

Note: On Feb. 23, Secretary Ana Ley made a motion via email to approve these minutes. It was seconded by Caresse Jackman and received unanimous approval on Feb. 24.

IRE Board of Directors

Board Meeting Agenda via Zoom February 13, 2026 @ 9:00 a.m. CT

Board members in attendance: President Josh Hinkle, Vice President Kate Howard, Treasurer Mark Greenblatt, Secretary Ana Ley, At-Large Member Alejandra Cancino, Chair of the Board Brian Rosenthal, Mary Hudetz, Paroma Soni, Cindy Galli, Jodie Fleischer, Caresse Jackman, Andy Lehren, Marina Villeneuve.

Villeneuve joined at 9:07 a.m.

Staff members in attendance: Amy Eaton, Laura Moscoso, Diana Fuentes, Chris Vachon, Heather Feldmann Henry, Benét J. Wilson, Lauren Grandestaff, Krista Sporleder.

Guests include: Mark Lagerkvist, Walter Smith Randolph.

President Josh Hinkle called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. CT. Secretary Ana Ley called roll.

Governance Discussion

The group talked about what they learned during a two-hour virtual training session about the Board's governance policies and practices. The session was taught Jan. 28 by consultant Lowell Aplebaum from Vista Cova, who has expertise in nonprofit boards and was recommended by RTDNA.

Executive Director's Report

- Executive Director Diana Fuentes said the organization had achieved about \$75,000 of its \$100,000 goal in sponsorships for NICAR26 committed as of Jan. 30. So far, 409 attendees have registered, fewer than this time last year.
- Fuentes noted most early glitches on the newly rolled out IRE website are mostly resolved but a few are still coming up. She urged the group to look for problems and said a soft launch is underway for a new resource center that is in the testing stage.
- Fuentes announced three new hires: Benét Wilson is now IRE's training director, Krista Sporleder is the program director and Aaricka Washington is the new marketing and promotions specialist. The organization has also posted a job posting for a Director of Development role; Fuentes said four people have applied for this role, as of Feb. 13.
- Fuentes said the final total raised for the organization's end-of-year giving campaign was \$110,293. Not much had changed in the budget at the end of January from the group's last budget update in November.
- Fuentes said new members had been registering largely because of workshops, the NICAR26 conference, IRE Awards and the new website. She said staff is fact-checking numbers produced by the new MemberSuite system to determine an exact number of active members at a given point in time. The new system tracks membership in real time.

IRE26 Conference Update

- Conference Committee Chair Cindy Galli said the group had come up with a shortlist of desired speakers. The committee decided to reach out to all and will find space and events for those who agree to come. Galli has reached out to all and hopes to have at

least 1 to 2 confirmed in February. She has also cast a wide net and is adding possibilities.

- Deputy Executive Director Lauren Grandestaff said staff is working to perform a full dress rehearsal for the IRE luncheon that will include a run of show to give the event structure.
- Grandestaff said programming for NICAR26 is done and she is now turning to IRE for planning. She said that staff is working with Sessionize, a service that offers a more efficient way for people to provide session ideas for conferences. It is less expensive and does not require as much of a commitment as Guidebook, which IRE has used before.

Executive Director Annual Review Discussion

Hinkle made a motion to enter executive session at 9:46 a.m. so the Board could discuss Fuentes's annual performance evaluation. Ley seconded and the Board voted unanimously in favor by voice vote. Hinkle then moved to close executive session at 10:04 a.m. and Howard seconded; the group then approved the motion unanimously by voice vote.

Action Items

Award Rescission Policy Proposal

Contest Committee Chair Walter Smith Randolph and Board Liaison Paroma Soni proposed a policy laying out the rules IRE should follow if a winning entry is later suspected to be substantially dishonest, intentionally deceptive, or dishonorable. After discussion, the group decided to send the proposal back for more deliberation by the committee. Several Board members shared concerns and suggestions, and some shared their thoughts with the committee via email.

Finance Committee Appointments¹

President Hinkle and Treasurer Mark Greenblatt shared their nominations to appoint two people to the Finance Committee. After a brief discussion, Hinkle made a motion to approve the motion and Ley seconded. The rest of the group approved the motion unanimously by voice vote.

IRE26 Luncheon Affordability Proposal

Board Chair and Affordability Task Force Board Liaison Brian Rosenthal proposed a new policy to set up compensated tickets for award winners to attend the luncheon. The vote was tabled to allow staff to evaluate potential options based on current financial predictions. They will follow up with the task force in the near future.

Consent Action Items

Ley made a motion to approve one consent action item. Hinkle seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by voice vote.:

- [Approval of Minutes of Recent Emailed Votes](#)²

Committee/Task Force Reports

The group submitted three committee and task force reports in writing.

- [Website Improvement Task Force](#) (Board Liaison Alejandra Cancino)
- [Member Services Committee](#) (Co-chairs Cancino & Andy Lehren)
- [Governance Committee](#) (Chair Sarah Cohen, Vice Chair Ley)

¹ **Finance Committee Appointments:** To fill vacancies on the Finance Committee, President Josh Hinkle nominated Peniley Ramirez, Futuro Media Group Co-CEO and Executive Director. Treasurer Mark Greenblatt nominated Alex Richards, Syracuse University Newhouse School Assistant Professor. Both will serve terms until July 2027. The Governance Committee is also being asked to review bylaw and policy language surrounding mid-year finance vacancies.

² **Approval of Minutes of Recent Emailed Votes:** On Jan. 14, the board voted to approve a statement written by IRE that strongly condemned the FBI raid of the home of Hannah Natanson, a Washington Post reporter who was investigating President Donald Trump's administration.

Officer Reports**[President's Report](#)**

Hinkle submitted his report in writing.

New Business

There was no new business.

Hinkle made a motion to adjourn at 10:59 a.m. and At-Large Member Cancino seconded. The group voted by voice vote to adjourn.