

Asian American Journalists Association

**SPRING 2009 ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

March 13-14, 2009  
AAJA Headquarters, San Francisco

**DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 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: Tomoko Hosaka, Asia; Kim Bui, Atlanta; Lorene Yue, Chicago; Paul Cheung, Florida; Stanley Lee, Hawaii; Leezel Tanglao, Los Angeles; Frank Witsil, Michigan; Nancy Ngo, Minnesota; Tara Arden-Smith, New England; Sachin Shenolikar, New York (proxy for Bob Der); Cheryl Tan, New York; Ellen Sung, North Carolina; Steve Bien-Aime, Philadelphia (proxy for Denise Nakano); Jason Lim, Portland; 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; Suzanne Marta, Texas; Sherri Ly, Washington, D.C.; Lu'isa Mataele, at large.

Staff: Ellen Endo, 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; Eddie Foronda, Web editor.

Guest: Vino Wong, Atlanta chapter president.

**ABSENT:**

Board members: Abe Kwok, Arizona (no proxy); Caroline Paras, Los Angeles (no proxy); Bob Der, New York (Shenolikar was proxy); Denise Nakano (Bien-Aime was proxy).

1. **Call to Order (Chan)**

*Meeting called to reconvene at 9:10 a.m. Pacific time.*

2. **Roll Call (Truong)**

*Roll call was conducted. Quorum was met.*

3. **President's Report (Chan)**

- [See document "AAJA President's Report, Spring 2009," submitted by Chan.]
- Opportunities are in leading the industry into the new-media landscape. The next "big thing" in journalism is likely to come from a laid-off journalist, not a newsroom manager besieged with our newsroom problems.
  - Let's think 30 years out as we consider our future.
- Has been pushing the ASNE leadership and UNITY board to have a diversity summit to get ahead of the cuts and to preserve jobs for journalists of color (especially with cuts based on seniority). Searching for another date because of ASNE cancellation.
- Broadcast Report (Kiryama)
  - Created two groups: AASBJ (Asian American Student Broadcast Journalists), AASMBJ (Asian American Small-Market Broadcast Journalists)
  - Both groups added to AAJA Web site with Vang's help. Quick response from people who want to participate.
  - Want a network built so people can meet up during convention. Some the discussions can help groom future organizational leaders.
  - Board can help by posting the groups on chapter Web sites.
  - Targeting AAJA members initially, then trying to build the base with outreach to campuses.
  - Yue asks about ethnic TV stations (including those that are based in large-market cities but that hire reporters who are just starting out)
    - Kiriyama says entry-level reporters are included in SMBJ, not just "small market" (No. 100 and smaller)

#### 4. **Treasurer's Report (Heckman)**

- [See document "AAJA Treasurer's Report, Spring 2009," submitted by Heckman.]
- The Seattle scholarship money is restricted funds for the Seattle chapter, but the control has been switched to National.
- We have earned interest nationally.
- Some hiccups with financial reports this year, and all but one chapter's paperwork has been filed as of early March. Chapters that have had trouble have had recurring issues (turnover in treasurer).
- Perhaps institute a standard that would require the outgoing treasurer to complete the spring financial report, making the process more seamless and easier on the national accountant, who has to file for extensions, etc., when deadlines are missed -- possibly affecting the status of AAJA's 501(c)3.
- Would like a quarterly or three-time-a-year conference call with the chapter treasurers to make sure everyone is involved (the listserv is not that active).
- At UNITY during treasurers' meeting, issues with Quicken were discussed. The software has standardized the accounting and is a great tool but when treasurers change, the software has to be repurchased (because the license doesn't transfer). Heckman contacted Intuit about donating the software but was not given a positive response (our mission isn't in line with its charitable donations). Want to allow update of license to new treasurer (\$20 vs. \$69).
  - Cheung suggests seeking a group license rate, but Heckman says it isn't feasible because there's no tiered system for nonprofits vs. the corporate rate. Calvin says Sacramento has a chapter laptop with all the necessary software installed, and that hardware gets handed off to the next person.

#### 5. **Executive Director's Report (Endo, J. Lee)**

- [See document "EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT/Report From the National Office for the Period From October 25, 2008, to March 10, 2009," submitted by Endo and J. Lee]
  - Endo started as ED on Nov. 24 and spent the first few weeks meeting with staff and getting to know staff who focus on the organization's financial position. There's a lot of value here, not only in people as resources but opportunities that should be explored and developed.
  - Hired with a mandate of fundraising, which began with a look at year-to-date financials. Biggest variance for '08 was UNITY, with costs being more than anticipated. The AAJA convention that follows a UNITY year, per tradition and information from former ED Rene Astudillo, is often a bit weaker in attendance and profitability. Stepped up fundraising efforts in early December with traditional sources and pending grants. In terms of cash, we're doing well.

- Philosophically trying to ID alternative sources. Looking first to people who have helped in the past. To date, only two official rejections but sometimes the amount of support is less. Went into files and looked for companies/individuals that have offered past support (maybe from several years ago but in the recent past). Individual donors require cultivation to encourage major gifts (retired businessmen, people with their own foundations, people successful in their own right).
  - Pyramid structure at most nonprofits
    - 20 percent are “major gifts”
    - Followed by members as a steady source of income (more in terms of number of people than bottom-line dollars)
    - Donors and grantmakers; prospects are at the bottom -- being cultivated so that we have an active bank for years down the road.
- Has gotten good at articulating the mission succinctly.
- Have to shift funding strategy.
  - Nishiwaki asks about sponsor list from ASNE. Endo says Bobbi Bowman has been in contact.
- Boston convention's appeal is the focus on succeeding in times of adversity. Have done revenue/expense projections based on previous years. Possibility of a loss if fewer than 700 attend (about 650 is the number for breaking even). Projected losses are not devastating (for 500, \$42,000 loss -- losses are not dramatically different as attendance decreases because expenses decrease, too).
  - Largest expenses are food-and-beverage minimum (guarantee is \$100,000, but we have typically far exceeded)
  - Smith says that original Seaport contract was negotiated in 2006 with minimums that would unrealistic to reach in '09. With Seaport's rate being \$209, we negotiated room minimums from 1,507 to 1,055 and the rate is \$179.
- Strategic planning
  - Have to clarify/crystallize mission to be best understood by potential funders. Begin dialogue for outreach beyond media companies. This is “friend-raising.”
  - Had meetings with staff about how they see the organization and the future.
- Discussion of ways to better reach members and possibly encourage people to join
  - Tan says a good way to encourage convention registration is to tell chapters what is so different about this year's programming.
  - Bien-Aime says that one-to-one conversations with lapsed members can help bring people into the fold. Perhaps having a marketing officer who makes those contacts would be useful.
  - Chan says you have to talk about what the value is (networking, career counseling, résumé critiques).

- Ly says members might not understand the aggressive approach AAJA has taken to address the changing market; we need a publicity push that capitalizes on how we're helping people reinvent. Several people say this is the role of the Advisory Board representative to convey to the membership.
- Tan says AAJA-NY has established a layoff listserv with lukewarm response so far. Shenolikar says people might not yet be comfortable posting.
- Sung says e-mail blasts are ineffective because they're not customized. Perhaps have people e-mail 10 to 15 people they personally know and streamline the message. Besides increasing outreach, you're also creating "emotional touch points" with the organization.
- Smith wonders whether as the organization has shifted from focusing on starting journalists to midcareer folks. How can we position ourselves to be relevant to people across the spectrum?
- Discussions are underway to create a group health plan as a member benefit. Possibly auto insurance, too.
- Salas says lower renewal numbers to date aren't necessarily a barometer of the organization's health; need to wait for early-bird convention registration deadline to pass, etc.
  - Reduced dues and convention assistance initiative.
    - Only full members from 2008 are eligible for the assistance. Chapters have responsibility for confirming the employment status of the applicant.
- Professional/student programs
  - A. Lee says that ELP had slightly fewer applicants than usual. You don't have to be an AAJA member to apply, but you do have to join once you're accepted.
    - Several people mention that the perception is that you must be a full member (false perception that ELP's not open to associates).
    - J. Lee says that the marketing of the program has traditionally been toward people who want to move up within their news organizations.
  - A. Lee says that we've worked with Poynter to allow applicants to choose the program that's most suitable to them (instead of having designated programs).

## **6. Special Election for Governing Board Vacancies**

- Medium-Size Chapter (completing the term vacated by Ameet Sachdev, Chicago): Paul Cheung, Florida
- At-Large Representative (completing the term vacated by Sharon Chan, Seattle): Frank Witsil, Michigan
- Updated board buddies
  - Tan (large): New York, Asia, Washington, D.C.

- Cheung (medium): Florida, Chicago, Portland
- Kwok (small): Arizona, Atlanta, New England, Texas
- Witsil (at large): Michigan, Seattle, Hawaii, Minnesota
- Chareunsky (at large): San Diego, North Carolina, Philadelphia, at-large
- Dunn (at large): San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sacramento

## 7. AAJA Groups in Pre-Certification Period

- A. Las Vegas (Chareunsky)
  - Many petitioners have left the area since last year's application to be pre-certified. The application has been formally withdrawn.
- B. Colorado
  - No report was received from the group via Kwok.
  - Mataele is on the mailing list. Members recently had a fundraiser and recruited students who had been unaware of the organization. Outreach to universities is underway. Mataele says she has been contacted by multiple members who are Colorado-based and unaware that an organized group exists.

## 8. Convention Updates

- A. 2009 Boston Convention (Smith)
  - Renegotiated contract with convention host site (Seaport) to reduce room-night minimum by a third, plus secured a reduced room rate. Free WiFi and other concessions were preserved, despite the reductions.
    - Anyone who already booked will automatically be billed the new reduced rate.
    - Will be renegotiating Westin contract to reduce (or cancel) our obligations to the secondary hotel.
  - Red Sox tickets are available only to convention registrants who are staying at the Seaport.
  - Major sponsors
    - Negotiating with ESPN
    - Have received \$40,000 from New York Times Co. (Boston Globe parent company)
  - Realistic attendance estimate of 400 to 600, with about 650 being the break-even point for convention proceeds
  - Programming
    - Hands-on multimedia training such as Flash
    - Angles related to career reinvention (writing business plans), how to market yourself as a freelancer
    - Scrap the traditional print/broadcast set-up for five "topics" (e.g., "weathering the storm," how to cover beats better in a digital age, "technical upgrade")
    - shorter sessions called "Balance" with issues such as nutrition, ergonomics, stress management, mental health
    - A mix of 90-minute sessions and 30-minute blocks
  - Committees

- Programming\*: Michigan, Florida, Asia
- Silent Auction\*: New York, Arizona, Philadelphia, Chicago
  - NY chapter has been soliciting items; Corky Lee is organizing photo collection
  - Deadline for items to be received by Michael Quan in Boston is mid-June
  - First time for an exclusive evening (5:30 to 8 p.m., Friday, Aug. 14), with an emcee and Anheuser-Busch sponsorship -- concurrent with some media company receptions
  - Heckman suggests adding artwork as a category
- Gala\*: Texas, Minnesota
  - Arthur Chi'en and Frances Rivera to be co-emcees
  - J. Lee says the Speakers Committee is working with the Steering Committee to line up a keynote by early April
  - After formal program, live-band karaoke with KiriYama as emcee
- Luncheon\*: ~~North Carolina~~ [sponsorship looks unlikely]
- National Scholarships: Seattle, D.C.
- Special Awards: ~~Los Angeles~~, San Diego
- National Awards: Sacramento
- Opening Reception
  - will be at Seaport
  - trying to invite some local celebs (Ming Tsai, etc.)
  - Lioness Dance Troupe to perform
- Media Access Workshop\*: Atlanta, San Francisco
- \* *New England involved as host chapter*
  - Not associated with a specific committee (as of 2008): Portland, Hawaii
- B. 2010 Los Angeles Convention (Tanglao)
  - Tentative kickoff Nov. 6 or 7 at the Japanese American Museum in Little Tokyo; would like to invite Governing Board to have fall meeting at the same time
  - Renaissance Hollywood is host hotel
  - small amounts of funding already secured from CNN
  - anticipate that National would have to help the local chapter build up the funding base (two-year sponsorships are under consideration, which might hold more appeal to nonmedia sponsors)
  - Chapter Co-President Darleene Powells would be (tentatively) willing to be co-chair
  - Veteran members Denise Poon and Anh Do would potentially help with programming
- C. 2011 Detroit Convention (Witsil)
  - Very early stages, but leadership team has been in the works
  - Co-chairs: Witsil and Ankur Dholakia of the Detroit News
    - Statewide leadership coalition including Erin Chan, Ron Recinto, Jam Sardar, Stanton Tang, Howard Chen

- Ideas for themes? Perhaps ask membership (during Boston convention) to help with ideas.
- Detroit Media Partnership (head of newspaper JOA) has committed funds to help meet local fundraising threshold
- Visited Arab American National Museum in Dearborn as a possible event site (transportation sponsorship already being discussed)

## 9. Board Committee Meetings

- A. Finance/Fundraising (Chan)
  - Power of One reinvigoration campaign (friends asking friends)
  - Goal of \$2,500 per board member, starting April 1 and ending June 1; people who meet the goal will get a special convention ribbon
  - “Only you can save diversity”
- B. Membership (Dunn/Ly)
  - Recommend leaving the definition of “journalist” as stated in the bylaws (it’s broad and gives the organization the leeway to consider membership case by case)
  - How to stop losing members and keeping veterans
    - Possibly expand the definition of full members to include “veteran journalists” (former AAJA members or a journalist-at-heart, someone who understands the principles of journalism); they could hold office.
    - Number of years of experience is TBD. What is a reasonable number of years to be considered a “veteran member”? Some suggest that the veterans must have previously been an AAJA member.
  - Consider giving associate members the right to vote to increase their vested interest in the organization (but they still couldn’t hold office)
  - Besides retaining institutional knowledge, how can we bring up new leaders? Perhaps coordinate a Camp AAJA-type event during the convention. Get the younger members involved and excited, plus reduce costs of the biennial retreat.
- C. Marketing (Sung)
  - Personalized, concise, simple message
  - Membership
    - Internally
      - Condense to internal talking points who can be a member
      - Best practices of a successful membership drive
    - External communications
      - Instead of communicating “transactional” benefits (expedited check-in), emphasize the emotional benefits (“we help develop you to your full potential”)
  - Fundraising support
    - Pitch cards for nonjournalists and journalists: the populations speak different languages
    - Set the base for cultivation



- Why donate? Your gift supports [examples]
- Track contacts with important donors
- Convention
  - Start an FB group of people who are attending
  - Twitter searches
- D. Programming/Career Reinvention (Cheung)
  - Want to tie various programs to a forward-thinking way of reinvention
    - Use the convention as a platform
      - If someone wants to start a company, a Web site would have information about how buy a URL, etc.
  - Consolidate all our good works into one Web site
  - Twitter feeds for some products (MediaWatch)
  - Possibly get grant money for developing a niche Web site (original products to support our member base)
  - A culture of germinating ideas, not just for AAJA but for the industry (differentiating us from the other affinity groups -- we can be a business solution for a media company)

**10. Recess**

*Heckman motioned to recess; Bien-Aime seconded. Meeting recessed.*

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**SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2009**

**PRESENT:**

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Board members: Tomoko Hosaka, Asia; Kim Bui, Atlanta; Lorene Yue, Chicago; Paul Cheung, Florida; Stanley Lee, Hawaii; Caroline Paras, Los Angeles; Leezel Tanglao, Los Angeles; Frank Witsil, Michigan; Nancy Ngo, Minnesota; Tara Arden-Smith, New England; Sachin Shenolikar, New York (proxy for Bob Der); Cheryl Tan, New York; Ellen Sung, North Carolina; Steve Bien-Aime, Philadelphia (proxy for Denise Nakano); Jason Lim, Portland; 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; Suzanne Marta, Texas; Sherri Ly, Washington, D.C.; Lu'isa Mataele, at large.

Staff: Ellen Endo, executive director; Janice Lee, deputy executive director; Antonio Salas, membership and chapter development manager.

Guests: Vino Wong, Atlanta chapter president.

**ABSENT:**

Board members: Abe Kwok, Arizona (no proxy); Bob Der, New York (Shenolikar was proxy); Denise Nakano (Bien-Aime was proxy).

**11. Call to Order (Chan)**

*Meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. Pacific time.*

**12. Roll Call (Truong)**

*Roll call was conducted. Quorum was met.*

**13. New Business**

- A. Power of One reinvigoration
  - Bring people together through the Internet

- On your own or with a team
  - Make the first donation yourself
  - Make it fun
  - Contact at least 25 people (Twitter, FB, phone call, SMS)
- Eight-week push: Starts April 1, concludes June 1
- Remind your donor base three times; thank donors three times, too
- Donors will need to specify for whom they are sending in money (anyone without a specification will fall into a separate category, which we'll have to check whether it was received)
  - They'll be credited under Power of One
- Tan suggests having recognition at the convention such as a donor-only mixer
- Four Steps to the Ask
  1. What is Power of One? (the campaign to support the mission and programs of AAJA -- this should be a quick spiel; whatever would resonate best with the potential donor)
  2. Why this is important to me (the solicitor)? (personalize this)
  3. The ask: How will you support this?
  4. Finally: Silence. (Usual responses: Let me think about it/I will give XXX/How much?)
    - Cheung says that you can break down the amount -- give \$1 a week (\$50 a year).
    - Nishiwaki says to offer a range instead of fearing under/overasking.
- AAJA can set up a schedule of payments for credit cards.
- We'll track each person's progress through Google Docs or somesuch.
- B. UNITY meeting frequency
  - Not enough information exists for the board to feel capable of making a decision about whether to have UNITY in 2010 and/or move to schedule of having UNITY every other year. Kiriya suggests further investigating the possibility of having UNITY every three years.
- C. AAJA's definition of membership
  - Membership Committee will craft suggestions for consideration by the General Membership Meeting in August

**14. National Advisory and Governing Board Meeting: Summer Dates**

- Advisory Board: 9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Aug. 15.
  - Governing Board will meet immediately after Advisory Board
- Chapter presidents and treasurers meeting will be 9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Aug. 15

**15. Announcements**

- A. Update on Roxana Saberi (Chan/Endo/J. Lee)
  - FreeRoxana.net
  - Yue will follow up with Ann Marie Lipinski about what AAJA can/should do. (A Chicago journalist was detained last year.)
- B. Poynter diversity column
  - Truong has been tapped to contribute monthly and asks for topic ideas. Tan suggests writing about the Power of One campaign
- C. Career fair requests (Vang)
- D. AAJA Media Watch on Twitter: @aajamediawatch
- E. Events Calendar
  - Cheung asks that people add events to the Google calendar
    - Post your events on FB page, too
  - May 2: Career revival workshop in D.C. (limited to 20 people, with a refundable deposit)
  - June 14: East-West Eats fundraiser in S.F. with food demo by Martin Yan
  - July 10-11: SAJA and AAJA East Coast Mini-Conference in N.Y.

**16. Adjournment**

*Ly 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 Kiriyaama, 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; Cheryl Tan, New York; Frank Witsil, Michigan.

Staff: Ellen Endo, executive director; Janice Lee, deputy executive director; Antonio Salas, membership and chapter development manager.

ABSENT: Abe Kwok, Arizona (no proxy).

1. **Call to Order** (Chan)

*Meeting called to order at 12:12 p.m. Pacific time.*

2. **Roll Call** (Truong)

*Roll call conducted. Quorum was met.*

3. **Approval of Previous Minutes**

*Heckman moved to approve the 2008 Fall Governing Board Minutes as reported, including an amendment updating signatories for AAJA bank accounts. Cho seconded. Motion passes.*

4. **New Business**

A. UNITY and 2009 Boston convention

- Lloyd LaCuesta, Aki Soga and Ameet Sachdev have stepped down as AAJA reps to the UNITY board; replacing them are Chan, Truong and Neal Justin. Immediate past AAJA president Jeanne Mariani-Belding is continuing her service with UNITY as its treasurer.
- The possibility of 2010 UNITY
  - \$52,000 penalty for canceling Los Angeles with more than a year's notice (Aug. 8, 2009 -- a year out -- means a substantial additional penalty)

- Could possibly exercise force majeure
- Questions about possibly extending the early-bird registration deadline for Boston (Red Sox tickets are transferable)
  - J. Lee recommends keeping it at April 12 to have a gauge of overall numbers
  - Registration cancellations/transfers possible until July 10 with processing fee

#### B. Membership Issues

- Dunn: The language still needs to be crafted, then submitted for chapter feedback.
- Heckman suggests a schedule to allow a survey of the membership before the convention.
- May 1 draft proposal to Advisory Board
- June 1 updates to Membership Committee
- mid-June survey of membership and recraft as needed
- Convention sked has membership meeting Thursday, Aug. 13.

#### C. Portfolio (Endo)

- 24.87 percent loss (was a moderate portfolio, not conservative -- clarification from the investment manager)
- investment guidelines say that we have to be within the benchmark of 28 to 30 percent loss
- Going to a more conservative portfolio means getting rid of high-risk investments and reinvesting (if wanted) or taking the money from the sale and converting to bonds/CDs or something we wouldn't lose as much money on
- Heckman to follow up with accountant Glenn Sugihara about whether to make any changes

### 5. Executive Session

*Heckman moves to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel issues. Tan seconds.*

*Heckman moves to exit Executive Session. Kiriyama seconds.*

### 6. Fall Governing Board Meeting Dates

- Nov. 6-7 in Los Angeles (tentative)
- A question is raised about whether having the meeting in San Francisco at headquarters would be more cost-conscious. Endo thinks she can secure a low-cost or free venue in Little Tokyo to help reduce costs.

### 7. Adjournment

*Cho moved to adjourn. Tan seconded. Meeting adjourned.*

## ADDENDA TO SPRING 2009 GOVERNING BOARD MEETING

**On July 8**, a motion was made to authorize AAJA staff to negotiate a buyout with the Westin Boston, the 2009 convention's "overflow" hotel, for up to \$30,000.

*Truong moved to authorize negotiations. Tan seconded. Motion passes.*

**On July 21**, a motion was made to authorize National President Sharon Chan and AAJA accountant Glenn Sugihara to be the authorized signers on AAJA's banking and investment accounts, superseding previous authorizations.

*Truong moved to authorize the signatory changes. Tan seconded. Motion passes.*

