiences elsewhere.
 - Huang: was an editor on the project from '96 to 2000
 - several steps can be taken before we get there
 - Voices is transformational for students and professionals
 - the byproduct isn't only the newspaper or multimedia product
 - We can use this to leverage sponsorships and grants with educational foundations
 - Marian Liu has reinvented and streamlined it.

- The Voices costs now are comparable to the mentorship proposal costs.
- T. Lee says we need to reevaluate the multimedia project and how it's working.
- Chan: Voices is a watchdog for the organization. We'd lose something if we replaced it with a mentorship program.
- J. Lee: It's hard to quantify the overall costs of Voices, but it's approximately \$100K. To make an informed decision, if it's all about the budget, you need to make the right comparisons.
 - What's the best student experience we can give at this convention?
 - What's the evaluation beyond asking our own members?
- Kwok: Working together to find new funding to serve AAJA shouldn't even look at this worst-case scenario.
- Liu
 - complete multimedia model this year: collapsed the four tiers into one project where everyone did everything. "How do we best tell this story?"
 - training journalists how they should be in the future and it's a leadership opportunity for professionals (asked ELP colleagues to help)
 - almost all the pros work as reporters at their home newsrooms, so they are learning, too
 - compounding effect: students who are in the project are working journalists today
 - "It's a passion project."
 - cost cutting this year: one fewer day of the project, fewer meals, pros paying costs out of pocket
 - grant covered equip (no more costs in the future)
 - other options: putting up students in the dorms instead of the hotel

B. Census deadline (Tima)

- A. Can we move it to the first quarter to allow the membership drive to be more effective?

11. National Governing Board Meeting: Fall Dates

12. Announcements

- Sacramento: Sept. 29 photo showcase
- Oct. 3 Scrabble fundraiser in NY

- D.C. Trivia Bowl: Oct. 23
- Asia chapter Web site revamped.
- Treasurers meeting suggests fundraising panel at the convention (“fundraising for journalists”).
- Question about why we don’t have student chapters as NAHJ does.

13. Adjournment

Heckman moved to adjourn. Bien-Aime seconded. Meeting adjourned.

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PRESENT:

Officers: Sharon Chan, national president; Janet Cho, national vice president for print; George Kiriya, national vice president for broadcast; Candace Heckman, national treasurer; Doris Truong, national secretary.

Board members: Don Chareunsky, San Diego; Paul Cheung, Florida; Matt Dunn, San Francisco; Abe Kwok, Arizona; Cheryl Tan, New York; Frank Witsil, Michigan.

Staff: Maya Blackmun, interim executive director; Janice Lee, deputy executive director; Glenn Sugihara, accountant.

Guests: Jeff Yang, Jeannie Park, Tara Arden-Smith, Chris Nishiwaki, Athima Chansanchai, Sid (???)

Absent: None.

1. Call to Order (Chan)

Meeting called to order at 1:16 p.m. Eastern time.

2. Roll Call (Truong)

Roll call conducted. Quorum was met.

3. Approval of Previous Minutes

Cheung moved to approve the 2009 Spring Advisory Board and 2009 Spring Governing Minutes as reported, including amendments updating signatories for AAJA bank and investment accounts; approval of the national staff to renegotiate the Westin Boston contract; renegotiate the 2010 hotel contract. Tan seconded. Motion passes.

4. Old Business

A. Financials (Sugihara)

- See "Statement of Changes in Financial Position: National and chapter Funds as of June 30 2009"
 - Membership is down to 1,400.
 - Encourages people to join at the Platinum level. (Guests say the level isn't well known.) Can spread payments over the year.
 - Recommends not giving chapters their portion of the dues and keeping that money in the national accounts this year.
 - Chan and Heckman mentioned this to presidents and treasurers at their meetings.
 - Initial reaction wasn't resistant.
 - Also consider presenting nonrenewals as an effort to drive membership sign-ups. (Give portion of dues to chapters for those people.)
 - J Camp donations from the chapter level down (\$8K vs. previous years of \$15K)
 - Cheung says the Florida chapter doesn't feel connected to choosing the students, etc., and how might that money be put to use (maybe to send an unemployed journalist?).
 - Heckman: Be more program-specific in your fundraising.
 - J. Lee says the chapters are overwhelmed with communication pre-convention.
 - Heckman: We differ from other orgs because we are one; the chapters are not distinct from National.
 - Glenn: You have to decide whether you want to take the money from the chapters or from the endowment. Of course, you want to raise the money from elsewhere if poss.
 - Blackmun: The national office does a lot of work in service to the chapters.
 - Nishiwaki: look at franchises to see if there's something to be learned from that model.
- Program leaders will start to be more involved in the budgeting.

Park: tie a series of fundraisers to the 30th anniversary

have we targeted teen media for raising j camp \$

is there programming we can do in the mold of PBS and such?

Cheung: let's try a convention telethon -- have our volunteers run a phone bank to raise \$ or get renewals.

Blackmun: 30th anniversary, 30 events

Grant developer has a list of foundations that we'll be seeking funding from for student programs.

B. Colorado Group Pre-Certification Status

Kwok had several exchanges with the group's former president, and the perspective is different than the presentation that was offered to the Advisory Board. Stable leadership with Gil and Erin, both have established ties with the community groups.

Cho moves to extend, Kiriya seconds. Precertification extended for a year.

5. New Business

A. Executive Session

Heckman moves for Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Truong seconds. Witsil objects.

Cho moves to exit Executive Session. Tan seconds.

Cheung says we need to develop a plan for keeping members updated about the status of the ED search.

6. Fall Governing Board Meeting Dates

- Nov. 6-7 in San Francisco

7. Adjournment

Kwok moved to adjourn. Heckman seconded. Meeting adjourned.