



To: SLA Board of Directors
From: Anne N. Barker, San Francisco Bay Region Chapter President
Date: June 10, 2013
Re: Board Transparency Initiative

RECOMMENDATION: In response to last year's challenging discussions around unit incentives, and in general support of increased clarity and transparency for SLA Board procedures, the San Francisco Bay Region Chapter respectfully submits the following Motion:

- 1) Detailed minutes:
The minutes of SLA Board meetings to include brief summaries of all substantive discussions at the session.
- 2) Broader distribution of minutes:
Minutes of SLA Board meetings to be distributed via the Leadership List at the same time they are posted to the SLA website.
- 3) Mandatory review period before Unit Cabinet action:
Board proposals that will be presented to the Chapter or Division Cabinets for action must be written up and distributed to the Leadership List at least one month before the Cabinet votes, whether that is in-person at the semi-annual Cabinet meetings or by electronic voting methods.
- 4) Should Board discussions related to a Chapter or Division Cabinet Motion not lead to Board action or a proposal by one month prior to the Annual Conference or Leadership Summit, notification will be distributed to the Leadership List, along with a summary of Board discussions and concerns thus far, so that unit leadership will be able to discuss and/or amend the original Motion at the Cabinet meetings.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: While the current Board is making a good faith effort to increase transparency, including the introduction of Board meeting summaries posted to the Leadership List, these efforts may change or fall out of favor on a year-to-year basis as the President and composition of the Board changes. Because Association leadership changes every year, codifying some common sense methods to enhance clarity, transparency, and the retention of institutional knowledge, will ensure consistency of access to Board information even as Board members change.

In the relatively recent past, Board meetings were conducted semi-annually, at the Leadership Summit and at the Annual Conference. The scheduled Open Board Meetings allowed unit leaders and rank-and-file members to observe Board business, listen to updates and discussions, and bring issues of concern before the Board. Advances in communications technology has allowed the Board to meet much more frequently, with telephone conference calls scheduled every month except for the months that include in-person meetings at the Leadership Summit and Annual Conference; while this has created a wonderful opportunity for the Board to act on Association business more quickly and with increased agility, it has had an inverse effect on the opportunity for unit leaders and members to attend a comparable percentage of Open Board Meetings.

Further, scheduling conflicts have relegated the Open Board Meeting to a conference time slot that dissuades members from attending. As member travel budgets have tightened, conference planners have made efforts to shorten the length of the conference with the intent of keeping members' hotel costs down. While this is admirable, marketing the conference to members as being a shorter duration that could allow one to travel on Saturday night or Sunday morning, then scheduling the Open Board Meeting for 9:00 am Saturday morning, creates a conflict with promoting member engagement with the Association.

In addition, maintaining a strict minute-keeping practice that is intended solely to record decisions made, not discussions that occurred, further restricts the ability of the membership to fully understand issues before the Board and proposals being brought to the Chapter and Division Cabinets. By extension, the lack of descriptive Board meeting minutes or other communication with unit leaders between semi-annual Cabinet meetings can make the business of and decision-making process at the Cabinet meetings a confusing affair for new unit leaders, impairing their ability to participate in discussions or to cast meaningful votes on proposals.

Finally, much as advances in communications technology have enhanced the ability of the Board to conduct Association business throughout the year, this technology enables the Chapter and Division Cabinets the same flexibility. In the past, it may have been necessary for Board actions and proposals to come before the Cabinets for a quick conference-based turnaround as these semi-annual in-person meetings were the only avenue for conducting Association business. Today, discussions and votes can be and have been conducted electronically via the Leadership List and the SurveyMonkey platform.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT: SLA members who are passionate about the Association want to maintain a high level of understanding about how the Association operates and the actions that are being taken on their behalf. Richer, more detailed Board meeting minutes would help keep interested and invested members informed and engaged in the Association. It would also assist with the long-term retention of institutional knowledge. As the make-up of the Board changes on an annual basis, the minutes of past meetings should be informative for

current Board members to conduct the business of the Association as they create a reference for understanding past decisions.

A better understanding of the roles, types of discussions, and decisions made by the Board would help unit leaders become more informed about how Association-level leadership positions work, assisting with the recruitment of current unit leaders into Association-level leadership roles in the future.

Further, provision of Board meeting minutes to the Leadership List would be an easily-enacted addition to communicate with unit leaders, keeping them in touch with Association leadership and allowing them to better act as a conduit for information to the members of their units.

Finally, allowing adequate time for discussion and consideration of Board proposals furthers the effort of maintaining engaged unit-level leaders. New leaders attending Chapter and Division Cabinet meetings for the first time may not fully understand the background of a proposal that is presented via a brief oral statement before a vote is requested. Providing an appropriate level of background information in writing, with enough time for unit leaders to consider the proposal at issue, will both increase new leaders' understanding of Association business and practices, and create more considered and thoughtful voting on the part of all unit leaders.

FINANCIAL IMPACT STATEMENT: There is no anticipated financial impact of this Motion.

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