

AHA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Chicago – September 26, 2015

Board members in attendance: Debbie Allen, Rebecca Hale, John Hooper, Jennifer Kalmanson, Howard Katz, Anthony Pinn, Herb Silverman, Jason Torpy, and participating via Skype Susan Sackett and Christine Shellska

AHA Staff in attendance: Roy Speckhardt, Maggie Ardiente

BOARD MEETING AGENDA Saturday 9:00 am

1. Call to order (by chair: Becky) 8:54am: Howard is appointed parliamentarian, Maggie is appointed secretary. New business items are added to the agenda—appearing below as noted.
2. Acceptance/amendment of May meeting minutes: Howard moves to approve. Jenny seconds. Approved by consensus.
3. Financial update:
 - a. Audit: John describes that in general the audit was favorable, but there were snags with the auditor's categorization. They appear to be a good firm to use as the numbers were clean and accurate, and it was relatively quick for a first year audit. (Though chronologically later, Howard moves to accept audit reports. Debbie seconded. Approved by consensus.)
 - b. 2015 Progress: We're ahead of projections and in very good shape, as is the Humanist Foundation.
 - c. 2016 Budget: Roy explains that the budget presented is the first deficit budget in over a decade because of the Reason Rally, capital building campaign, 2016 board election, and 75th anniversary conference. Being somewhat conservative on income items such as bequests (80K) and Legal settlements (50K), it's a deficit budget but one we may be able to overcome. (Though chronologically later, Becky called for a vote on the new budget. Debbie moved to accept. Jenny seconds. Approved by consensus.)
 - a. Capital Campaign: Jason asks if it is a good idea to do a capital campaign and a deficit budget in one year? Roy is open to opinion on that. The space is becoming a serious challenge. Roy hasn't contracted with a real estate broker yet, but hopes to explore options from buying out our neighbors building and renovating to getting a standalone building where we can house friendly groups. Debbie says we need to take advantage of the 75th anniversary and Reason Rally to fundraise for the capital campaign. The sense of the board (also discussed later chronologically) is that we shouldn't delay, and should spend the funds needed to get competent consultation to get this underway right away.
 - b. Foundation Grant: Roy put in a plug figure of \$300K to transfer to the foundation and reminded folks that this helps with the 5 percent that we get back. Some discussion of approaching the Foundation to help with this unique 2016 deficit

situation, which is an opportunity to make our anniversary spur the growth of humanism. Debbie says it's not inappropriate to use annual distribution for operation expenses, that's what endowments are for, but we might seek additional funding for a special situation. Jenny says it's an outdated way of thinking to say we can fund our entire budget with just dues. Instead of the anticipated \$230K, we should request \$400K for these special projects. Roy will rewrite grant letter proposal.

2. Humanist Heritage Program: The idea is to collect and keep historical records of the leadership, VIPs and history of our organization that helped make humanism great. Biographical sketches are saved in various formats at the office. We intend to make this information more readily available via the Paths to Humanism book of profiles to be published by the Humanist Press. Jason suggests tapping into Evan Clark and Serah Blain's travels collecting humanist stories, they can also help collect them for us. Debbie says it's a great opportunity, but we need to be clear about the goals, people we want to see powerful narratives, which can also make interesting podcast stories. We may discover some people come to humanism because of a faith crisis, which makes for an interesting hook. Tony says they need guidance from professional researchers, perhaps to develop a set of questions. John points out the separate processes of collecting, preserving, digitizing and disseminating. John Leaker at Meadville Lombard might provide professional guidance. Roy will talk to Leaker about the processes and will talk to Evan and Serah about working with them.
3. Performance and effectiveness review (executive session): Staff leave for discussion of executive director performance.
4. The Humanist Foundation: Jenny discussed the Foundation meeting. The sense is that it had a pretty good year. The Trustees agreed to put 5% of assets in hedge funds, which were a lower percentage than recommended, but it still saved us funds during the China market crash. Things are going well performance wise. Overall performance beat the market by a small percentage. Herb points out that over a three year period his Vanguard index funds went up 16 percent over three years. All in double figures and very low expense. Jenny suggests that we would be in double digits too if we did a three year period. Jason points out that if we the Trustees moved the investments to the S&P 500, there would be a concern of volatility. You may lose 30% in a year. If the AHA only got money from the increase, we might see none some years. We should protect the longterm growth of the foundation in terms of the mandatory distributions. Discussion.

Herb notes that Vanguard has different funds depending on your risk. We would like to have something prepared from the Foundation showing how they are doing year by year versus other investment options. Becky points out that since our agreement with the Foundation several years ago to have all bequests with the Foundation named go directly to the Foundation and all with the AHA named go to the AHA board for possible use in operations, the vast bulk of them all bequests has been invested with the Foundation. An alternative would be to invest some of the funds separately, and track its progress against

that of the Foundation investments. Jenny said she'd bring these points to the Trustees when they next meet.

- a. Mike Werner for 2016-2022 term: Howard moves to approve Mike Werner. Jenny seconds. Approved by consensus.
 - b. Updated bylaws (editorial corrections/clarifications): Jenny moves to approve. John seconds. Approved by consensus.
4. Resolutions Committee: Jason describes proposed human rights resolution, how issues around end of life considerations were handled, and how it addresses human rights, reproductive rights, end of life choices, LGBTQ rights, and so forth. He invites board to review resolutions excel sheet and is open to suggestions on next resolutions. Jason moves to accept the human rights resolution. Jenny seconds. Approved by consensus.
5. Conferences: Some discussion about alternate structure options for conference from expo style to more campy programming options, and some benefits of breakouts versus plenary. Suggestion to re-introduce movie room and add a popcorn machine as a plenary alternative. Other options include: costume, cooking, dance, yoga, art, mindfulness. Recognition that AHA represents those with interest in advocacy, academia, and community, and it's a challenge to plan an event that accommodates all three.
- a. 2016 Chicago Conference: May 26-29, Hyatt Regency McCormick Place in Chicago, IL. Be sure to recommend Midway Airport, and sites like the Chicago Museum. Try for speakers and awardees connected to Chicago University. Susan went over the confirmed awardees and those we're seeking. Additional suggestions were collected.
 - b. 2020 Proposal for Joint AHA/AEU/IHEU Conference. Maggie explains that the plan is to have a collaborative proposal to host in Manhattan. Discussion emphasizes cost balancing and opportunities in New York City. Maggie will prepare proposal to be submitted next week.
 - c. 2017 Annual Conference: Discussion included San Francisco, Washington DC, and others, but most consensus was for Charleston South Carolina if it can be done in conjunction with Carolina Secular Conference. Maggie will research hotel options in Charleston.
6. Reason Rally: Discussion includes view that the actual planners are too few in number and board asked to approve more than participate so far. Interest in assuring AHA gets bang for its \$30K sponsorship bucks. Can AHA offices host an event or tour? What AHA give-aways should we have? Can we have banners made for local AHA groups participating? Some ideas for speakers and guests discussed. Kris noted that they hadn't gotten back to her on AAI's interest in participation.
7. Interfaith Common Ground Event: Roy discussed plans for event including the sharing of foundational perspectives, what we bring to the table, and practical discussions of how we can engage each other to make a difference. For outreach, local groups have packets of flyers, members in area states got emails, there's a billboard ad at the train station on the campus, listed on the student calendars, advertised outside in other states.

8. **New Affiliation Agreement: The Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers:** Jason explains that after 5 years full time, much was accomplished, but the group can benefit from working closely with a larger organization. MAAF has to reorganized toward paying for services (mail, data entry, parts of staff time, etc.) In the proposal AHA will rewrite the MAAF bylaws, have veto power over board, provide marketing support, staff time, and overall help. Between the advertising and fundraising, MAAF is likely to continue its past precedent of at least raising and spending 50,000 a year. But if it fails to raise the necessary funds in one of the initial three years once the agreement takes effect the AHA will cover the difference so that existing programs can be maintained. Becky points out that it's a valuable organization, and we should keep the brand. Jenny says this is mutually beneficial. Roy explains that a planned staff hire will help make room for this in staff time. Herb would want MAAF to be an independent organization still for SCA and other purposes and it was decided to make this more a strategic affiliation vs. a merger/acquisition. While Jason recused himself, there was a consensus agreement that this is a good decision and that they'd be favorably inclined toward the specific agreement we were planning. Roy and Jason will modify the draft to meet everyone's needs, and Jason will present to the MAAF board.
9. **New Affiliation/Merger Agreement: The Institute for Humanist Studies:** Roy discussed IHS's scholarly quality, production of journal and books, associated fellows and other work addressing the think tank niche—true academic work that undergirds the philosophy. Its vision is to also provide public policy support for lobbying done by movement groups such as AHA, CFI, AA, and SCA. Warren Wolf's death, and upcoming vacancies presents a leadership challenge that can be somewhat alleviated by a strong connection to a national group. It has enough funding to continue without a serious investment at current levels for the next few years. Jenny says that this voice needs to be there and that we can grow the brand more than writing books. Tony says that we are providing ideas and research and that the organization may have the potential to do more with greater resources. Roy has someone in mind who can help with the fundraising and policy work. The sense of the board is in favor of the agreement.
10. **Programs, adjuncts and coalitions action items:** Roy and Maggie highlighted some items, mentioning a redesign of renewals to better emphasize online-only "green" options, and we're re-developing the main AHA website. (Becky recommends being very careful to make sure the old links redirect to the right place so we don't lose valuable connections. Suggestion also to add click-to-donate button and/or "Like this story? Support!" links on each page, including theHumanist.com, and not just at the bottom.) The Appignani Humanist Legal Center continues to do more, and we added new attorney Kat Paige to help. Let's keep up the strong win rate, and publicize it more. The new Humanist Society website is almost ready to release, the numbers of celebrants stand at 320, and the group's debt to the AHA will soon be cleared. The Humanist Press has books in the pipeline, with Jessica improving procedures and feedback now going to authors on progress. The Humanist Institute is doing well with live trainings in different parts of the country, as well as growing online education.

11. Chapters and Affiliates: New groups to approve include The Humanist Chaplaincy at USC in Los Angeles, CA, Palm Beach Humanists in West Palm Beach, FL, Humanist Community of the Space Coast in Satellite Beach, FL, Lake County Humanists in Round Lake Beach, IL, and the Humanists of Southern Delaware in Milton, DE. Howard moves to approve them all. Debbie seconds. Approved by consensus.
12. Adjunct and Social Justice Staffer: Roy described plans to add person to work primarily on social justice issues, but help with our adjuncts in general and give them the attention they need including outreach, social media, and connecting efforts to local groups. Plans include expanding groups beyond Feminist Caucus and LGBTQ Humanist Council to include Black Humanist Council and others over time.
13. 2016 AHA Board Elections: Tony Pinn, Becky Hale, Rob Boston, Debbie Allen, Herb Silveman, and Kristin Wintermute are up for election and should notify Roy and the nominating committee about their plans. Herb will not run again. The nominating committee will be chaired by Mel Lipman and include Mandisa Thomas, Mike Werner, Kevin Jagoe, and Kimberly Ellington.
14. Spring Board Teleconference Meeting: Consensus was that it will be Tuesday February 16th at 8:00pm Eastern Time.
15. Howard moved to adjourn. Jason seconded. Meeting closes at 4:19 pm.