

American Humanist Association

Board of Directors Meeting Agenda

Teleconference —February 27, 2019

1. Call to order (by chair: Sunil) at 8:23pm ET
 - a. Roll call and introductions: Sunil Panikkath, Rob Boston, John Hooper, Becky Hale, Howard Katz, Dr. Monica Miller, Juhem Navarro-Rivera, Christine Shellska, Sharon Welch, Ellen Sutliff. Staff: Roy Speckhardt, Jennifer Bardi, Brody Armstrong
 - b. Appointment of parliamentarian (Howard)
 - c. Appointment of recording secretary (Brody Armstrong)
2. Acceptance/amendment of November meeting minutes (p 2-4)
 - a. **John motioned to approve, Becky seconded. Approved by consensus.**
3. Between meetings actions: Vote to establish rule that other than the AHA Board Liaison, no AHA board officer can also be a voting Humanist Foundation Trustee: Jennifer moved, Sunil seconded, unanimously approved. Vote to direct staff to extend award offers to selected candidates: unanimously approved. 2 non-voting. Vote to propose the slate of Lori Lipman Brown, Rebecca Hale, and Raul Martinez to the Humanist Foundation for Trustee consideration. Jennifer moved, John seconded, unanimously approved. Committee Chair assignments moved by Howard, Ellen seconded, unanimously approved. Vote to adopt the revised AHA Board Member and Officer Travel Reimbursement Policy: John moved, Sharon seconded, unanimously approved. Vote to hold the AHA board of directors spring meeting in Chicago: Ellen moved, Jennifer seconded, unanimously approved.
 - a. **Howard motioned to approve between meeting actions, Becky seconded. Approved by consensus**
4. Financial update
 - a. Finance Committee Report (John): We had a meeting of finance committee on Feb 20th to look at financials through December. Minor discrepancies were found. Summary: expenses total 2.8 million and income was 2.9 million. A 15% decrease in contributions was masked by incoming legal fees. Most major budget items were comparable with last year. Roy explained that when the Foundation accepted that we raised as much as we could for the building, and forgave us for the remainder after active pledges, it was assumed that they wouldn't be adding additional maintenance fees. The \$78,000 in our maintenance and upkeep account had to be re-classified as either assets or expenses. John pointed out that for that reason, he would like more cooperation between the treasurers of the two groups. Policies and procedures that allowed both parties transparency would prevent this kind of problem.
 - b. 2019 Budget Update (Roy): There have been significant changes going on recently with the budget, some related to SCOTUS case, another involves a climate campaign we were offered. There have also been changes with expectations in income. There are enough that it is worth doing a revised budget for the board. We will soon be in a better place to predict how it is going to go and will submit that revision as soon as it's prepared.
 - c. The Humanist Foundation (Jenny-absent, Roy): The Foundation lost significant funds during the end of the year market downturn.

5. Consideration of open board seat due to Ian Dodd's departure
 - a. John began the discussion remarking on process recommending that we take advantage of the good work already done by the nominations committee which already considered diversity, talent, and the like. The two candidates in each past election were not elected, including: Aron Ra and Geri Bridges from 2018, and David Breeden and David Chivers from 2016.
 - b. Howard said the logical thing to do would be to go to the person next in line, who got the most votes in the last election—(that would be Geri Bridges from Las Vegas).
 - c. Roy mentioned that going down the line might not be the best idea considering that there may be a reason membership did not elect them.
 - d. John pointed out that incumbents have a considerable advantage in elections.
 - e. Sunil said that if we were to fill vacancies by only looking at the past election that would and should be in the bylaws, which it is not.
 - f. Ellen said that since this is an opportunity for us we should look at who we already have on the board and make the best choice to fill our needs.
 - g. Becky added that she put Aaron in front of the board as a replacement, because she feels we need someone who has public persona. Same applies to Hemant.
 - h. Howard said that Hemant may not accept.
 - i. Ellen suggested that we should require that membership is up to date, and ask them to submit an application for consideration for the opening.
 - i. Becky disagreed, pointing out that if we require an application up front and do not select them, then we can create bad feeling.
 - ii. Howard added that if someone cares about the organization, then we would expect them to be at least attentive to updating their membership.
 - j. Ellen added that we should look at large donors, since they've invested in the AHA.
 - i. Christine countered that doing so might create the illusion that our decisions are driven by financial interest, and that donors have decision making power.
 - k. Howard said that we should reach out to past candidates and ask them if they are interested before we move forward.
 - l. Consensus was that the discussion can move to email.
6. Resolutions Committee (Ellen): This will be a top priority going forward with the expectation of having something at the next board meeting. Roy added that if Ellen's committee needed staff to help with anything in that process, we are willing. Sunil added that last year we had an ad hoc committee that established a process for coming up with language for the resolution, so that we don't get bogged down in the process during board meetings.
7. Conferences and events
 - a. Award review principles in light of Alice Walker concerns
 - i. Sunil led the discussion say that given the facts, and the fallibility we have, this is likely to happen in the future. I think it is important to have a clear procedure for how we look at these things.
 - ii. Howard asked how far back are we going to go on each award?
 - iii. Sharon added that the effect that she has had in terms of redefining feminism and empowering women is significant. So this is a complex issue.
 - iv. Howard said that one of the problems with Krauss was that people identified him with the AHA, which doesn't necessarily apply to Walker.

- v. Juhem concurred, saying that when he thinks of Alice Walker, he think of many things, but not often do I think of her as connected directly to the nontheist movement. Krauss' situation was very different.
 - vi. Rob said maybe we could make a blanket statement on the website that awards were given in recognition of the things they were doing at that time, and don't necessarily reflect who people are now.
 - 1. Sharon supported that approach.
 - 2. Howard agreed, pointing out that we changed our vetting system, so the possibility of this happening again is now reduced.
 - 3. Sunil reminded that Walker does appear on the letterhead, and that her connection appears elsewhere. We may wish to adjust the letterhead to be a selected list or do away with the list.
 - vii. Consensus was to complete the conversation over email.
 - b. 2019 Awards (Roy): We need to fill at least three more award slots. Kristen Bell couldn't accept this year but may be able to do 2020. If the board approves the current proposed candidates that would help us complete the process.
 - i. **Becky motioned to approve proposed candidates in board packet, Howard seconded, approved by consensus.**
 - c. 2019 conference plans (Roy): I think that all the pieces are in place for the event to be a success. We should be able to fill all of the rooms, but online attendance is a roll of the dice. Staff has a plan to promote the online portion of the conference through social media, mail and blogs. We are more behind than we would like to be related to personal matters, website challenges, and the Supreme Court case, but we can still make it happen. Becky said that we should be getting out promotional materials and work with local groups, especially with the group in Miami.
 - i. 2020 Miami (Roy): We're not exactly where we want to be for 2020 planning with our connection to University of Miami still building, activity and speaker planning not yet begun, and the Humanists International (formerly IHEU) asking for fees and authority over some things that we were not able to accept.
 - 1. Becky explained that Humanists International are viewing this as a World Congress as opposed to an AHA one with added international flavor, and they were not pleased with what the AHA was able to muster for the last World Congress we hosted in 2008. We can turn this into a win by reframing how we look at it. They want to be a team with us and get it pulled off correctly.
 - 2. Sunil added that he has been to other World Congresses, and the ones in Europe were certainly more internationally oriented.
 - 3. Becky said that she thinks what will make or break this is the list of speakers that we have. They also have a scholarship fund they have offered. I should also say that after our meeting, HI was far more comfortable with the plans for 2020.
8. Programs, adjuncts and coalitions requiring attention
- a. AHLIC Legal Center: Supreme Court arguments on the cross case were discussed.
 - b. Chapters and Affiliates:
 - i. **Howard motioned to approve the new Chattanooga, Tennessee and Dubuque, Iowa groups, Rob seconded, approved by consensus.**

9. Next board meeting will be in Chicago on June 15th.

10. New business

a. Sunil asked if we should we revisit recognition for Monica? Kris suggested something small now and reward her more significantly when the case is decided regardless of outcome. Ellen suggested an award in her name. Howard suggested a plaque or certificate of appreciation.

b. Kris motioned to commend Monica Miller with a plaque or certification for her performance in the SCOTUS case. Becky seconded, approved by consensus.

11. Howard motioned to adjourn, Christine seconded, approved by consensus. 10:03pm ET