



## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

*Denver – May 7, 2015*

Board members in attendance: Debbie Allen, Rob Boston, Rebecca Hale, John Hooper, Jennifer Kalmanson, Howard Katz, Anthony Pinn, Susan Sackett, Christine Shellska, July Simpson, Herb Silverman, Jason Torpy, and Kristin Wintermute,

AHA Staff in attendance: Roy Speckhardt, Jessica Xiao

1. Call to order (by chair: Becky at 8:30am Mountain Time)
  - a. Howard was appointed parliamentarian
  - b. Jessica was appointed recording secretary
  - c. No new business was introduced
2. Jenny moved to approve the **February 2015 meeting minutes**. Howard seconded. Approved by consensus.
3. Financial updates
  - a. John reported that the **auditors'** opinion is that AHA 2014 financial statements are presented fairly and in accordance with GAAP.
  - b. John reported that the **2014 financial results** included the highest on record. Most categories were exceeded, particularly in bequests and legal settlements. The year ended with \$100,000 more than expected. Spending choices were made, but they were either board-approved or circumstantial. AHA received more than \$2 million from seven bequests to the Humanist Foundation, increasing net assets of the Humanist Foundation from \$4.3 million to \$6 million. The amount of money distributed to AHA increased by 58%. Strong performance continues through the first quarter of 2015. Fred Edwards was hired as the director of Planned Giving for the Humanist Foundation. A significant large bequest has put AHA in a good position year to date.
  - c. Jason moved to **approve audit**. Rob seconded. Approved by consensus.
  - d. Reporting on the **revised 2015 Budget** Roy said it shows changes since the budget was created in the fall. Most changes relate to UCOR becoming an independent entity and to the pressure to add an additional person to the legal team to handle the inflow of cases – there are additional lesser impacting items. Roy reports that the revised budget shows projected incomes and expenses in a way that still balances.
  - e. Jenny moved to **approve revised budget**. Kristin seconded. Approved by consensus.
  - f. Reporting on the **Humanist Foundation**, Jenny said that the Trustees will be meeting in Santa Fe next week. She added that the Alliance Bernstein report is positive. The Humanist Foundation had a great year because the AHA received bequests and gave them to the foundation.

Becky asked Jenny if she knew the return for the Humanist Foundation if the AHA bequests were not considered in the calculation and whether the impact of Fred's assignment with the Humanist Foundation for the past year could be calculated. Roy added that it will take 3-5 years for Fred's impact to be observable.

The return for the last quarter, net of fees, was 4.3%. The return for the 2014 year overall was 5.5%. Becky said this doesn't seem like a good return. Jenny explains that this return is calculated after paying Bernstein's fees and while it doesn't beat the stock market, it beats inflation. Becky asked for more information on their fees. Jim Simpson (a Foundation Trustee in the audience) clarified that it is less than 1 percent. July Simpson asked Jenny for more clarification on why it was a good return.

Jenny explained further that though there is the possibility of putting everything into an index fund and following the market, there is risk associated with market turns and down performance. She added that it is a different investment philosophy and the Humanist Foundation fund sticks with a conservative, low-risk profile to insulate from market shocks in order not to risk the future of the movement.

Herb adds that he has read studies showing that over a 20-year period, unmanaged funds do better than managed funds. He asked if the Humanist Foundation has considered the Vanguard fund. Jenny says that Bernstein did a presentation demonstrating that their managed funds did better than Vanguard, which is preferable for personal investing, but not for larger sums of money where the dynamics are different.

4. The **strategic planning** process, Jenny reports, is just getting started. The committee has met once and set how they would like to approach the creation of a strategic plan. They are opening up the planning process to the membership and will ask for feedback from conference attendees who attend the State of Humanism membership meeting on what they would like to see from the organization in thirty years. This information will be used in creating roadmap for the five year plan. Jenny defined the difference between tactical and strategy meetings – strategy is the higher level of what we want to accomplish and tactics are how they are achieved. Jenny anticipates the plan will be ready for release by the time of next year's conference.

Some discussion ensued, invited by the chair. The current committee members are: Chair Jennifer Kalmanson, Debbie Allen, Rebecca Hale, Anthony Pinn, Roy Speckhardt, and Jason Torpy. Maggie Ardient is invited to join the committee because of her extensive contribution to conference and development. Todd Stiefel has been invited to join, pending response.

Roy suggested a strategic planning retreat scheduled a day accompanying the next board meeting. Jason suggested the need for a professional facilitator. Todd Stiefel will be asked to be the professional facilitator if he does not join the committee.

**Jenny will take email ideas on strategic planning and review and integrate the ideas.**

5. In reviewing the **Office Policy Manual** Roy highlighted the main changes and updates in legal language. He has also integrated advice on being a good staff person into the policy manual. He invited questions from the board.

Becky asked for a clarification about the change in policy with regard to flexible/staggered start and end times. July and Jenny stated their appreciation for the flexible start and end times.

Howard moved to **approve office policy**. Debbie seconded. Approved by consensus.

Roy explained the change in the 403b plan for employees – employees will receive a vested match for the first \$2,000 set aside for their 403b fund annually.

Jason moved to **approve the 403b statement**. Kristin seconded.

In discussion Becky expressed reservations on voting because the fees AHA would have to pay to the firm were not clarified. Roy said that AHA has a legal firm handling set up of the vested match pro bono. Jason suggested the worst-case scenario would be to find out the law firm we worked with didn't do comparative analysis and fees are more than they ought to be, in which case, we can solve the problem and hold firm responsible.

Approved by consensus.

**Roy will get the document for Becky to sign.**

6. The **Bylaws Proposal**, presented by Howard, began with Howard thanking Jason for his help on setting term limits and stated that he was fine with omitting a parliamentary officer position. He expressed that these bylaws are not just for the board of directors, they are for the membership organization of the AHA and should be approved by the membership, for example, by voting at a general conference board meeting, if annual conferences will still be held.

Jenny is skeptical about membership voting at the conference because the attendance does not include a large percentage of members and it may seem elitist to limit voting power to people who are able to afford to attend. Rob is concerned that a vehicle like this can become opportunity for people who want to make trouble. He believes this is not the kind of direct democracy AHA members are looking for.

July suggested mailing ballots or to find another more inclusive option for membership participation in order not to alienate younger members who cannot afford to come to the conference.

Jenny asked Roy for the ballpark figure of what percentage of the membership responds to ballot elections for the board. Roy said 10 percent. Herb commented that the entire AHA membership votes for the board members to represent them, and it is a reasonable compromise for democracy.

Howard said that since he knew we were going to be looking towards the possibility of modifying the annual conference setup to include years with regional meetings, that he was willing to at this point in time forgo the member ratification, with the understanding that he would probably bring up a modified amendment in future, once the meeting structure is finalized.

Debbie believes that AHA needs to think of more serious ways for members to get involved. This is a reminder that AHA must set up a strategic planning email address for members to reach out to.

Jenny **moves to accept bylaws as presented** to board. Jason seconded. Approved by consensus.

7. Jason reported on resolutions committee items.

- a. Jason explained the resolutions committee work on drafting a **human rights resolution**. They looked at previous resolutions moderately related to human rights and narrowed it down to four areas: death penalty (against), death with dignity (for), freedom of consciousness and belief (for), gender expression, and family planning. The workable draft was included in the exhibits and Jason invited comments from board members, Fred Edwards, John Shook, and Ron Lindsay. Becky would like inclusion of language in women's reproductive rights section that would advocate for having a responsible number of children. Jason also mentioned that all resolutions from the past 74 years have been codified in an excel file and can be made accessible. The resolution is not ready for approval at this time, only for comment.

The current members of the resolutions committee are Chair Jason Torpy, Rebecca Hale, Jennifer Kalmanson, David Niose, Anthony Pinn, and Roy Speckhardt.

Roy stated that the addendum to the board updated Humanist Statement on Islam was in response to the board's request for us to clarify the well-considered opinion with facts, figures, and research. It demonstrates that we do live in a world where there is one religion dominating the scene in violence, but the same group is also highly discriminated against in the United States and does not share the same view of violence that majorities hold abroad.

Christine mentioned appreciation for the work on the statement. Jason complimented the research.

8. The **75<sup>th</sup> annual conference will be May 26-29 at the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place in Chicago, IL**, which is Memorial Day Weekend.

Roy says the Reason Rally is shooting to schedule for June dates in 2016. Susan mentioned this conference will be shortly after an International Humanist and Ethical Union event scheduled for May 22-23, 2016. Will AHA send someone to represent itself?

Becky stated for the record that the annual conference will continue to happen despite some discussion about other options. After analyzing pros and cons, Becky stated that they nurture the movement well so the next challenge is to look for creative structures for it to make it more accessible to people. Becky asked those seated in the galley for feedback on how the timing of the conference affects attendance. Stephanie Allison from Rehoboth, DE, stated that she is thrilled that this year's conference was held on Mother's Day weekend because it was a chance for her and her daughter (from west coast) to reunite at the conference. The only factor is that the conference must be scheduled well in advance in order to inform her employers. Becky again invited the folks to continue to share over email.

Herb mentioned that the Reason Rally is tentatively set for 2016 but may be switched to 2017 and, if so, has asked member organizations to not have annual meetings that year in order to get a larger turnout. Sarah Morehead is currently the chair of Reason Rally.

Kristin commented that holding the annual conference in May makes it difficult for parents with children in school and for university students approaching their final exams which would deter AHA from attracting those demographics. Howard asked for when was the earliest we've held a conference and the latest. Roy answered the earliest was in April in conjunction with Harvard University and the latest was mid-June. Jenny asked if there is an organization that's already claimed the weekend of July 4th. Freedom from Religion Foundation has a camping event that weekend in Alabama.

Jim suggested AHA come up with a **survey to determine best timing of conference. Debbie suggested that the survey should also include long-range planning ideas with suggestions about what matters to membership.** Becky demonstrated concern over the length of the survey contributing to higher attrition rates. July suggested a solution of creating surveys by topic, with each topic taking 5 minutes. Debbie cautioned AHA must be careful in structuring the questions and remember to ask demographical questions.

Susan reports that the Awards Committee has a list of awardee prospects for 2016 in the board packet. Board members asked for clarification on unknown names and added suggestions for other prospects to consider.

Debbie stated her preference for a Humanist of the Year awardee (or set of awardees) chosen for their work as humanists in precarious situations or persecuted for atheism rather than for their celebrity status. Becky suggested an "unsung hero award." Rob also stated preference for awardees recognized for actions for the community, not just their celebrity status.

Roy reminded everyone of how prominent awardees help draw people to the conference, reflect diversity in high level attendees to the conference, and are associated with AHA in the future on our letterhead and in invites to future awardees.

Herb underlined that there are multiple purposes and that one purpose of celebrity status awardees is to increase external media attention. He remarked that silent atheists demonstrate atheists can be good people without trumpeting their atheism.

9. The **Common Ground Event** is scheduled for October 8 at Rutgers University. Roy explained that the AHA is working in conjunction with Xaverian Missionaries, and with the Humanist community at Rutgers to organize an event where believers and secular humanists can discuss differences and suggest actions for social good. A number of speakers have been confirmed or are in process.

Becky asked if we are marketing to larger AHA membership. Roy responded affirmatively and added that it is a one-day event with lunch and space provided by Rutgers. The Facebook page and website ([commonground2015.org](http://commonground2015.org)) has more information. Herb commented that he likes the name and idea of Common Ground, but asked whether there were a more inclusive name than interfaith.

10. While **programs, adjuncts, and activities** will be discussed in more detail at the State of Humanism meeting. Roy said he will briefly mention things that may not be covered at that later meeting.

Roy highlighted Bo Bennett's Humanist Hour podcast as a great method of outreach because AHA has not had this type of consistent programming before. Roy also highlighted AHA's ability to attract supporters to respond to action alerts – the recent

action alert on the National Day of Reason brought 10,000 respondents which is a comparatively high participation level.

The Darwin Day website was redone and the AHA, with the help of consultants and cooperation with movement groups, increased impact of Darwin Day legislative actions.

One of the plaintiffs in the AHLC's Bladensburg Cross case is in the audience. AHLC is contesting the presence of a forty-foot cross on state park property. The argument from the opponents is that the cross is not a religious symbol. Jason suggested the strategy of determining whether there are churches offended by the idea that the cross is not a religious symbol.

Roy commented on the number of celebrants, which is steadily increasing. Jason asked about the Humanist Society website. It would be more difficult to modify it than to completely redesign the website.

11. The following groups were nominated to be added as **AHA Chapters**: Humanists of Southeast Michigan, in Farmington Hills, MI, North Kitsap Unitarians, in Poulsbo, WA, Humanists of Linn County, in Cedar Rapids, IA, and Northeast Ohio Humanist Association, in Youngstown, OH.

Becky asked for clarification on whether the Unitarian church as a whole is becoming a chapter. Roy affirmed and Howard listed examples of previous UU church chapters. Herb asked whether there are UU Humanist chapters interested in becoming chapters of AHA. John mentioned that the UU Humanist groups are looking into dual affiliation.

Jenny moved to **approve new chapters**. Howard seconded. Approved by consensus.

Debbie clarified that affiliates do not need to be approved by the board.

Debbie requested that the minutes reflect her appreciation for Rachael Berman's exceptional work with chapters and affiliates and the Humanist Society.

Debbie expressed disappointment about UCoR's independence. Debbie asked if chapter services will be affected by the separation of UCoR and AHA. This remains to be seen. Debbie stated her ongoing involvement with UCoR and requested any changes in the UCoR and AHA chapter relationship be divulged to the board.

Roy reported that \$8000 was sent to chapters as grants to help them with their work.

12. Continuing with program, adjunct and activity reports, Roy pointed out that AHA is doing more **tabling** at movement-related conferences and conferences related to issues humanists care about.

Becky stated that the AHA should underscore that it is an organization of progressive activists passionate about many causes as part of its marketing and outreach strategy.

Christine asked if AHA had Canadian membership and if AHA would be attending any Canadian conferences. AHA has a small percentage of international members and is planning to have a presence at the Imagine No Religion conference.

There is a Canadian Humanist Association. Christine suggested AHA attendance at the None of the Above Alberta Secular Conference and the Non Conference. Roy, or staff, will get in touch with Christine about these.

Kristin would like to see AHA support and **collaborate with religious humanists** more.

Roy pointed out that the Kochhar Humanist Education Center's Paths to Humanism brochure series reaches out to religious humanists. Each brochure is accompanied by an in-depth paper online and poses that along with one's religious identity, one may identify as a humanist as well.

Becky states that the content of these flyers returns AHA to the question: does one have to be an atheist to be humanist? The board discussed the distinction between religious identity and religious belief, and the growing apathy towards religion/post-theism as they relate to humanism. Debbie asked how the AHA is using the brochures. The AHA is using them at major public community events, but not specifically at religious conferences, and has notified the chapters about their availability. Tony suggested we need to better understand the demographic these brochures are meant to target through empirical research.

AHA member Stephanie (audience) suggests people attend religious services for community rather than religious enlightenment, and AHA should fulfill that need. Tony stated it would be strategic to determine how to embolden churchgoers to work within context of organizations to decrease faith rather than pull them out of these organizations because we cannot assume people are persuaded by argument. Jason suggested inclusion of humanists who attend share humanist values but religious services as part of cultural expression. Rob reiterates that humanism does not duplicate the sense of community instilled by churches and religious communities, and humanists should not alienate those who attend religious services for the community.

Susan, Tony, and Herb urge caution as the purpose of humanism and brand of the AHA will be diluted by the broadening of the definition.

Roy reported that **Humanist Press** has books in the pipeline, including his own, *Creating Change Through Humanism*. The Humanist Press team (Roy, Luis, Merrill, Jessica, and Lisa) have been working together closely to professionalize book operations.

13. Susan reported that there is an **IHEU** conference in Manila, Philippines, in last weekend of May in which IHEU will be voting on bylaw changes and admitting chapters, and suggested that AHA may be interested in sending a representative in order not to forfeit AHA votes. As Vice President on the IHEU committee, it is a conflict of interest for Susan to also represent AHA. Jenny suggested reaching out to an AHA chapter in Hawaii to determine if they would like to send a member.
14. The **fall board meeting** will be held in Chicago, with the strategic planning retreat on Friday and the board meeting to follow on Saturday thru Sunday morning, or something

similar. First choice dates are September 25-27, and second October 9-11 to be finalized offline.

15. July moved to **adjourn the meeting**. Herb seconded. Meeting adjourned by consensus at 11:28 am.