

SPJ Board Meeting Minutes

Date: July 11, 2026

Time: 11:01 a.m.

Location: via Zoom

Present: Katja Ridderbusch (President), Genelle Williams (Vice President), Susanna Capelouto (Treasurer), Rachel Spooner (Secretary), Sabriya Rice (At-Large Member), Benjamin Grady (At-Large Member), Mark Woolsey (At-Large Member), Lee Peters (Student Representative)

Also Present: Patty Rasmussen, Jennifer McKee, Kim Speece

Absent: Laura Downey (Immediate Past President), Mitch Leff (At-Large Member)

I. Approve July 2026 Agenda

- A. Vice President Williams shared the agenda prior to the meeting. President Ridderbusch asked if members had any changes. President Ridderbusch added the review of the Annual Report to the agenda, she asked if the Board would like to approve the agenda.
- B. Treasurer Capelouto moved to approve. Vice President Williams seconded. President Ridderbusch asked for a vote to approve the agenda. The motion passed.

II. Approve June 2026 minutes

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

III. Treasury Report

- A. The starting balance on June 1st was \$10,939.76 plus \$200 in PayPal. The starting balance on July 1st was \$10,192.27 plus \$200 in PayPal.
- B. Expenses totaling \$743.49 included the Mailchimp fee of \$26.50; the Zoom fee of \$16.99; \$100 for 4 \$25 gift cards for panelists, and \$600 for Jennifer McKee and Joshua Wilson to attend SPJ Leadership Institute July 17-19 in Indianapolis. There was no income. 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. Secretary Spooner moved to approve, seconded by Vice President Williams. President Ridderbusch called for a vote. The motion passed.

IV. New Business

A. Board Leadership elections

Elections for Board leadership are underway. Treasurer Capelouto and Patty Rasmussen run as co-presidents, Joshua Wilson runs as vice president, and Jennifer McKee runs for At-Large Member. Announcements will be made July 15. The new Board will take office on August 3. Only 28% of SPJ Georgia members have voted as of July 11.

B. Appointment of Kim Speece as At-Large Member

President Ridderbusch announced that At-Large Member Leff has stepped down from the Board to be replaced by Kim Speece, a longtime SPJ member. President Ridderbusch asked for a motion to appoint Kim Speece to the Board. Treasurer Capelouto moved to approve, seconded by Vice President Williams. President Ridderbusch called for a vote. The motion passed.

C. Annual Report overview

President Ridderbusch is finalizing the SPJ Georgia Annual Report for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Treasurer Capelouto assisted with the financial portion, and Jennifer McKee did the last of three required audits. During that time frame, SPJ Georgia hosted 22 events, raised membership from 37 to 50, an increase of 35 %, and secured the most funds in the chapter's history.

V. Old Business

A. Update: Sip & Share fundraiser on August 1 in Atlanta

Vice President Williams shared that the event will be hosted at Ohio River South. Atlanta Magazine Editor-In-Chief Allison Entrekin will emcee. The Board has secured over 20 raffle prizes for the event. 10 tickets have been sold as of July 11 with a goal of 40 attendees. Each admission ticket includes one raffle ticket, and additional raffle tickets will be sold. At-Large Member Grady will display photography and take photos of the event. Per SPJ Georgia Code of Conduct, each Board member has the financial responsibility for two fundraiser tickets per year. Two bartender volunteers are needed. President Ridderbusch suggested adding the dress code to the promotion efforts.

A. SPJ Georgia High School Scholarship: next steps

At-Large Member Rice shared that the quality of last year's submissions were not satisfactory, and no winners were selected. She mentioned hosting an informational webinar for prospective applicants and requiring a letter of recommendation with the application. Treasurer Capelouto and Student Representative Peters mentioned that the submission process is too involved for the amount offered in the scholarship. President Ridderbusch and At-Large Member Rice reminded the Board of the requirements and mentioned that the submissions last year failed to include basic information. Raising the scholarship fund to \$1000 did not find initial consensus among Board members. At-Large Member Speece suggested adding an opportunity for winners to shadow a Georgia

journalist as an incentive to apply.

B. Update: Next steps for “Georgia Knows Media” media literacy campaign

The Atlanta Press Club has invited SPJ Georgia to train some of their members in the Georgia Knows Media train-the-trainer session. The two sessions will be online and take place June 29th and June 30th. The campaign will next travel to Macon, Augusta, Savannah, and Albany. There will be a free online webinar to introduce the campaign to SPJ members on July 30th.

VI. Committee Reports

- A. Membership: There was no Membership update.
- B. Freelance: Patty Rasmussen shared that the previous Freelance Friday on June 26 was a success. Next Freelance Friday is likely to happen in September.
- C. Advocacy: A new Advocacy Chair is needed.
- D. Student Affairs: There are no Student Affairs updates at this time.

VII. Events

A. Virtual workshop on mental health and resiliency for journalists with Next 18

President Ridderbusch shared that Matt O’Donell of Next 18 is willing to do a free virtual webinar about mental health and trauma in September or October. The webinar will likely be organized in collaboration with the SPJ National Programming Committee.

C. Tybee Beach Cleanup community service event in late summer/early fall

Vice President Williams hopes to have SPJ Georgia partner with Tybee Clean Beach for a beach cleanup on Saturday, September 19 at 10 a.m.

President Ridderbusch asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Treasurer Capelouto moved to adjourn, seconded by Vice President Williams. President Ridderbusch brought forth a vote. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 11:53 p.m.

Meeting minutes recorded by Rachel Spooner, secretary.