



## **Board of Directors Meeting**

*Las Vegas — May 17, 2018*

1. Call to order by chair (Rebecca Hale) at 9:00am.
  - a. Roll call and introductions (Debbie Allen, Rob Boston, Ian Dodd, Rebecca Hale, John Hooper, Jennifer Kalmanson, Howard Katz, Sunil Panikkath, Susan Sackett, Kris Shellska, July Simpson, and Jason Torpy were in attendance. Staff Roy Speckhardt and Matt Bulger were in attendance.)
2. Appointment of Parliamentarian (Howard Katz)
3. Appointment of Recording secretary (Matt Bulger)
4. Suggestions for new business to be considered.
  - a. Sunil would like to add an agenda item regarding the magazine.
5. Acceptance/amendment of March meeting minutes moved by Howard, seconded by Jenny, accepted by consent.
6. Finances
  - a. John reports that for the Finance Committee that as of the 2017 year end, we are on budget, and membership has increased because of the Trump bump. Currently, the first quarter is a bit below expected fundraising levels; however this is expected to turn around because a mailer campaign is currently underway. Bequests are also currently down, but are not expected to remain that way. The draft audit document was reviewed and Ian moved to approve the draft audit, seconded by Debbie, approved by consensus.
  - b. Reporting for the Humanist Foundation, Jenny said that we haven't had a lot of activity, but they are looking to bring on a new planned giving director to fundraise, Roger Clark, who will be replacing the retiring Fred Edwards. The Foundation Trustees are here for the conference and are especially interested in securing bequests and annuities.
  - c. Providing a capital campaign update, Roy stated that the capital campaign fundraising plan is now wrapped up. The AHA was expecting to get \$15k from a mailing, which the AHA did. The AHA will be asking the Trustees to forgive the remaining balance.
  - d. Roy updated on the effort to seek a property tax exemption, explaining that the attorneys want us to resubmit forms, and that we're likely to get it once forms have been resubmitted. Property tax exemption would save close to 50K a year and would be provided because the AHA provides services to the city and its residents. Becky reminded that while the AHA is responsible for expenses, the building is actually owned by the Foundation.
7. Bylaws proposed changes: Jason moved to accept the revision to the bylaws (discussed in depth at the last meeting), Sunil seconded. Unanimous board vote in favor of these changes.

8. Board elections: the slate received from nominating committee included: Geri Bridges, John Hooper, Jenny Kalmanson, Howard Katz, Monica Miller, Juhem Navarro-Rivera, Aron Ra, Christine Shellska, Ellen Sutliff, and Sharon Welch. There are 10 candidates for 8 positions.
9. Reporting for the ad-hoc committee (of Sunil, Roy, Jenny, and Jason) set up to review the way in which resolutions are drafted and approved, Sunil said the committee recommended:
  - a. The text of a proposed resolution cannot be amended at the level of the full Board beyond two weeks before the proposed text is to be taken up for a vote.
  - b. The Resolutions Committee should have two different working groups: one that focuses on short, responsive resolutions of current interest; the second would focus on long term policy issues and would also clean up past resolutions.
  - c. We should consider adopting a standard for shorter resolutions as a way to make the process more efficient. And we would adopt collaboration software instead of mailing things around to increase participation. Howard expressed concern that we be overly restricted by text or other factors in our resolution development. Sunil, explained that there need not be an explicit limit, but would rather adopt standards about how they should be composed.
  - d. Howard moved to adopt these changes, seconded by Sunil, approved by consent.
10. Awards review committee: Reporting for the committee, Jenny stated that at the last board meeting there was talk of taking up a review process of past awardees and future awardees in order to vet who receives awards from the AHA so as to ensure that we are only giving voice and platform to people who most exemplify our values. This is not about censorship, but is rather about ensuring that the people the AHA honors are honorable people themselves and don't significantly deviate from the values of the AHA. Sunil said that we don't have to wait for the next board meeting but this could happen over email.
11. Becky led a discussion on conference plans, saying the 2019 virtual conference will be an experimental idea for a conference. Roy said that the plan is that it will be a virtual conference for many people participating, with physical conferences happening across the country in places like Stanford and Rice universities with individual segments being broadcasted to the internet from each of these places. This will allow the AHA to reach more people from different parts of the country and will allow celebrities to participate such as Rachel Maddow, who expressed interest in speaking at our conference but would prefer not to travel away from Manhattan. Becky elaborated further saying the idea is to give our members a chance for broader participation, and will allow local groups to be more involved in the conference process. It will be a community building activity. Additionally, it will help us be more responsible for planetary resources (negating much of the conference air travel, car travel, etc.) It would be an opportunity to bring good minds together without putting much carbon in the air.

Jason mentioned utilizing pay-per-view as well to allow local groups to utilize places like bars or theaters to participate. Becky acknowledges that the overall experiment is a bit of gamble and risk, but would help both the environment and those who can't pay for the conference. July also mentioned that pay per view could also happen at homes too. Ian was curious how we would do a board meeting at the conference. Roy is still figuring that aspect out, since we are still required to do two live board meetings, we could just stream the live board meeting or do it at another

time. Sunil wants to know what the academically credible locations are that are close to chapters and which would serve as good venues for this conference. Roy is currently preparing such a list and will consult with a company about the number of feeds that are possible. Debbie thinks we should begin with established communities as potential locations for segments of the virtual conference, and she envisions younger groups being able to attend under this scenario. Susan wanted to know if we would still be able to give out awards, Becky thinks it could happen in various places presented by different combinations of board and staff. Susan says that there won't be centrally organized banquets in this case, which Roy agrees with, though small VIP dinners with an awardee might be arranged. Howard mentions that one negative of this is that there will be little interaction of humanists from different parts of the country, but that point aside, Howard is behind the virtual conference. July, in response to Howard's point, says that there would still be travel from people not from the major cities, so while it isn't a national exchange, regional humanists would get to meet each other. Sunil, for the reasons that Howard stated, believes that the best way to address this is by having virtual conferences every other year, interspersed by national in-person conferences. Debbie points out that most chapters already don't send people, and that mostly the same group of people show up. Debbie agrees with Sunil that virtual conferences should occur every other year. Ian mentions that the TED conference has been able to do this successfully and we should reach out to them for advice.

Becky said the 2020 annual conference will be a joint conference with IHEU, who is having their World Conference at the same time. Becky mentioned it might be hard to get some IHEU board members into the United States since several of them are from the countries on the restricted travel list. Roy said the hotel is the Hyatt Regency in downtown Miami.

12. Programs, adjuncts, and coalitions were discussed with reports available on: Development, Communications, Advocacy, The Humanist Magazine and theHumanist.com, Web Development, AHLC, Humanist Society, Education Center, Chapters and Affiliates, Humanist Press books, Social Justice Alliances, Freethought Equality Fund, Institute for Humanist Studies, MAAF, and IHEU.
  - a. Debbie will be ending her role on the Humanist Society board on account of her new position at the SCA, Steven Bechtel will be stepping in as President, Jason Torpy Vice President, Kathy Diedrich Secretary, and Joshua Berg Treasurer. They are currently looking for more members to add to the board. Jenny moved to preapprove that slate of officers, Christine seconded. Approved by consent.
  - b. The Humanist Society needs a new AHA voting rep for 2019 for the Humanist Society Board. Jenny nominated Christine to serve, seconded by Debbie Allen. Approved by consent. [Later it was discovered that Humanist Society bylaws require the person to be a celebrant, so this may need to be revisited.]
  - c. Approve new Chapters and Affiliates groups: Sunday Assembly Kalamazoo, and Southeastern Virginia Atheists, Skeptics & Humanists. Debbie moved to approve these chapters, Rob seconded. Approved by consent.
  - d. As a follow-up to the last board meeting, Becky began a discussion of group requirements, such as the requirement that new chapters give us their membership list, as some groups don't want to divulge this.

- i. Ian says his local group is this way, and while they want to give as much information as possible to the AHA, they want this to be an opt-in process as opposed to the default.
- ii. Sunil thinks we should approach this from what is standard in the nonprofit industry—do most national organizations require membership lists from local groups?
- iii. Jason thinks that we should press them for their lists, as these groups voluntarily chose to be a chapter of the AHA. If they don't like these requirements, they should not remain a chapter and possibly drop down to being an affiliate. The AHA allows local chapters to access our membership rolls via mailings so this isn't a one-sided relationship. Local groups can also request that members who don't wish to receive communications from the AHA have their wishes respected (an opt-out policy).
- iv. Howard reminds us that there were membership chapters, where all members of these chapters were also members of the AHA. Howard thinks that chapters who are forced to disclose members will view this as a significant burden.
- v. Jenny doesn't think we should deliberately antagonize our chapters.
- vi. Roy mentions that we have allowed exemptions for certain groups, but not sure that we should do that often. By having these names, we are able to fundraise and gain new members, which is beneficial. If we don't have these lists, we also are unable to help groups who lost membership lists or dissolved, but now wish to reassemble.
- vii. Debbie's experience is that most chapters and affiliates don't have a relationship with the national group. That being said, there are explicit benefits to being a chapter, and so they have to be willing to pay the cost of sharing their membership rolls.
- viii. Rob thinks that this is an issue for the local chapters to resolve, as members who are unwilling to hear from the National organization once a year are being unreasonable.
- ix. Jenny sees this as an issue bigger than marketing, she has problems with the idea that people have to opt-out instead of opt-in. It's a threat to individual privacy and is morally wrong. She thinks that people should have to actively include themselves.
- x. Howard sees two problems (privacy issues and that he feels like it's a threat).
- xi. John thinks we are making a problem where there isn't one. He thinks these decisions should be made on a local basis. But he thinks that if they are receiving 501c3 designation from the AHA they really should have to contribute the membership rolls.
- xii. Jason moves that in return for the benefits of membership, chapters are expected to send all current members to the AHA once per year. This should include name, address, email, phone, and an indication as to whether they are opt-in or opt-out. All opt-out names will be viewed by the AHA but not stored in our central database. The motion died for the lack of a second.

xiii. Jenny moves to table this discussion. Howard seconds. All in favor of tabling except for Jason.

13. Next board meeting November 17 at AHA headquarters: Roy will get the dinner catered at the office so that the board doesn't have to go out.

14. New business

- a. Sunil wants to discuss whether we have a mission for the Humanist Magazine and theHumanist.com, and if we do have that mission we need to do a better job of articulating it. He'd like to see it published in the magazine and the website as well.
  - i. Roy believes we have an old mission for the magazine, but will make sure to list that in the publication. The website and ezine do not have a stated mission, but easily could.
  - ii. Howard wants to know whether articles past, present, and future are looked at by an editorial board, or whether they are reviewed by an individual editor. Roy explains that Jennifer Bardi retains editorial control for the magazine, though she does occasionally highlight edgy articles for consideration.
  - iii. Rob and Woody Kaplan (from the audience) think that Humanist magazine's strongest aspect is that it is a truly independent publication, and not just a promotional piece.
  - iv. July said that one of the things that drew her to the movement is critical thinking, and she thinks that having controversial and challenging articles in the Humanist encourages critical thinking.
- b. Becky was reading IHEU materials which explicitly asked that all humanist organizations use the capitalization "Humanism" instead of "humanism." The IHEU wants consistency across the world in how we label ourselves.
  - i. Jason mentions that we already use the capitalized versions in many of his materials, but if we're to make the change he'd like the IHEU to come sell it to the AHA.
  - ii. Becky mentioned that a document promoting the capitalized version is on the IHEU's website.

15. Howard moved to adjourn, seconded by Jenny. Approved by consensus at 11:20am.