

## 2021 AAJA Fall Board Meeting minutes

### Board of Directors Meeting

Saturday, Dec. 18, 2021

On Zoom

**Board of Directors members present:** President Michelle Lee, Senior Vice President Nicole Dungca, VP of Communications Shirley Qiu, VP of Finance Jin Ding, VP of Journalism Programs Kris Vera-Philips, Large Chapter Representative Henry Fuhrmann (LA Chapter), Small/Medium Chapter Representative Julia M. Chan (Atlanta Chapter), At-Large Chapter Representative Benjamin Pu (New York Chapter), At-Large Chapter Representative Yuri Nagano (Asia Chapter), Small/Medium Chapter Representative Nader Issa (Chicago Chapter). VP of Civic Engagement Julia B. Chan joined at 5 p.m. ET.

Michelle calls to order at 4:07 p.m. ET. Shirley calls attendance at 4:07 p.m. ET.

Welcome to Nader! Repping for one meeting.

AAJA policy update: letters of recommendation policy (Michelle)

Jin: I've written letters of recommendation (as an individual, not a rep of AAJA) in the past for visa applications. Would this policy prevent me from doing that in the future?

Yuri: Asia Chapter sees letter of recommendation requests tied to visa requests for attending the convention in the U.S. and the N3CON regional conference in Asia because many attendees need to cross borders. We've also seen requests for help seeing work visas in the U.S. We've turned down all requests because of potential liability issues.

Michelle will add in a line to say HQ will confirm the membership status of individual members. And maybe we say we will review cases on an individual basis.

Michelle will run this language by Don to make sure there aren't any language issues on it.

Kris motions for a vote on this policy on the condition that Don will review for legal language and Michelle will share updates in the slack channel. Ben seconds. Everyone approves.

Affinity group review (Nicole)

Four groups didn't apply for reapproval: Enterprise, Features Forum, News Nerds, Small Market Broadcast. No new groups have popped up yet. There are no new task forces – Pacific Islander task force and AAJA Plus are still going strong. No vote necessary for this update.

Nicole will check in with Small Market Broadcast – there's typically turnover with leaders because they move onto larger markets, but it's an important group for people just starting their careers. We should see if there's still a desire for them to continue.

Michelle: Did yung AAJA start a broadcast arm?

Ben: No, we tried but it ran out of steam. Talked with small market broadcast AG to see if they wanted to have folks join yung AAJA but that fell through.

Jin: Surprised that News Nerds didn't reapply – they've been pretty active.

Nicole: I'll check in with them as well.

Jin: Did anyone reach out about an LGBTQ AG?

Nicole: They didn't officially apply. They might still be gathering their group together.

Michelle: Let's make sure to circle back with all of those groups to make sure they didn't just miss the deadline or something. For younger broadcasters, it's hard for their schedules because they're often working later hours. Maybe the broadcast advisory council could absorb it? I don't know how it should look but there's a need and we should address it.

Kris: That would be a wonderful idea, and it would be great if the broadcast advisory group could mentor younger folks in broadcast.

Programs update (Kris)

Kris will update the org chart to be more visual. Program leads to sign the MOU in February. Safety protocol is being considered for all programming.

Michelle: Big props to Kris for getting this together. It's a big step forward, something we've wanted for a while.

AAJA style guide proposal (Julia B. Chan)

Chunking up the style guide revamp process. The current style guide is outdated – that came down. Henry and Pia will join the style committee, which plans to meet in January.

Michelle: Background is we've been trying to launch this process for a year now. I'm putting this as a priority for the new year. What's the timeline for the condensed version?

Julia B.: Late January to get a rubric together, chunk up the style guide. Will get a shortlist to gboard for approval by the end of January.

One piece of feedback from Naomi was that she'd love to suggest some longer-term recruitment of AAPI community for this committee. I think that's a good long-term plan but shouldn't hold up our short-term timeline.

Michelle: I think this is a case where we set our ambitions high but move forward with the condensed version.

Kris: This would be good to have with the Olympics starting up in February.

Michelle: Great point. We should do the condensed version but also come up with a guide for the Beijing Olympics. At the most basic level, provide some pronunciation guides.

Ben: Is it really our place to provide guidance on terminology or places that aren't necessarily in the sphere of American media? E.g. defining "Tibet"

Julia B.: Good point. I think part of the conversation is, how can we get people to the resources they need efficiently?

Nicole: These are all good points. Having a style guide this exhaustive – you might want to consider getting funding, because that's a long guide. We do put out statements explaining different Asian cultures.

Julia B.: Our scope needs to be tight. If we aim to capture our entire identity and experience, that's an endless list. The more we can define our slice and scope, the better we can serve people.

Michelle: Maybe we ask SAJA and AMEJA to take parts of our style guide, those who have more expertise on those terms.

Henry: I think the need for this is greater than ever, but the guide can be smaller. Who is our audience? We should define our lane.

Nader: We should make sure we're inclusive of all of Asia in this guide. Definitely should work with AMEJA and SAJA but also possible to condense.

MediaWatch update (Julia B. Chan)

Two major events: guidance on the coverage of Sept. 11, 20 years later. This was a collaboration with AMEJA, SAJA and NABJ well ahead of Sept. 11. The active participation of leadership across journalism orgs was great to see.

The other event was in October, YouTuber making racist remarks about Betty Yu, reporter at KPIX-TV. Released a statement that day, got on a call with Betty and KPIX to offer support.

Michelle: We didn't want to respond right away because we didn't want to amplify this guy's comments. But we prepared talking points in advance, just in case it went viral. Once it got covered in local media it got to the point where we should speak out.

Julia M.: What was it like working with the station – CBS local news groups have been problematic in the past. Did we make any progress with them?

Michelle: In terms of CBS, we continue to hear issues our members run into at local o&os. In this case the issue wasn't with KPIX managers. They got their local anchors on it.

Julia B.: For MediaWatch leadership, no one has reached out with an emphatic desire to step up in light of Cefaan stepping down. Some people have shown light interest.

Michelle: Let's do more recruitment on that.

Julia B.: Luckily the committee is pretty well-oiled, but a co-chair would be nice.

#### Scholarship policy (Jin)

Currently, many of our scholarships are dependent on one donor, we'd like to diversify that.

We'll take a 10% overhead fee for anyone who wants to start a scholarship with us.

Requirements: provide funding for 3 years, \$5,000 minimum. Overhead for programs including scholarships is pretty normal – it takes staff time to manage. We need to put out newsletters, pay for Submittable every year. 10% is not high; it basically covers our costs.

Kris: How is this being managed under AAJA HQ?

Jin: Currently it's managed by Waliya. Not sure what will happen when she goes on maternity leave. There are currently 20 scholarships under AAJA.

Kris: Does AAJA reserve the right to challenge, question scholarship rewards?

Jin: Each of the scholarships are endowed by their own committees, they'll each have an MOU that outlines the selection process. But they need to comply with AAJA's code of conduct. What this covers is how we decide to set up the scholarship and how we sunset them.

Michelle: Could you add a line saying the Board of Directors must approve all new scholarships?

Jin: Yes.

Jin motions to move this to a vote. Ben seconds. Everyone approves.

#### Fiscal sponsorships (Jin)

This is completely new. In addition to Richard Lui, we're sponsoring The Yappie and Randall Yip. I was involved in all those and we're currently testing this policy.

Michelle: Previous fiscal sponsorships haven't been approved by the board.

Ben: It sounds like we've already done this. Historically I'm curious what the process has been. What happened with Richard Lui's book?

Jin: We first started with Richard on the Sky Blossom documentary. For a lot of documentaries, they go thru 501(c)(3)s to fundraise. Richard reached out to us.

Michelle: The fiscal sponsorship for that project was arranged with the former ED. A policy would ensure a vetting process for projects. The board should have a say, because it ultimately has AAJA's name on the product/project but we don't have any editorial say. I propose that the approval is done by the board but the vetting is done by the 3 people named in the policy.

Ben: I'd like there to be language that says the Board of Directors signs off on all future fiscal sponsorships.

Kris: What's a typical timeline for other fiscal sponsorships?

Jin: It's really case by case. Documentaries could be many years. We could also add language for the maximum length of a fiscal responsibility agreement. E.g. 2 years, to tie to leadership terms.

Ben: Do fiscal sponsorship agreements provide a significant source of revenue for AAJA?

Jin: Currently, not much. That's why I want to have a policy.

Julia B.: This could be an onramp for people to become their own 501(c)(3), help fund reporting projects.

Kris: Maybe this is something we talk about with Catalyst fellows.

Yuri: Is this driven by a need for revenue for us or by filling a need for members?

Jin: There are members asking about it; at the same time, this is a potential growth opportunity for AAJA. Any revenue generated goes to our general funding pool, which is the most flexible bucket. We talked about setting it to 7.5% (7.5-10% is very reasonable. Market rate can be higher, 10-15%)

Michelle: Let's come back to this tomorrow for a vote.

Ben motions to go into closed session at 6:29 p.m. ET. Kris seconds.

Julia B. Chan motions to bring us back out of closed session at 7:06 p.m. ET. Jin seconds.

Michelle recesses the meeting at 7:07 p.m. ET.

## **Board of Directors Meeting (continued)**

Sunday, Dec. 19, 2021

On Zoom

Resumed meeting at 4:04 p.m. ET.

Budget update (Naomi)

We're in a very strong financial position with \$4.8M in assets. We've had a very strong fundraising year.

Yuri: Asia chapter is trying to move its funds in Hong Kong to an account in Singapore. For a foreign nonprofit to open a bank account overseas is not easy, and it took more than a year to secure nonprofit designation to open a bank in Hong Kong initially. We are moving because of tax policy changes in Hong Kong. As for U.S. funds in the National account, we are trying to open a U.S. account to move the funds to, but this is no easy task. The chapter needs a U.S. member to look after the account and we are not finding a taker. Our chapter treasurers are in Asia and are often not U.S. citizens, making it difficult for them to open a

U.S. account. Even if we found one person who can, there is a leadership pipeline issue where we are not sure how long that person can watch the funds for us. Wiring cross-border can be expensive and transactions like membership fees from National and sponsor money can cost something like \$50 each, so it's made logistical sense to hold funds in the U.S.

Jin: Working with Glenn on a training for treasurers. Hoping to get in-person training together for the convention.

Naomi: Exceptional funding for mental health this year. Established funding for AAJA Studio and 40th anniversary programming (first time it's not been volunteer-run). However, not sure if this can be sustained in the long-run.

Jin: We've saved a lot of money by doing virtual conventions – costs were cut down significantly. I expect that we'll spend way more money on the convention next year – because it's in person, but also because of the hybrid model and pandemic-related safety protocols, like on-site testing.

Naomi: Hoping our next hire will be for helping with fundraising strategy, operations. I manage most of the consultants, except for comms and graphics. AAJA Studio also goes up to Jessica.

Michelle: Who on staff is in charge of member support?

Naomi: The CRM technology side has been managed by Nitt and consultants. Member support is split between the younger staff – training them up now.

Jin: I wonder if one person should take ownership of member support.

Naomi: I think that would be the goal. In training them, hoping in 12-18 months someone can step into that role.

CRM update (Naomi)

There are major sync issues in our tech stack. Background: There were discussions about coming off of Nation Builder, and we wanted to build a tech stack based off Salesforce. We chose Salsa Engage, but it wasn't able to handle the two-way sync between Salesforce and itself. It's not quite functional for what we need day-to-day currently.

Next steps: Go back to the basics, something that can handle membership well. We've demoed half a dozen products so far. We'll go into another transition period at the beginning of next quarter. We're hiring a firm to make sure the data transition works well.

We could do a manual data pull for chapter elections, but chapter leads currently can't pull updated rosters.

Michelle: Has there been any study on what other associations use? We've been dealing with CRM issues for 7 years unfortunately, and board recommendations change because of turnover.

Naomi: Both NAHJ and NABJ use Member Clicks. There was something about it that didn't work for us. Member Suite had some advantages over Member Clicks. Maynard uses Salesforce, but they're not a membership organization.

Michelle: It's becoming a critical issue for some members because they can't renew their own members. I wonder if we can elevate this priority even more. Could we hire a second staffer to just deal with this in the short term? We can't survive if we can't sign on members.

The board agreed in asking Naomi and HQ to prioritize CRM transition in the new year, and to dedicate funding as needed to hire a consultant who can help us overcome the critical transition challenges.

AAJA Awards (Julia M.)

We're on target to launch the revamped awards in a month. We have a Submittable template so far. Next steps: Getting more judges on board. We'll be doing more targeted outreach in early 2022, making sure we have all the categories covered. We'll be looking at 2 years' worth of awards.

Eligibility: Opening up to members only. The one caveat is for the Pacific Islander award, we'll open that up to NAJA members as well, per the advice of the Pacific Islander Task Force.

Jin: We have a fund to give Pacific Islanders free AAJA membership for a year. So we could require AAJA membership and offer that as an opportunity to NAJA members who want to submit.

Julia: That's a good solution.

Julia: How have member awards worked in the past?

Michelle: Members nominate other members, board votes on the winners. The only challenge is that the same people nominate or get nominated every year. Board members don't vote if they nominated someone or were nominated for that category.

Julia: We're hoping to open nominations for this Feb. 1. The member awards won't be part of the Journalism Excellence categories in January.

Michelle: Across the board, all nominators should be members, even for the AAJA Visibility Award.

Break at 5:21 p.m. ET. Resumed at 5:25 p.m. ET.

Hall of fame (Naomi)

AAJA founders will be the inaugural group in the Hall of Fame. Julia B. Chan motioned to approve this. Julia M. Chan seconded. Unanimously approved.

## Fundraising committee proposal (Naomi and Jin)

Naomi: We want to put together a committee to start an endowment campaign to further stabilize and sustain us as an organization. Should be geographically diverse to make sure we're tapping different cities.

Michelle: Background is that fundraising and cultivating big donors is typically the job of the board of directors at nonprofits, but it's always been difficult for us because we're a journalism organization – past board members have felt uncomfortable asking for money. We want to eventually change the board culture in a fundraising direction, but this is the structure we're proposing in the meantime.

Ben: My employer has strict conflict of interest policies, which limits my fundraising abilities. So this is a great idea.

Julia B.: Same – I've had to recuse myself from sponsorship conversations in the past.

Shirley: I wonder if this fundraising committee could be a more long-term strategy rather than a stopgap solution? Those issues will always exist on the board.

Jin: Yes, that's something I'm thinking about as well. I'm in a sponsorship role in my day job, so there aren't as many restrictions for me, but other journalists who step into this role may not have that flexibility.

Jin motioned to approve this proposal, Ben seconded. Approved unanimously.

Fiscal sponsorship policy: Jin motioned to approve. Yuri seconded. Approved unanimously.

## Endowment plan (Jin and Naomi)

Jin: I acknowledge that there's language that some might feel uncomfortable with in this slide deck, but want to point out that AAJA is not a journalism organization – distinction from journalism membership org.

Naomi: This draft slide deck will probably live online publicly, but as we use this it'll have several dozen iterations tailored to specific funders and donors.

Michelle: I'd suggest presenting this to the advisory board in the spring to collect feedback, because of the language. Don't want them to feel taken off guard. Also may want to circulate it to key chapter leaders, or put it in the leaders channel.

Jin: For launching the endowment campaign, there needs to be a more focused roadmap. We developed a 3-year roadmap. The first step is to get the fundraising committee together; the next step is to give them the tools to execute the roadmap. We'd launch the endowment campaign in year 3.

Naomi: The ambassadors will not get a cut of anything; it's purely a volunteer position.



Jin: The purpose of the endowment campaign is to make sure we survive and thrive, even in downturns and difficult times like 2008.

Michelle: Review slides 16-19 for the proposed board leadership role in fundraising efforts. Feedback from the board on eventual fundraising responsibilities?

Nicole: We should not attach a number to fundraising goals – it might scare people away. We already have recruitment issues for board positions.

Julia M.: Agreed. To be honest, this goal would have probably scared me away from joining. And this might prevent members who are in less financially secure situations to join board leadership.

Shirley: Agree with all above. If we want to introduce this as a new culture, setting financial goals right away seems like too extreme of a change. Starting with more general goals would be a better way to transition to this culture.

Julia B.: Agreed. In the spirit of inclusivity, we should create a menu of goals for building toward this culture. Whether you're an introvert, have no fundraising experience, have no funds to personally contribute, you should be able to see yourself serving in a board role.

Kris: Agree with above. Number value is daunting. Training would be helpful.

Henry: Agree with above. The strength of this board is its diversity. Goal could be prohibitive for people to join.

Yuri: For all the reasons mentioned and my personal experience, it took me a couple years for an in-kind donation. You have to sit down with them, wine and dine. It takes time and coaching.

Ben: I would like to strike the give/get goal entirely, because we do make a significant amount of money already from corporate and other sponsors.

Nader: Agree with a lot of what's been said. I'm not sure about the give/get number, because the pro that'll give us does not outweigh the con of time, stress from working journalists who don't have all that much money to give. I think it would also hurt the idea of setting a fundraising culture, because people will put it off, it won't be prioritized throughout the year. The idea of getting involved in the board is sharing experiences and supporting, and we'd be shutting people out if there was a financial aspect. A better approach might be building a culture of fundraising in our hubs – chapters, AGs.

Meeting minutes approval

Michelle: We want to vote on meeting minutes by mid-January or so to get them online.

Convention 2022 (Michelle, Jin, Naomi)

Michelle: July 26-30 in LA. Traditional host chapter responsibilities don't make sense anymore, so we put together a new MOU. Asia Chapter is looking into Singapore as a host city – they will provide an update by January, then we will sign an MOU with them as well.

Naomi: Before, if there was a profit, the chapter would get a portion of the profit. But in this situation, we're going to a host chapter city where there's robust fundraising, so we'd like to propose a split regardless of the profit margin for sponsors that the LA chapter finds.

Jin: Leezel and I are staying on for another year for programming. We're thinking about keeping some virtual component, but it's not financially realistic to livestream the sessions. So we're discussing doing a few virtual days in June or later September, not connected to convention dates.

Kris: What's our backup plan for the pandemic?

Naomi: We have a well negotiated and relatively airtight force majeure clause. We can also let the hotel know in July if there are any changes. Legally, we're in good shape. As far as backup, if we had to go virtual again we would work to keep the same dates.

Jin: We're also considering selling virtual tickets, in-person tickets, and a bundle ticket. Our call for programming ideas and a convention programming committee will be opening soon.

The board thanked Henry and Yuri, our outgoing members, for their support, dedication and service. We'll miss them on the board and are grateful to have worked together the past two years.

Henry moves to close the session at 7:02 p.m. ET. Ben seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m. ET.