

IRE Emergency board call

July 20, 2021

IRE president Mark Walker called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. Eastern

The following board members were present: Jodie Fleischer, Jennifer Forsyth, Cindy Galli, Josh Hinkle, Marisa Kwiatkowski, Jennifer LaFleur, Mark Rochester (joined at 1:40), Barbara Rodriguez, Brian Rosenthal, Kat Stafford, Jodi Upton, Mark Walker and advisory chair Cheryl W. Thompson

Not in attendance: Neena Satija

Staff present: Diana Fuentes, Stephanie Klimstra and Heather Feldmann Henry

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Motion from Walker to suspend the waiver of notice for an emergency meeting. **Second** from Upton

Vote: Passed unanimously

For reference, below is the requirement for the waiver vote:

Code of Bylaws: Section 6.04. Special meetings. *Special meetings of the Board of Directors may be held as determined by the Executive Committee. In the event of an emergency declared by the president or acting president, the board of directors may meet and act by telephone conference call, provided that a quorum of two-thirds of the members of the board are participants in such a telephone emergency meeting.*

Section 6.07 Waiver of Notice. *At any meeting at which all Directors are present, notice of the time, place and purpose thereof shall be deemed waived, and similar notice may likewise be waived by absent Directors, either by written instrument or by electronic mail.*

Contest committee

Walker said that because he was unable to find a board member willing to chair the contest committee, he would like to appoint an IRE member who previously has served on the contest committee, but who is not on the board.

Motion from Walker to suspend for one year, the requirement that the chair of awards/contest be a board member and have the governance committee review making it a possible permanent change. **Second** from Fleischer.

Vote: Approved 10 to 1. (No from Forsyth)

Walker announced the new committee chairs:

- **Governance:** Chair Marisa Kwiatkowski, Vice Chair Brian Rosenthal
- **Conference:** Chair Cindy Galli
- **Audit:** Chair Neena Satija, Andy Donohue
- **Member services:** Co-chairs Kat Stafford and Jodie Fleischer
 - **Diversity Task Force (reports to member services):** Chair Barbara Rodriguez
 - **Elections Task Force (answers to Governance):** Chair Jodie Fleischer
- **Revenue:** Chair Jennifer Forsyth
- **Endowment:** Chair Jodi Upton
- **Training:** Chair Josh Hinkle
- **Awards/Contest:** Zaneta Lowe

Fuentes gave an update on the search for director of partnerships. She said she is still seeking candidates. She also said she was creating a Diversity Director for IRE and plans to promote Francisco Vara-Orta into that position.

Motion from Walker to enter executive session. **Second** from Rosenthal

Vote: Passed unanimously

Motion from Walker to leave executive session. **Second** from Upton.

Vote: Passed unanimously

Fuentes said that Lauren Grandstaff will be reaching out to update materials for educators on the IRE site.

Fuentes presented the staff proposal for COVID-19 safety protocols at the October symposium in Baltimore. IRE will require in-person attendees to be vaccinated, unless they have religious or medical exemptions.

Board members discussed whether IRE should request vaccination information or require testing for those unable to be vaccinated. Fuentes said because the conference is hybrid, members will have the option to attend virtually.

Klimstra said she would do research about companies that can do vaccine card collection and verification. She also will research testing options. She will update the board at the August retreat.

Motion from Fleischer to approve the staff recommendations for safety protocols, pending legal review.

Second from Rosenthal.

Vote: Approved unanimously

Fuentes and Henry presented the staff recommendations for the October symposium registration fees.

Registration fee discussion. Henry explained how the fee structure was developed based on past events. She said IRE hopes to make at least \$100,000 at the DBEI event in October.

Henry said that IRE has a total of \$160,000 in conference fellowship funds for this year, which will be for the October DBEI symposium, NICAR22 and IRE22. How the funds will be allocated has not been determined, but will most likely depend on the number of applications.

Upton said that as IRE moves forward with future events, we likely need a deeper discussion about fees relating to hybrid options going forward.

Rodriguez said that it would help managers to know the benefits of in-person attendance versus virtual attendance when deciding whether to send staff to a conference.

Walker called for a working group to evaluate the event fee structure and make recommendations to the board and staff.

LaFleur left at 2.50 p.m. to attend another meeting. Forsyth took over recording minutes.

The board discussed plans and logistics for the upcoming board retreat in Chicago Aug. 6 to 8. Each member present shared what they think IRE should focus on going forward and what they want to get out of the retreat.

Walker said he will compile [the ideas](#). He said he also would like to hear from staff. Walker asked Fuentes to hold a staff meeting and present their views at the board retreat.

Motion from Walker to adjourn. **Second** from Galli.

Vote: Unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 3:36 p.m.

Proposed safety protocol IRE October 2021 DBEI Symposium

This is the complete protocol:

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends everyone 12 and older get a COVID-19 vaccination to help prevent the spread of disease. Those who are fully vaccinated may resume domestic travel and participate in group activities without wearing a mask or social distancing unless required by law.

IRE takes the health and safety of all attendees at its events seriously and follows the guidelines of CDC. All in-person attendees at the October DBEI Symposium must be fully vaccinated.

A person is considered fully vaccinated:

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a two-dose series, such as the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, or
- 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine.

Final doses must be completed by Wednesday, Oct. 6, to attend the symposium in person.

If a conference participant — registrant, speaker, IRE staff — does not meet these requirements, they will not be allowed to enter in person. They will have the option of attending virtually.

To request a medical or religious exemption from the vaccine requirement, please complete this confidential form [here](#) (link). IRE has the sole discretion to approve or not approve the request.

At this time, IRE is not requiring that in-person attendees wear masks at the conference because they will be vaccinated.

IRE will work with the hotel to provide hand sanitization stations throughout the event spaces. Distanced seating sections will be available in meeting rooms to accommodate various levels of comfort. Due to this social distancing, some in-person events may be limited due to on-site venue space capacities.

You should not attend the conference if you are experiencing or exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms or if you were exposed to a person with a positive, confirmed case of COVID-19 within the 14 days before the event begins. For a list of symptoms from the CDC, [click here](#).

IRE will continue to monitor CDC guidelines and any state/local ordinances and will inform attendees of any changes to this safety protocol.

This is the paragraph for the check-off box that will be on the registration form with a link to the full protocol:

I agree to abide by all safety protocols (link) implemented on site for the event. I understand that I must be fully vaccinated to attend the symposium unless I receive an IRE-approved medical or religious exemption.

Non-compliance of any of the safety protocols or vaccine requirements will result in the denial of entry or removal from the event. IRE will continue to closely monitor all conditions related to COVID-19 and reserves the right to modify health screening protocols at its discretion. I agree to follow any changes that are implemented to continue participation in the symposium.

Capacity

Room Name	Type	100%	75%	50%
Galena	Master - SR	18		9
Heron	Master - SR	18		9
Essex A	HO - SR	20		10
Essex B	HO - SR	20		10
Essex C	HO - SR	20		10
Harborside BR A	Panel - T	180	135	90
Harborside BR B	Panel - T	180	135	90
Galena	Theater	40	30	20
Heron	Theater	40	30	20

Riser
Riser

Plan to record sessions in this room (talked to Lauren on 7/14)
setting a few socially distant rows in the back, live streamed
setting a few socially distant rows in the back, live streamed

456

228

Do we want to have a lunch on Friday? If so, how many are we thinking?
Reception Thursday night?

yes
yes

Friday lunch Roughly 400 confirmed

Registration Analysis

Used for initial budget - IRE October event

In-person professional (early bird by 8/30)	250
In-person professional (regular)	275
In-person professional (on-site, if available)	300
In-person student	75
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Virtual professional	150
Virtual student	50

**This would tentatively include an opening reception on Thursday and plated lunch on Friday.

**If we do not have a lunch then we would have two receptions (Thursday and Friday nights)

SPJ Conference (Sept 2-4, 2021)

In-person professional (regular)	260
In-person professional (onsite)	460
In-person student (regular)	200
In-person student (onsite)	330
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Virtual professional	200
Virtual student	150

RTDNA (Sept 23-24)

Professional member (early bird 8/10)	310
Professional member (regular by 9/10)	425
Professional member (onsite)	525
Student/retiree member (early bird)	200
Student/retiree member (regular)	275
Student/retiree member (onsite)	350
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Professional nonmember (early bird)	510
Professional nonmember (regular)	625
Professional nonmember (onsite)	725
Student/retiree nonmember (early bird)	250
Student/retiree nonmember (regular)	325
Student/retiree nonmember (onsite)	350

*** None of these tickets include the RTDNA Paul White & John F Hogan Reception which is an addl \$50

Association of Health Care Journalists (Oct 28-31)

Professional in-person only (early bird before 9/1)	175
Professional in-person only (regular rate after 9/1)	225

Professional in-person only (onsite)	250
Student in-person or virtual (early bird)	120
Student in-person or virtual (regular rate)	150
Student in-person or virtual (onsite)	175
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Member virtual only (early bird)	120
Member virtual only (regular rate)	150

Board member goals for IRE

Upton said she wants to look at board goals for 5, 10, 20 years out and how they might affect revenue. She also wants a conversation with IRE's attorney to talk about our obligations as board members, our fiscal responsibilities, what are our legal obligations and how we should respond to those.

She wants to discuss the endowment, including thinking about whether we should have an endowment drive. She asked that awards for departing members go to the awards committee.

She would like to talk about some administrative support for the board, maybe 10 to 15 hours a month. She wants to make sure recommendations going to the governance committee actually come back, etc. Our minutes and our g drive are difficult to find something in. She made the suggestion to Diana to see if that's feasible and how it might work.

Stafford said her top focus is going to be how to continue to move IRE forward in terms of diversity and wider representation, in types of training, types of panels, all the offerings we have. Not just racial diversity but local newsrooms, mid-level newsrooms, she wants to make sure that it's reflective of print folks, broadcast folks, even our wire services. She wants to make sure we have intentionality and are defining what we mean when we say diversity.

Rodriguez said that this is a time of exodus of journalists and journalists of color from our industry and she wants us to brainstorm tangible actions and whether IRE has a place in being a leader and bringing those conversations forward.

She wants to think about recruitment and participation in what right now is a confusing process for members to learn: How do I get more involved? Including getting people involved so you don't have to recruit people to run for the board. She wants to see how we can get that pipeline going sooner rather than later.

Kwiatkowski suggested that instead of placing IRE board documents in Google Drive, we could use Google Pinpoint, which would make them all searchable.

One of the big things that I think we should do is really build the governance, policy and procedures document. It would help with discussions about what IRE approved before we got on the board. To have it all laid out in a way that we can hand over to future board members would be very helpful.

A strategic document that would be a working document that would spell out the vision would also be very helpful.

Galli said she wants to make sure our panels and everything we do is representative not only of race but market, media form and all of the above. She would love for the conference committee to have more input on panels going forward, working with staff. We have great ideas and it would be fantastic to have more input and visibility on who is being represented.

She wants to create a more collaborative membership. We are all working journalists and we should be working together. She wants to prioritize retaining members, especially long time members. How do we retain those folks and keep them interested? They have training to offer and money to offer and we should be appealing to them as well.

Rosenthal said that strategic planning should be a priority. And he's "plus one" on the need for guidance from legal on our board responsibilities and liabilities.

He's glad we're going to be talking about virtual conferences and would love more discussion about affordability. It would be great to get results back on the registration form on how many people are paying their own way.

He also wants to figure out how to engage with our members. Asks about whether the membership survey will be ready to come before the board at the retreat. He likes the idea of having a member Slack channel. He wants to make sure IRE is an active organization not just for the annual conference but all year round.

Hinkle said his main focus is to see greater emphasis on local journalism initiatives, rethinking affordability and accessibility for those journalists. He wants to find a way to engage IRE veterans or senior members, to have conversations about those folks as well. Not just the speaking at the conference but see what they really want instead.

He wants to expand the diversity focus, continuing conversations about gender and race but more conversations on LGBTQ issues, workplace, disability, culture issues to where we need to pick up the pace on those. He also wants a conversation on mental health resources available to investigative journalists.

Walker said he would like us to find a new lane of training. He gave an example of how Freedom Forum used to have multimedia programs targeted students to HBCUs and pair with new organizations to get them paid internships. Those programs no longer exist. Says we can make an impact on a local level by studying what those programs used to do and carve out long-term strategy and providing people those opportunities.

He also would like to see members and board members involved in training. Having board members attend training would be a great opportunity for members.

Fleischer said the biggest thing she's heard from members is the need to focus on senior members and older long-time members and ways to increase our training and things they need right now. A lot of folks are trying to reinvent themselves or transition from one platform to another platform. Need to increase our programming for our veterans members.

She wants to do a deep dive into member numbers beyond reports we've got so far. Want to make sure we are focusing on renewals and not so focused on new members that we lose senior members in the process.

She wants to brainstorm with staff, and would love to come up with some sort of feedback loop, especially about the new mentoring platform. She's like some feedback on who used it, how they liked it, how many times they used it and who did the mentoring.

She wants to make sure that the member survey gets sent out.

Forsyth said she wanted to meet the members of the board and get to know them better, along with the staff.

She also wanted to make sure that people are getting what they pay for with an IRE membership. Not only should it be access to the conference but she wants to make sure that the website works well, that people can access the tip sheets they want when they want it and that the mentoring program is successful for members.