

## **SPJ Board Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** February 14, 2026

**Time:** 11:02 a.m.

**Location:** via Zoom

**Present:** Katja Ridderbusch (President), Genelle Williams (Vice President), Benjamin Grady (At-Large Member), Mitch Leff (At-Large Member), Laura Downey (Immediate Past President), Sabriya Rice (At-Large Member)

**Also Present:** Rahul Bali, Jatika Hudson (Immediate Past Vice President), Jennifer McKee, Patty Rasmussen.

**Absent:** Rachel Spooner (Secretary), Susanna Capelouto (Treasurer), Mark Woolsey (At-Large Member)

### **I. Approve February 2026 Agenda**

- A. Vice President Williams shared the agenda prior to the meeting. President Ridderbusch asked if members had any changes. No changes were brought up, she asked if the Board would like to approve the agenda.
- B. Vice President Williams moved to approve, seconded by At-Large Member Leff. President Ridderbusch asked for a vote to approve the agenda. The motion passed.

### **II. Approve January 2026 minutes**

- A. President Ridderbusch asked if members had any changes to the January 2026 minutes. No changes were brought up.
- B. Immediate Past President Downey moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Vice President Williams. President Ridderbusch asked for a vote to approve the minutes. The motion passed.

### **III. Treasury Report**

- A. The starting balance on January 1st was \$7,063.14 plus \$40 in PayPal. The starting balance on February 1st was \$11,984.41 plus \$40 in PayPal.
- B. Expenses totaling \$78.68 included the Mailchimp fee of \$26.50; the Zoom fee of \$16.99; \$13 for Wordpress; \$22.19 for GoDaddy. Income totaling \$5,000 included \$5,000 from the SPJ Foundation Media Literacy Grant. The full report is available upon request.
- C. President Ridderbusch asked if members had any changes to the treasury report. No changes were brought up. At-Large Member Rice moved to approve, seconded by At-Large Member Leff. President Ridderbusch called for a vote. The motion passed.

- D. A financial audit was held on January 14th with SPJ Members Constance Heery and Marsha Walton. There were no discrepancies found. SPJ Georgia ended the year with \$7,103.14 in cash assets, which is \$1,156.36 more than our projected 2025 budget. President Ridderbusch asked if members had any questions about the audit. No changes were brought up. Vice President Williams moved to approve, seconded by At-Large Member Leff. President Ridderbusch called for a vote. The motion passed.
- C. The review of the proposed 2026 budget will be moved to the March 2026 Board meeting.

#### **IV. New Business**

##### **A. Gift Card for At-Large Member Woolsey**

President Ridderbusch made the board aware that At-Large Member Woolsey was in a car accident recently and proposed sending him a gift. President Ridderbusch asked for a motion to approve purchasing a \$100 DoorDash gift card. At-Large Member Leff motioned, seconded by Vice President Williams. President Ridderbusch called for a vote. The motion passed.

##### **B. Update on Media Literacy Campaign**

President Ridderbusch and Treasurer Capelouto are drafting a curriculum for the campaign, and the finished draft will be sent to the Board for review. The campaign will prospectively be launched mid-to-late April, and it will probably start in Columbus, Georgia. Sharon Dunton, the founding president of SPJ Georgia, lives in Columbus and will connect the committee with contacts. President Ridderbusch and Vice President Williams introduced the logo design candidates. The selection of the designer will be via email vote.

##### **C. Elections for Board Student Representative**

Elections for a student representative will occur in March. Constance Heery will assist Vice President Williams for the elections. SurveyMonkey will likely be used for the application form.

#### **V. Old Business**

- A. **Recap: Freelance Pitch Webinar:** Vice President Williams shared that 64 people registered for the webinar: 17% were SPJ Georgia members, and 30% were members of other SPJ chapters. 44 people attended the webinar, which makes the Freelance Pitch Panel SPJ Georgia's record-breaking event.
- B. **Update: Savannah Media Mixer:** Vice President Williams shared that there will be a media mixer in Savannah on February 19th. SPJ Georgia is hoping to make more connections outside of Atlanta. \$150 was donated for the event. Vice President Williams asked for a motion to approve \$100 for the Savannah Media Mixer. Immediate Past President Downey moved to approve, seconded by At-Large Member Rice. President Ridderbusch asked for a vote. The motion passed.
- C. **Update: Fifa World Cup Online Guide for Journalists:** SPJ Georgia will create

a resource guide template to send out to every SPJ chapter in a World Cup host city. The Houston, Miami, Boston, and New York/New Jersey chapters have already joined the initiative.

- D. **Update: 2026 SPJ Georgia High School Scholarship:** At-Large Member Rice stated that the scholarship was included in the Georgia Journalism Education Association newsletter. The deadline is April 1st, and an evaluation of efforts will be made in March.

## VI. Committee Reports

- A. Membership: At-Large Member Woolsey is now the chair of the membership committee.
- B. Freelance: There is no freelance committee at this time.
- C. Advocacy: Advocacy Chair Grindle will be stepping down at the end of the month. A new Advocacy Chair is needed.
- D. Student Affairs: At-Large Member Grady is organizing an SPJ GA introductory and networking event for journalism and communication students at Oglethorpe University. SPJ Georgia has connected with the Kennesaw State University SPJ student chapter for future collaboration.

## VII. Events

- A. **Two-part safety and security training for journalists:** President Ridderbusch is organizing a two-part workshop on safety and security for journalists in the spring. The first part, digital security, will take place via Zoom on March 12th in partnership with the Freedom of the Press Foundation. It will only be open to SPJ members.
- B. **Webinar on Substack newsletters for Journalists:** Member Patty Rasmussen has contacted several journalists active on Substack who could potentially serve as panelists. The goal for the panel is to inform journalists about the benefits of starting a Substack newsletter, or a similar outlet.
- C. **Mixer/informational event in Augusta:** Member Jennifer McKee is in contact with the student chapter at Augusta University for several events. One potential event idea is an informational event regarding covering protests.
- D. **Event planning around ACES and NABJ:** ACES will host the National Editors' Conference in April, and NABJ will host their Annual Conference in August. Both events will take place in Atlanta. Immediate Past President Downey is in contact with the current NABJ president.

President Ridderbusch asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Immediate Past President Downey moved to adjourn, seconded by At-Large Member Rice. President Ridderbusch brought forth a vote. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Meeting minutes recorded by Rachel Spooner, secretary.