

Minutes
Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Association
Board of Directors Meeting (Zoom)
Friday, March 1, 2024

Call to Order: Vice President Eric Schnaible called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. EST.

Roll Call: Secretary Carla Sylvester called the roll. A quorum was present.

Board Members Present: Vice President Eric Schnaible, Secretary Carla Sylvester, Chief Financial Officer Phil Ratliff, Julie Briggs, Dick Cole, Beth Horine, Jim McGuire, Chuck Merlo, Perry Nouis.

Board Members Absent: Chairman Brett Ashworth (proxy to Eric Schnaible), President John Dorrian, Mike Paoli, Allen Herritage.

Others Attending: Judy Bivens, Jay DeFrank, Art Forster, Clem Gaines, John Gura, Hank Hufnagel, Christine Queen, John Terino, Lou Timmons.

Minutes of the Last Board Meeting: Vice President Eric Schnaible asked for approval of the minutes of the Special Meeting conducted Dec. 1, 2023. **Jim McGuire moved** to approve the minutes. **Perry Nouis seconded. Motion passed.**

SAF/PA Update: Col. Allen Herritage was not present. Jay DeFrank said that later in the meeting he would address some of the sensitivities regarding attendance of active-duty board members.

Financial Report: Chief Financial Officer Phil Ratliff referred the board to the financial report he sent in advance of the meeting. The balance was over \$560K as of Monday, so we are doing well. Even though the 2023 annual meeting was the most expensive ever, we've recouped those costs plus \$30K. **Carla Sylvester moved** to approve the financial report. **Jim McGuire seconded. Motion passed.**

SAF/PA Liaison Report: Lou Timmons reported the Best of the Best plaque at SAF/PA has been updated.

Committee Reports

A. **Organization Transition:** Jay DeFrank thanked everyone who participated in the transition working group meeting, which included members of the active force, and the AF PA Agency.

- 1) Legal concerns: The AF PA Agency's trademark and licensing lawyer expressed concerns with how we use the PA emblem and AF symbol, with our name, and with active duty participation in AFPAA. The active people had been instructed to remain silent during the meeting, and afterward, Col. Allen Heritage told Jay he and Col. Beth Horine could

not appear on our web page as active members of board and asked to be taken down immediately.

- 2) Current status: Jay said we are awaiting additional information regarding potential issues with the Air Force symbol, PA emblem, etc. Our organization's initials are the same as those of the Air Force Public Affairs Agency, but Jay doesn't see that as a big issue. A main area of concern is participation by active duty people, but it is a matter that SAF/PA has to engage in. He said we have to be sensitive to other demands on SAF/PA, and let them act when the time is right for them. Meanwhile, our organization is still open to active duty people, and we can still generate positive visibility through our existing programs, such as the Dalton Scholarship program, Best of the Best, Hall of Fame, and oral history. He recommended that for now we remain positive and patient. He added we hope we can continue to have SAF/PA attend our meetings as in the past in a non-voting capacity until the questions about participation can be worked out with SAF/GC.
- 3) Newsletter and website: Dick Cole asked if he should avoid using the star-and-wings and PA logo in the newsletter. After some discussion, the board agreed we should suspend use of those images in the newsletter and on the website until the permission issue has been resolved. Dick said he would pursue requesting permission from the Air Force and DOD as necessary to use these.
- 4) Recent changes in DOD focus: Julie Briggs said that recently within DOD there has been a new focus on joint ethics and affiliations with outside organizations. Military members can join a nonprofit, but can't participate on duty time. We as an organization have to extend the invitation; SAF/PA can't appear to do it for us. She added that regarding trademarks, in last 11 years DOD has been trademarking all the seals and badges for all the services, things that used to be fair use. The DOD website has the language, and it's changed from what we may have known in the past.
- 5) Coordination with other services: Further discussion revolved around looking into how other services such as the Army are able to have active duty participation in their organization, and how active duty people are able to participate with organizations such as Air Force Association. Jay said that active duty people are already participating with us, so SAF/PA has a legitimate inroad to discuss the matter with SAF/GC. Beth said reservists not in active status can do what they want, so they can be active viable members.

A. **Annual Meeting Committee**: Perry Nouis traveled to San Antonio a couple of weeks ago and met with Annette Crawford and Hal Smarkola to continue plans for the annual meeting, which is scheduled for Oct. 3-5 at the LaQuinta Inn and Suites San Antonio Riverwalk. He visited Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland and discussed the itinerary with the staff there.

- 1) Registration fee increase: **Perry moved that the board approve an increase in the registration fee for the annual meeting from \$200 to \$250 per person** to accommodate rising costs in meeting expenses. **Phil seconded**. Discussion included the following topics:
 - a. The size of our current bank account, and whether we can expect it to remain high or how much it is subject to market fluctuations.
 - b. To what extent the endowment fund that is created by dues from all members should be expected to cover expenses for a meeting attended by about 100 members.
 - c. Balancing a fee that attendees are willing and able to pay with the need to fund a good experience.
 - d. Whether we can expect the registration fee to stay stable for several years, noting that we haven't had an increase in seven years.
 - e. Hank Hufnagel asked if are we getting funds from defense contractors to offset costs. Phil replied we haven't received contractor funds in five years, aside from those from Lockheed-Martin to support the Best of the Best award.

With discussion concluded, the board voted and **motion passed**.

- 2) Centurion Fund: Phil added that the registration form is being modified to allow attendees to contribute to the Centurion Fund (a donation of \$100 for a chance at having hotel room costs covered) when they register. In the past he has solicited those donations at the meeting throughout the weekend.

- 3) Next year's meeting: Perry said the 2025 meeting is being planned for Fairfield, California. We last met there in 2011. Bud Ross is helping organize it, with proposed . dates of Oct. 16-18, 2025. If the board agrees, Perry will contact the hotel that was used last time, the Hilton Garden Inn in Fairfield. Travis AFB is agreeable to hosting us, and Napa Valley is nearby. **Perry moved to schedule the 2025 meeting as described, and Eric Schnaible seconded**. In discussion, Art Forster said he thought were leaning toward having the next meeting in Arizona, and expressed doubts about Fairfield as a location that would draw attendees. Phil and Perry said they did not have a contact in Arizona who was willing to work a meeting there, and that the last meeting in Fairfield was one of the best attended at the time. It was also mentioned that in the past there was a discussion of rotating the meeting between four key locations. Additional discussion related to which airports provide access to Fairfield. San Francisco, Sacramento, and Oakland were identified as nearby airports. With discussion concluded, the matter was put to a vote and **the motion passed**.

B. Membership Committee: Christine Queen referred the board to the report she sent before the meeting. Our numbers are slowly rising even with the loss of passed members and non-renewals. We currently have 480 members. Christine dropped 30 members that had not paid from 2019 to 2023, and blocked them from the password-protected areas of the website.

Fifteen members who had not renewed as of the end of 2023 were also blocked. The bottom of the report shows new members. In the next couple of weeks Christine will contact BAE to see if they will again donate printing services for our membership directory. She is looking forward to Club Express making things easier.

- C. **Communications/Newsletter:** Dick Cole asked for input for the newsletter in the next week or so; his goal is to publish the next issue by the end of March. Hank Hufnagel praised the last issue of the newsletter, and other members echoed the sentiment.
- D. **Website:** Jim McGuire said the website has a new photo gallery from the Tampa meeting thanks to contributions from Dick Cole and Mike Miley. He's added a page for the upcoming San Antonio meeting, and will work with Perry to add a registration form and attendee list when the information is ready. He also created a new photo credits page to credit individual photographers whenever possible for images on the website. He developed a new navigation system that will make it easier to add or delete a page. The site is up to 360 pages, which previously had to be changed individually, but now a master menu makes it easier to make changes.
- E. **Oral History:** John Gura reported nothing new.
- F. **Facebook:** Judy Bivens reminded the board that our Facebook page is a private page. People have to request membership and answer qualifying questions to join. Yesterday the page had five requests for membership. One was legitimate and she admitted the person to the group. The others were requested within 5-10 minutes of each other and had no apparent affiliation with our group, so she declined them. The goal is to keep people off our page who would be trying to sell things or spam the page.

Old Business:

- A. **Hall Of Fame:** Art Forster presented several topics related to the Hall of Fame.
 - 1) New HOF class: Art had sent the board members the slate of candidates recommended for the next Hall of Fame class. On behalf of the Hall of Fame committee, he requested the board vote on the nominees: BG Jim Hart, BG Ron Rand, Maj Glenn Miller, and Col Art Forster. **Eric Schnaible moved to approve them, Jim McGuire seconded, and the motion passed.** Art will prepare congratulatory letters to Gen Hart and Gen Rand for Chairman Brett Ashworth to sign, and will work with Jim McGuire and Dick Cole to get them on the website and in the summer newsletter so the announcement is closer to the annual meeting.
 - 2) Nomination form changes: Art said the committee has revised the nomination form. Until now, the quality of nominations has varied widely, and the committee scored each nomination on a scale of 1 to 10. For future nominations, the committee decided

to define five criteria for consideration: Leadership, Initiative, Accomplishments, Mentorship, and Continued Service. The form is being changed accordingly.

- 3) DINFOS display: Art noted that the committee is still pursuing a means of displaying our Hall of Fame at DINFOS. With changes of leadership at DINFOS, they have had three different commandants in 4.5 years. The HOF committee is still working toward a wall display similar to the AF heritage display and the Army HOF display. The next step is a meeting with the current commandant. Clem Gaines has volunteered to lead that effort, and Julie Briggs has also been part of the process. Art said he will keep the board posted.
- 4) Additional discussion: Christine noted that a new member observed there are no people of color on the Hall of Fame. She explained there weren't a lot of leaders that were people of color, and Art noted that anyone can nominate anyone. Phil asked about photos of the Army HOF. Art said he has photos he can share with the Board of Directors, along with the PowerPoint that established the AF Heritage Wall display. Eric asked if there is a representative from the Glenn Miller family who would participate in the award ceremony. Art said Miller had no heirs that we've found, but he has indications the Air Force Band might send a representative and display the award at their offices.

B. Dalton Scholarships: Chuck Merlo reported we have three applications so far. He said that last year the committee would have liked to give at least one more than the five allotted, and wondered if a corporate partner might contribute to it. Phil doubted it and said so far it has been funded by one member. He added that this year we received another \$1K donation for the Dalton Scholarship program. So if this year the board wanted to award six scholarships instead of five, the funds are there. Art noted that Gen Dalton was the national chairman of PRSA and was prominent in the Texas Public Relations Association, and Art suggested maybe they would donate in his honor. Chuck said he'd be happy to check with them. In reply to a question from Jim McGuire, Chuck said he would like to have two more scholarships, depending on the number and quality of applications received. He noted it's probably too late this year to increase the number. He also said he and Phil approved a request from Lt Col Cherney, a scholarship recipient, to extend the deadline to claim her funds. Phil suggested that if funds that are awarded go unclaimed, we can reallocate them to new recipients. Jim McGuire supported the idea of adding two additional scholarships per year and suggested the board could take a vote on it. Chuck suggested we wait until we receive all the applications for this year.

C. Logo/Bylaws: Jim McGuire noted Jim Hart was unable to attend. He said that work is still in progress on trademarking the logo. Phil added that subsequent to the board approving the latest changes to the bylaws, there were some administrative errors that needed correcting. Jim Hart contacted the attorney, made the corrections with the master file in the state of Virginia, where we are incorporated, and Jim will get them to us when he's able.

D. **Club Express:** Jim McGuire thanked all who attended the demonstration of the Club Express management system immediately before the board meeting, and asked for feedback. He supported the idea of using Club Express, and noted the transition would involve a good deal of work.

1) Discussion: The board voiced strong support for Club Express. Dick Cole was impressed with the low per person cost, realizing it's predicated on how much we set up ourselves. He said it will make life easier for the membership chair and the newsletter editor. Jim McGuire pointed out it would help with succession planning. Club Express would make it easier for a successor to take over the website without having to learn raw coding. Julie agreed with Jim and asked if this is the only company we've looked at. Jim said he spent a lot of time reading reviews of club management systems, and Club Express almost always came out on top. Independently, Phil had been looking and also came up with Club Express. Additionally, the Army PA Association uses it and spoke highly of it, and many other military veteran groups like us use it. He said we are willing to look at other companies, but feels Club Express will be the best option if we decide to do it. It will cost us money, and for a while we'll continue with the current web hosting service so it will be more expensive in the short run, but in the long run will be worth it. Art Forster commented that it would enhance our efforts to archive our records. Phil said he is involved with another organization that uses Club Express. At 483 members, we're looking at about \$163 per month. He said we pay more than that now for web hosting. In the long run, financially there's a great benefit and he has a hard time seeing a down side. Perry said from an event management perspective, he thought it was tremendous and would like to use it. John Gura said he first looked into Club Express years ago, and we should jump on it. He agreed there will be a learning curve, and temporarily an increased cost, but those costs will be offset because eventually we won't have to pay other expenses such as Constant Contact, which we use for email blasts.

2) Security concerns: Julie asked about cyber security and what security protocols they use. Jim said that was one of the motivations to go with Club Express. We have some security issues on our site now. He said he would feel more comfortable with Club Express because they have more expertise in security than we do.

3) Next steps: Jim proposed assembling a committee including Art, Phil, John, Christine, Perry, and anyone else who'd like to help develop a transition to Club Express. Julie recommended we vote whether to move forward with Club Express. **John Gura moved we do so, Carla seconded, and the motion passed.**

E. **Archive Project:** Jim McGuire said Linda Haseloff has volunteered to help collect our archives from disparate sources and consolidate them into a digital archive. She was unable to meet today, so Jim is trying to help her. So far there have been a couple of emails asking for input,

but she has heard only from Mike McRaney. Jim asked Perry if he could help, and Perry agreed to do so. Phil said anyone with documents can ship them using the USPS flat-rate boxes, and he will reimburse them.

New Business:

A. **Joint PA Association Committee:** Jim McGuire said thanks to Art, there was a meeting of the Navy, Army and Air Force PA associations. There was an interest in creating a joint PA association committee that would meet on periodic basis. Jim sent an email to the board, and Jay DeFrank and Art Forster expressed interest. Jim said it seems like a good idea, especially given Jay's briefing on the status of our transition, to learn how the Army handled their transition to including active duty in their organization. Jim invited anyone else who was interested to let him know.

Vice President Eric Schnaible: Eric asked for any further comments.

A. **Newsletter:** Dick said he sent copies of the last newsletter to the Hall of Fame members and received a nice note back from Linda Schillerstrom.

B. **Next Meeting:** Jim asked if an evening or weekend would be better for members who are working. After some discussion, Eric said he could take the question offline. Chuck said Fridays are not great for him. Christine said Tuesday nights are not good for her. Julie said that as a GS employee, she takes leave to attend these meetings. She said she doesn't mind as long as she has at least a week's notice.

With no further business, **Phil moved to adjourn. Julie seconded, and the motion passed.**
The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:15 p.m. EST.

Minutes prepared by Secretary Carla Sylvester