

**American Association For Public Opinion Research
Executive Council Meeting
January 14-15, 2010
Minutes**

ROLL CALL/CALL TO ORDER.

Peter Miller	President	Present
Frank Newport	Vice President	Present
Richard Kulka	Past President	Present
John Boyle	Secretary-Treasurer	Present
Barbara O'Hare	Associate Secretary-Treasurer	Present
Stephen Blumberg	Standards Chair	Present
Reg Baker	Associate Standards Chair	Present
Michael Link	Conference Chair	Present via phone on 1/15 only
Rob Santos	Associate Conference Chair	Present
Nancy Whelchel	Membership & Chapter Relations Chair	Present
Kelly Foster	Associate Membership & Chapter Relations Chair	Present
Michael Mokrzycki	Communications Chair	Present
Jon Cohen	Associate Communications Chair	Present
Paul Lavrakas	Councilor-at-Large	Present
Roger Tourangeau	Councilor-at-Large	Present
John Waxman	Interim Executive Director	Present
Barbara Gunderson	Staff	Present

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. EST by Peter Miller.

Minutes of the December 11, 2009 Executive Council teleconference were reviewed. Paul Lavrakas moved, seconded by Roger Tourangeau, that the revised minutes be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

Treasurers Report and Budget Review

John Boyle informed the Council that a Treasurer's report for November was not available as he had not received the monthly financial report. John Waxman led a discussion on the fourth draft of the budget. The first draft budget projected a deficit of \$130,000. In response, cuts were made to selected conference expenses, in consultation with Michael Link, conference chair. The most significant changes since the first draft include:

- Conference food and beverage [f&b] expenses were reduced by approximately \$38k. These reductions applied exclusively to breakfasts and coffee breaks. The hotel contract requires a \$250k minimum f&b expenditure.
- Eliminated roughly \$20k in variable conference expenses that AAPOR would have incurred to fully fund underwriting items [such as table wine underwriting opportunity of \$5,000 where the full cost to AAPOR would be \$13,000]. Therefore, AAPOR would have lost \$8k had a sponsor come forward to underwrite the wine. As a result, wine at the banquet, as well as banquet table center pieces and water bottles are no longer available to sponsors. None of these items had

currently been claimed by a potential sponsor. The sponsorship committee will reassess underwriting opportunities to more closely reflect the actual cost of each item.

- Strategic Planning expenses were decreased from \$25k, to \$15k.
- The number of in-person Council meetings was reduced from 5 to 3 reducing our leadership expense budget by roughly \$22k.
- \$17,500 was added in POQ revenue to offset budgeted expenses- -this corrected an oversight in the first draft.
- In light of the fact that the budget includes expenditures to conduct a membership campaign in 2010, a small return on that investment was anticipated so we've projected 5% membership growth [generating approximately \$12k in new dues revenue] in 2010. For budgeting purposes, the 5% increase has been applied to all dues categories. The POQ expense budget reflects the additional Journal subscriptions AAPOR will pay for as our membership numbers grow.
- A projected 10% growth in conference support from sponsors, underwriters, exhibitors and advertisers adding \$10k in new revenue. This increased the goal of sponsorship to \$110,000.

The Council proceeded to review individual line items with the following comments and decisions:

- Revenue of \$15,000 expected from the American Statistical Association from the 2008 Multicultural conference was added. Roger Tourangeau will follow up with ASA to confirm.
- There will be a new expense of \$10,000 to fund the Hard-to-Reach Populations conference to be held in 2012 but it will not affect 2010 budget.
- Expense of \$3500 was added for Survey Practice.
- An additional \$5000 for a likely fourth face-to-face Executive Council meeting in 2010 was added. Any future Standards hearings will be considered extraordinary expenses.
- COPAFS and COSSA dues expenses will remain in the budget. These organizations provide important support to the survey industry and thus, indirectly, to the AAPOR membership. Further, working with these organizations may be important in promoting the AAPOR transparency initiative.
- The Code of Ethics will be an online publication (\$1000 in design expenses will be incurred), saving \$4000 in expense for printing the booklet. The Standards Definition booklet will be online only, and no cost added to the budget. Council may also consider having the Blue Book in electronic format in the future as well.
- Expenses in the budget for Membership/Chapter Relations, Communications and other related outreach line items, which are considered to be marketing expenses, will be reviewed by a subgroup to be appointed by Peter Miller. These dollars will be re-assigned to a new Marketing section of the budget.
- A \$9,000 discretionary amount will remain in the budget for Web site re-design, but may be eliminated if funding is tight. Some Council members commented that this re-design was an important consideration in changing management firms and should not be delayed.
- \$500 expense for the digitizing of audio and video archives was added.
- \$2,000 is allocated to the AAPOR historical display for the Annual Conference in Chicago.
- In support of the transparency initiative, Peter plans to implement an archive at Roper for survey organizations' documentation of their survey practices. Cost of this archive is expected to be approximately \$25,000. Peter would like to fund this through an endowment effort. No budget line was added at this time.
- No expenses were added for the Education Committee, as a result of conversation with Melissa Hermann the following day, Friday, Jan 15.
- The Conference Operations Committee will be funded for the 2010 conference, with the exception of the committee dinner. The committee has been working with Sherwood in planning social activities for the conference. The Council discussion supported phasing out this committee, due to the extensive conference support being provided by Sherwood.

- The Council decided not to print the conference preliminary program, resulting in a \$6,500 reduction in expense. The program will be available online.
- Members of the Council voiced concern about cutting of the conference food and beverage expenses that might result in a less satisfying experience for the attendees. They felt that balancing of the budget should not be the overriding concern, if it means not providing the amenities attendees have had in the past. John Waxman assured the Council of the quality of the arrangements. He noted Sherwood has built the conference budget to reflect actual expenses, such as 75% attendance levels at meals.

John Waxman provided additional perspective on the budget, based on Sherwood's experience with other associations. He noted that auditors will expect associations to be operating under a balanced budget, unless there has been commitment by the organization to operate under a deficit budget in anticipation of future revenue (for example, a major marketing campaign that will increase membership and revenue). He recommended the organization set some goals for its reserves. It is generally advised to have 6 months of operating expenses in the bank and 8-9 months is preferable in order to continue running the organization under emergency circumstances. (A reserve policy had been reviewed by Council at a previous meeting in 2009.) He also noted that the \$275,000 budgeted for Sherwood management in 2010 is below the average cost for other associations.

After the above revisions to the budget were incorporated, the 2010 budget has a \$5,500 surplus. Paul Lavrakas moved that the budget be accepted. Roger Tourangeau seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Slating of Election Ballot

The Council reviewed the candidates provided by the nominations committee for slating in the 2010 election. The committee was comprised of Dick Kulka, Gary Langer, Courtney Kennedy, Linda Dimitropoulos, Don Dillman, and Deborah Jay. For each elected office, the lists of candidates suggested by the nominations committee were reviewed and finalized by the Executive Council. Council members ranked the candidates individually through confidential ballot, providing a final list of the candidates in preferential order. Dick Kulka will contact nominees for each office in the order in which they are ranked to ascertain their interest in running for Council. The top two candidates who accept the nomination in each office will be slated in the election. The process of ranking the candidates was completed and Dick Kulka will begin contacting the candidates in the coming weeks.

Standards, Executive Session

The Council met in Executive Session to review a potential Standards case. This review resulted in the Council accepting the recommendation of the Standards chair to take no official action on the complaint.

The Council meeting was recessed at 5:30 p.m. EST.

Friday, January 15, 2010

The Council meeting resumed at 8:34 a.m. EST. Called to order by Peter Miller.

Standards Committee Report

Stephen Blumberg reported on the results of the Standards Review Committee, chaired by Mary Losch, which completed its review of the Standards Code in late October. The Standards Review Committee provided its recommended modifications of the code in a memo dated October 28. The full Standards Committee reviewed and responded to these recommendations in a memo to the Executive Council, dated

December 10. There are a few issues concerning the recommended modifications which the Council was asked to review and provide its feedback.

In particular, Stephen asked for Council feedback on these issues.

The subcommittee recommends modifying the code in section I.B. to include the following statement:

If the research is based on non-probability samples we shall not report sampling error, nor claim or imply representativeness of a broader population with any known statistical validity or reliability.

The full Standards Committee felt it was inappropriate to include a specific statement regarding sampling error when other sources of error are not specifically addressed in the document. The motivation from the subcommittee is that this particular error is commonly made in public media, is egregious and misleading to readers without knowledge of statistics, and as such, should be directly addressed in the Code. Reg Baker noted that the Code does include statements addressing the need to disclose whether a sample is a probability or nonprobability sample and multiple statements about full disclosure of data gathering and statistical procedures. The Council discussed this issue, and noted that a Best Practices document is likely the better place for this level of specificity. Tom Smith from the subcommittee participated by phone in a portion of the discussion, providing clarification of the subcommittee's reasoning.

The Council agreed that the overriding principle is that a survey organization must be completely open about the procedures they used to support their conclusions. They must report what they did in the spirit of full disclosure. The Council consensus was that the particular addition recommended by the subcommittee is too specific and should be revised to exclude a specific reference to sampling error. The Council also recommends including such statements in the Best Practices document. Stephen noted that the committee will be reviewing this document after completing their review of the Standards Code.

Other recommended Code revisions brought to the Council for comment included the addition of a statement about the unacceptability of plagiarism in reporting findings and conclusions, specification of a timetable as to when disclosure of methodology must be completed, and discussion of the potential impact of the Code requirements on client contracts requiring nondisclosure. The Council commented on the proposed changes to the Code. The Executive Council discussed the need for some guidance about the timing of disclosure, but no timetable was agreed upon. Paul Lavrakas raised an issue regarding the Standards Code statement in section II.D.1 regarding the treatment of respondents. Paul proposes stronger language that it is incumbent upon the survey organization to ascertain whether any harm has occurred to the respondents and, if so, there is an ethical imperative to resolve and correct the damage.

The Council recommended that based on their guidance, the Standards Committee work with the Code Review Committee to resolve the issues discussed and present the revised Code for Executive Council approval during the February teleconference. The revised Code will then be made available for full membership comment from February to March, assuming Executive Council approval, at which time it will be up for final vote, electronically, by AAPOR members. Twenty five percent of members must vote to achieve final approval.

Conference Committee Report

Michael Link, conference chair, reported that everything is moving along smoothly in preparation for the conference. Approximately 600 abstracts were submitted, about 50 fewer than last year's conference. Four hundred abstracts were accepted as papers, with an additional 130 as posters. Poster session participants were increased to maximize attendance. Sponsorship and underwriting commitments are \$75,000 to date, and follow up with additional companies is in progress. Michael and Peter are proposing a plenary session on Integrity in Polls and Surveys with a panel of individuals who represent the use of survey results and their communication from differing perspectives, in a moderated Town Hall style.

Peter suggested, and the Council discussed, opportunities to promote the conference to new audiences who might attend and/or exhibit at the conference, especially given the Chicago location. The conference team will pursue these ideas including working closely with MAPOR.

Barbara O'Hare informed the Council that Blanche Sudman would like to participate in the conference on this tenth anniversary of Seymour Sudman's death. Diane O'Rourke has suggested having Blanche Sudman participate in the presentation of the Sudman Award and would like the Council to consider compensating the fees for Blanche Sudman to attend the conference. The Council agreed that this is very worthwhile. Barbara will follow up with Diane O'Rourke and Michael Link.

The Council recommended that members who had died in the previous year be acknowledged in the final program, but not as part of the banquet program.

Rob Santos reported that 13 organizations have submitted proposals to conduct the post-conference survey of attendees. The proposals are currently under review. In addition, five student papers have been submitted for consideration for the Sudman award.

Membership/Chapter Relations Committee Report

Nancy Whelchel reported on Membership/Chapter Relations activities. She noted that she and Kelly Foster are working with Sherwood to resolve programming issues in reporting data from the membership database. Membership renewal is approximately 56% to date, compared to 46% a year ago. During the fourth quarter 2009, 108 first-time members joined. The Council discussed the need for the organization to put more attention to following up with members who may want to participate in committees and mentorships.

Communications Committee Report

Mike Mokrzycki reported on the activity of the Communications Committee. He will be sending out a request to Council for articles for the next newsletter. Mike asked for Council perception of the value of *Survey Practice*. Council reaction was positive, with general consensus that the publication is growing stronger in value of content. The Council would like to see more interaction and response to posted articles. A question was raised as to whether it should be a members-only publication. Council agreed *Survey Practice* should remain open to the public. Mike will follow up with the advisory committee to convey the Council discussion.

Mike reported AAPOR Linked-In has 435 participants, Facebook, 438, and Twitter, over 200. The Council discussed how to possibly better integrate the electronic communications and draw more member participation. The use of the AAPOR website to provide job bank service continues to be in discussion and Sherwood will work with Mike and Jon Cohen to have the site up and running prior to the Conference. Mike, Jon, and Sherwood are also considering ways to continue communications in support of the transparency initiative.

Education Committee Report

Melissa Herman joined the meeting by phone and reported on the progress of the Education Committee. There are six short courses confirmed for the May conference. The cell phone short course will be held on Sunday and will be a good test of the viability of offering courses on Sunday, the last day of the conference. In addition to conference activity, the committee is working with the American Statistical Association (ASA) to provide access to ASA webinars for AAPOR members at the same cost as ASA members. The committee is collaborating with ASA on course topics and instructors. The committee would like to develop independent programming for AAPOR in the future.

The Education Committee is discussing whether short courses should be taped and offered online. Negatives to this proposal are the offering of the same courses to local chapters to generate revenue and the absence of opportunity to interact with participants in a taped class. The committee is also discussing whether a certification program should be established, related to the short courses. General consensus from the Council was that they do not encourage a certification program, but we should determine what courses are of interest and how to grow the course offerings for revenue generation.

John Waxman will follow up with Melissa to determine if any Education Committee expenditures are expected in 2010. He will schedule a teleconference with Melissa, the Sherwood Education Director and other Sherwood clients who currently offer educational programming. If projects are brought forth that would be revenue producing, the Council would reconsider the budget in this area.

New Business

Paul Lavrakas recommended the Council consider splitting the Secretary-Treasurer position into two positions. Dick Kulka noted that this would require a change in the current By-Laws. John Boyle reported that no monthly financials have been provided from Sherwood since the September report. Sherwood will forward these reports immediately. John Waxman reported that Sherwood has been interviewing for an AAPOR account executive and will have Peter and others designated by Peter, interview the finalists before making an offer. It was recommended that site selection for the 2013 Annual Conference should begin in the near future.

Next Meeting

The next Executive Council meeting will be February 19 at 11:00 a.m. CST via teleconference. There is likely to be a March face-to-face meeting to discuss the recommendations of the Strategic Planning committee.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m. EST.