

# **Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**

*Conference Call — February 16, 2016*

## **BOARD MEETING AGENDA**

### **1. Call to order**

*Becky called the meeting to order at 8:07pm.*

#### **a. Roll call and introductions**

Present: Rob Boston, Becky Hale, John Hooper, Jenny Kalmanson, Howard Katz, Tony Pinn, Susan Sackett, Kris Shellska, July Simpson, Herb Silverman, Jason Torpy, Kristin Wintermute, Roy Speckhardt (ex-officio), Maggie Ardiente (staff)

Absent: Debbie Allen

#### **b. Appointment of parliamentarian**

Howard was appointed parliamentarian.

#### **c. Appointment of recording secretary**

Maggie was appointed recording secretary.

#### **d. Suggestions for new business to be considered**

Becky discussed a potential article to be published on TheHumanist.com that mentions the AHA's strategic plans with a focus on social justice and wants to get feedback from the board on two issues: trickle-up economics and universal health care. This was added to new business for discussion.

### **2. Acceptance/amendment of Fall meeting minutes**

Howard moved to accept the Fall meeting minutes. Jenny seconded. Becky called for discussion.

Becky mentioned the section of the minutes that the second sentence on the Humanist Heritage Program should read "We intend to make this information more readily available via the Paths to Humanism book of profiles to be published by the Humanist Press." The sentence will be fixed.

Jason said the section on MAAF needs to be clarified; MAAF plans to raise \$50,000 in 2016, and if it doesn't AHA will make up the difference. The section will be fixed replacing sentences 4 and 5 of that section with "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.”

Howard amended his motion and moved to accept the minutes with Becky’s and Jason’s suggested changes. Jenny seconded. Approved by consensus.

### **3. Financial update**

#### **a. 2015**

John outlined the balance sheet and profit and loss for the AHA and its affiliated entities in 2015. He reported that the combined annual budget is 2.7 million and that the combined net assets is about 8 million, and drew attention to the pie charts that distribute the AHA’s programs based on money spent, which is good to look at when comparing the priorities set in the strategic plan. As we set the priorities for the future, we want to look further at how AHA funds are being used for programs. Becky found the charts enlightening, and John agreed.

John referred to the profit and loss reports. He explained that contributions were lower this year, and plans are already in place to increase fundraising visits and implement ways to upgrade middle donors to major donors. Advertising dropped because AHA did not do a billboard ad campaign in December as usual. Internet and telephone expenses were higher due to the cost of upgrading the AHA website. Legal costs were higher but offset by even higher income from legal victories.

Becky had a question about the consolidated statements, and Roy explained that there’s a column that shows internal transfers between organizations (such as bequests received by the AHA and later sent to the Humanist Foundation) so they’re not counted as income twice.

#### **b. The Humanist Foundation**

Jenny said there’s no new activity other than some updates from AllianceBernstein. The stock market isn’t doing well, so the diversification in the hedge fund did help the Foundation’s investments slightly.

### **4. Strategic planning**

Jenny reported that the strategic plan is going through new rounds of editing, but it will soon be ready for board discussion. Roy reported that the strategic plan includes input from the board, staff, and top donors. He mentioned that he talked to donors recently in Southern California about the new focus on social justice, and reactions were mixed to positive. Jenny offered to meet with donors when she is in Georgia later in the month.

### **5. Resolutions Committee**

Jason had no updates from the resolutions committee since the strategic plan and AHA-MAAF arrangement took priority. The latest issue was a statement on the environment, and hopes to have something for the AHA board to consider at the next board meeting.

## **6. Name change to American Humanists?**

Roy said at the last board meeting we discussed changing our name to simply “American Humanists.” He went through the process of getting domains: americanhumanists.org is ours, but americanhumanists.com is already taken and they want \$17,000.

Board members weighed in on how they felt about a name change. Many agreed that the AHA has a long history of being the AHA and see value in maintaining the brand; some questioned what value changing the name would bring. Becky said it’s friendlier because it refers to people and individuals, rather than an impersonal group. Roy said the trend in advocacy nonprofits is to move away from “association” toward identifiers that are human-centered. Further discussion on the value of the name change: will it result in more donations or media? Jason suggested doing a marketing study to find out the value. Some suggested using “American Humanists” sometimes in press releases or member outreach when appropriate, but keeping the original name of AHA.

## **7. 1777 T Street Building**

Roy said the building is officially on the market and several people have toured it so far. Maggie talked about the feasibility study being conducted by the capital campaign consultant Nan McConnell. The board asked questions about the staff’s plans if the building sells right away; Roy said whether the building sells or not, more space is needed.

## **8. Conferences and Events**

### **a. Chicago 2016**

Maggie mentioned that the schedule is almost finalized, all the awardees are booked, and we have about 200 registrants so far. Board members offered ideas on promoting the event locally.

### **b. Charleston 2017 plans**

Becky reported that a request for proposal was sent to the convention bureau in Charleston and will soon receive responses. Herb mentioned that the local Charleston humanist group is meeting this weekend, but nothing yet to report.

### **c. Awards Committee**

Susan referred to the list of 2016 awardees, which did not include John de Lancie, but mentioned that he will be receiving the 2016 Humanist Arts award. She highlighted some of the 2017 suggestions. Board members offered ideas for future awards, including Nate Phelps, Nicholas Kristoff, Barack Obama, Diana Nyad, The Oatmeal, and an award named after Bette Chambers. Susan invited board members to email her with more suggestions.

Susan mentioned that the Feminist Caucus is thinking of changing the name of their annual Humanist Heroine award to “Feminist of the Year.”

#### **d. Reason Rally**

Debbie Allen was absent and unable to give her report, but Roy mentioned that the most updated information is available on the Reason Rally website. Becky said she tried to get a reservation at the main hotel and they’re already booked, so it’s looking to be a big event.

### **9. Programs, adjuncts and coalitions action items**

To save on time, Becky suggested that board members ask questions from the written reports rather than rereading all the department reports. Jason said others are very excited about the AHA-MAAF integration and it’s going well. Becky asked Maggie about some details regarding last year’s appeals, and Maggie responded with more information about fundraising strategy. Roy mentioned that the AHA got over 60,000 media hits last year, likely more than any organization in the movement.

Roy said there are no new chapters or affiliates to approve at this meeting but that the board may want to pre-approve the Washington Area Secular Humanists, who are voting in a week or so to change their status from affiliate to chapter. Roy had a meeting with its new president who appears to be favorable. Jenny and Jason provided more details about WASH. It was the sense of the board that the AHA will enthusiastically welcome WASH if they decide to be a chapter.

### **10. Schedule spring board meeting**

We will be starting with a yet to be scheduled dinner on Wednesday evening May 25, followed by our closed session discussions 7:30-9:30 pm. The open portion of the AHA Board of Directors Meeting is 8:30am to 2:00pm Thursday.

### **11. New business**

Becky and Jenny talked about an article they wrote in reaction to an article on “New Atheism” that was written last week about atheists not making social justice a part of their work. Becky and Jenny’s article, titled “The New Humanism,” would reference the strategic plan and AHA’s new focus on social justice and equality, but that two items that

the board had not developed policy on were part of the statement; they wanted to get the board's consideration. The two issues were single-payer health care and trickle-up economics, or providing a higher minimum wage for workers.

An extensive discussion took place talking about both issues. The board agreed that it wasn't necessary to focus on single-payer, but that universal health care was a basic human right and therefore aligned with humanism. However, the discussion about economics and the minimum wage were not all agreed upon by the board.

Jenny and Becky will send the latest version of the article to get more feedback. Roy emphasized the importance of this discussion and the need for the board to create more resolutions and policy statements on these issues to help guide the organization and staff.

Becky added one more item to new business: the newly formed President's Award, to honor a volunteer who puts in many hours a week working at, for example, a soup kitchen wearing a humanist shirt or working hard to develop their local group or chapter. Some names were suggested to receive this award. Howard volunteered to help select the recipient of this year's award with Becky.

Becky opened the meeting to any further discussion topics or final comments. Rob moved to adjourn the meeting. Howard seconded. Approved by consensus.

*The board meeting of the American Humanist Association was adjourned at 9:28pm.*