

**Society for Technical Communication**

**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**

**Hyatt House, Falls Church, VA Face-to-Face**

**Fri 4 and Sat 5 Nov**

# Attendees

Board

* Adriane Hunt, President
* Alyssa Fox, Vice President
* Kirsty Taylor, Secretary
* Jane Wilson, Treasurer
* Bernard Aschwanden, Immediate Past President
* Craig Baehr, Director
* Alisa Bonsignore, Director
* Liz Herman, Director
* Cindy Pao, Director

Office

* Liz Pohland, Interim CEO
* Stacey O’Donnell, Interim COO

# Consent Agenda Items

* Approval of Sept 19 meeting minutes and summary.
* Approval of Oct 19 meeting minutes and summary.
* Approval of CEO Search Committee members:
  + Andrea Ames
  + Craig Baehr
  + Alan Houser
  + Lisa Meloncon
* Approve the updated by-laws for the Orlando Central Florida chapter.

# Agenda Items

# Friday, 4 November

* 8:30 - Call to order and approval of agenda (10 minutes)
* 8:40 - Consent agenda items (5 minutes)
* 8:45 - President’s report – Adriane Hunt (15 minutes)
* 9:00 - Interim CEO/COO report – Liz Pohland and Stacey O’Donnell (30 minutes)
* 9:30 - Treasurer’s report – Jane Wilson (15 minutes)
* 9:45 - CEO Search Committee Update & CEO Position Description– Alyssa Fox (60 minutes)
* 10:45 - BREAK (15 minutes)
* 11:00 - Budget - Liz Pohland and Stacey O’Donnell (90 minutes)
* 12:30 - Lunch with staff (60 minutes)
* 1:30pm - Strategy: Who Do We Want To Be? (including card sort exercise) (90 minutes)
* 3:00 - Summit update – Todd DeLuca (15 minutes)
* 3:15 - Summit Keynote - Liz Pohland (15 minutes)
* 3:30 – BREAK (15 minutes)
* 3:45 – Election and Nominating Committee processes – Bernard Aschwanden (90 minutes)
* 5:15 – Conclude for the day.
* 6:00 Dinner at Four Sisters

# Saturday, 5 November

* 8:30 – Call to order.
* 8:35 - Election slate – Bernard Aschwanden (30 minutes)
* 9:05 - Strategy: Start, Stop, Continue (135 minutes - incl. 15 min break where we can)
* 11:20 – Communities discussion – continuing on from August board meeting discussion on SIGs (60 minutes)
* 12:20 Lunch (45 minutes)
* 1:05 – Community Dissolution procedure – Cindy Pao (15 minutes)
* 1:20 - Strategy: Next Steps and Action Items, Owners, Due Dates (until end of meeting - may finish earlier than indicated)
* 5:30 – Conclude.

# Friday 4 November

Ms Hunt called the meeting to order at 8:29am.

A quorum was established.

The agenda was approved.

The consent agenda was approved.

# President’s report

Ms Hunt shared some observations at the mid-term point, after speaking to a range of society members. The organisation’s new website is a great opportunity to grow the STC. Ms Hunt would like for the board and staff to focus on strategy and a Now, Next, Later approach, along with adopting a sprint mentality and elements of the agile process. A variety of ideas, including the society’s delivery of services, products and information to members through to orientation for new board members were mentioned. Adopting some of the elements of agile development could be a way for both the board and staff to increase responsiveness and communication, with members, with communities and with future members.

# Interim CEO and COO Report

The website update should be finalised by the end of the year. Content is being reviewed during the migration. The new career centre is available, as is the membership directory. Board and staff pages were put up in the past week. Staff have been having weekly meetings to review the web pages and what is required.

Targets for end-of-year include SIG site migration, Summit website, and the Mentor board.

Updates on staff movements were given. An option to move to a smaller space within the current office building has come up; this is being reviewed with the leasing agent. Other options will be reviewed for current market rates.

Training courses for the certification program are continuing to be held. Currently, experts need to track their own CEUs. APMG and STC will be able to track CEUs soon. STC event CEUs will be automatic, non-STC events that are approved will be required to be entered.

There are now 90 registered CPTCs.

The former certification commission entity, the 501 c(6) is being dissolved, as it is no longer required with the current certification structure and classification of revenues. Mr Baehr and Ms Pohland are working on the Practitioner level within the certification framework.

Education income is very close to budget. The board discussed presenters, topics, session evaluation and feedback, and various formats for education content delivery

Ms O’Donnell is working on an advertising contract at the moment, and planning to hit 2016 budget. Areas for potential advertising include [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org), Intercom online, Technical Communication online, the print versions of both magazines, email blasts and the salary database. Sponsorship is not a part of advertising revenue.

So far this year, approximately six new companies have joined the CVP program, with an average of eight employees per company. The renewal rate by company is approximately 90%.

As of Monday 31 Oct, 809 members have re-joined for 2017. Year-on-year, that is behind by approximately 200 members.

Ms Erin Gallalee, the Membership manager, is responsible for tasks such as tracking member numbers, responding to member requests, marketing for members, responding to password requests. She is responsible for all categories of membership. The board discussed trying to keep in touch with the professors and leaders of the 300 or more technical communication programs that are offered in the US alone.

# Treasurer’s Report

Ms Wilson presented the finance results to end September 2016.

A variance to 2015 was proposed by the auditor, which will result in a change. Total current assets - $593,812 and total assets is $619,263. In liabilities and net assets, accrued expenses are a big difference to 2015. Total liabilities are $744,295, with total net assets of -$125,032.

On the revenue side, web seminars are getting close to budget. There is typically not a lot of change in revenue during this part of the year.

For expenses, personnel is performing better than budgeted, due to an budgeted, unfilled staff position that is not planned to be filled.

We are currently beating expenses. The operation change in net assets is off budget by around $100k.

*Move that the board accepts the financials for Sept as presented. The motion was seconded. The motion passed.*

Ms Wilson commented that Ms Elaine Gillam has been a huge help during community budget season. Mr Timothy Esposito has also been helping.

# CEO Search Committee Update

Ms Fox reported on the progress of the CEO search committee, and commented that she was excited about the experience and knowledge that the members have in both technical communication and hiring leaders. The committee members are:

* Alyssa Fox, Chair
* Andrea Ames
* Craig Baehr
* Alan Houser
* Lisa Meloncon

We will not be using a search firm to help us find a new CEO; social media and posting to appropriate Association website (such as ASAE) will be used instead.

The current intention is after reviewing applications, to have phone interviews with the top candidates, then one round of in-person interviews in the DC area. The committee will be required to travel only once, and this travel expense has been allowed for. Our lawyer will be involved in contract negotiation, and the board will be able to review the contract.

The board reviewed the current CEO job description, and whether the position title should be Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer. If was suggested that generally, Executive Director is used in not-for-profits, whereas Chief Executive Officer is used in for-profits. The STC by-laws refer to Executive Director; the board deemed that titles can be transitory, and we should not update the by-laws for this.

The board members contributed many comments to improve the job description, and focus it on the key areas that are critical to STC.

The meeting adjourned for a break at 10:35am.

The meeting resumed at 10:48am.

Ms Lida Khodabakhshi joined the meeting.

# Budget

Ms Pohland presented the proposed 2017 budget that had been prepared. The budget was organised by program area.

Conferences

A higher attendance than Anaheim or Phoenix has been assumed, which includes expecting single day registrants. Some costs (postage, staff travel) will be much less due to the location. Overall, the budget assumes a small revenue surplus.

Education

The same number of courses and webinars are planned to be held as in 2016.

Governance

This section includes outside services such as fees for election software and the parliamentarian. Board costs for two face-to-face meetings per year (one at the Summit) are under governance.

Marketing and PR

Personnel costs are up, due to time the staff are spending in this area. Nothing was spent on outside services in 2016; have budgeted for the same amount as 2016 budget in 2017.

Membership

Estimating that we will have 5400 members – hoping for more, but budgeting based on 2016. Advertising has been moved here in 2017, it was under communications and publications.

Community Relations

Revenue is the amount received from SIGs (chapters falls under membership).

Professional Development

Staff professional development costs. Costs for the salary database are included in this column.

Communications and Publications

This section includes advertising and subscriptions. There has been a higher interest in the journal under Dr Dragga’s editorship. Subscriptions include institutions that subscribe to the publications.

G and A

Expenses include outsourcing of the accounting position, and costs involved with the CEO search. Assuming slightly lower IT expenses due to 2016 one-time iMIS upgrade. Most IT expenses are fixed. Assuming much lower internet bill – the office is on a new plan that is half the prior cost. Assuming similar services for pay checks, bill payments. May be altered if the office moves to a smaller location.

Overall, the budget forecasts a modest surplus in 2017.

Ms Khodabakshi left the meeting.

The meeting adjourned for a break at 11:36am.

The meeting reconvened at 11:45.

# Election and Nominating Committee

Mr Aschwanden reported on the current status of the Nominating Committee.

The committee is finding it more difficult to find people willing to run for the board. With the current model, it is tough to find Vice President candidates, though that model guarantees two very strong candidates

The board discussed various ideas around the makeup of the election slate and positions, in general, and potential modifications that could be made.

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 12:26pm.

The meeting re-convened at 1:30pm.

# Strategy – Who do we want to be?

Ms Bonsignore led a card sorting exercise to inspire strategy discussions. The board narrowed down the cards to:

Who we’re not:

* Conservative
* Regional
* Traditional
* Expensive
* Eclectic
* Reactive

Who we want to be:

* Trusted
* High-quality
* Customer-oriented
* Relationship-oriented
* Proactive
* Progressive

Product/features

* Summit
* Education
  + Webinars
  + Online courses
* Certifications
* Communities
  + SIGs
  + Chapters
  + Member Directory
* Publications
  + Intercom
  + Technical Communication
  + Salary database
  + BOK
  + Blog
  + TC Today
* Affinity program
* Mentor board
* Career Centre
* Academic database
* Recognitions - Honours, awards and competitions
* Networking – through communities, Summit, email lists, etc.

Mr Todd DeLuca joined the meeting at 3:01pm.

# Summit Update

Mr DeLuca summarised the status of Summit preparation - overall, the status is green. 185 submissions were received for the Summit, which is comparable to last year. This year, submissions were restricted to two per person. The initial program has been laid out and selected; acceptance and decline letters will all be sent by end of day today.

Approximately 57 presentations have been selected, including some new types of presentations. The initial program will be available for early registration; a more detailed program will be available later, as rooms at the venue are organised. There will be fewer concurrent sessions compared to 2016 – 5-6 concurrent sessions rather than 7-8. This is due to space available at the venue, as well as ensuring all sessions are strong choices. The schedule is being adjusted; sessions will be 50 minutes with a 20 min break in-between, based on feedback and all rooms being close. Each day will start at 9am.

Two recommendations for keynote speaker have been submitted based on theme and budget.

Mr DeLuca left the meeting at 3:11pm.

# Summit 2017 Keynote Speaker

The board discussed matters relating to the Summit keynote speaker and how the conference should be closed.

*Move that the board accept Seth Mattison as the Opening Keynote speaker for the Summit 2017. The motion was seconded.*

*The motion passed.*

The board discussed the potential content and speakers who would be involved in a closing panel discussion. Ms Pohland and Ms O’Donnell said they would follow up with Mr DeLuca on these matters, and report back to the board by 30 November.

The board requested: a plan for who will be the invited speakers, what the closing panel will be, and how the budget for speakers would be spent.

The meeting adjourned for a break at 3:35pm.

The meeting resumed at 3:51pm.

# Nominating Committee discussion part 2

The board continued to discuss various matters around the makeup of an election slate, in general.

Mr Aschwanden explained the process that the Nominating Committee has used this year, which included splitting into teams, interviewing, recording, sharing recordings, and finalising the slate they they have proposed.

Ms Hunt requested that any potential candidates for upcoming election would leave the room.

Mr Baehr, Ms Wilson, and Ms Pao left the room at 4:12pm.

The remaining board members discussed assorted pros and cons of having one or multiple candidates on the slate for the particular roles (VP, Treasurer and Secretary).

In general, the board agreed that it would prefer to not have a candidate run unopposed for any of these particular roles.

Mr Baehr, Ms Pao and Ms Wilson re-joined the meeting at 4:28pm.

# Strategy Part II

The board used the card sorting exercise from earlier in the afternoon to help frame the discussion on our vision for STC.

Many ideas were discussed including enabling communities to form quickly, meet a potentially temporary need, and then disband when the need has been met. Communities with successful leadership models, and how they ensured that they have them were mentioned. The board considered whether certain structures within the society should be modified to encourage more modern community practices.

Should our message be “What can you do to make the profession better?”, rather than make the society better? And the society can help you make the profession better.

There are currently 42 chapters, 9 student chapters, and 10 SIGs.

There is no-one dedicated on staff to oversee the communities, the CAC has picked up a lot of that effort, but they are volunteers. One staff member is working part-time on community relations.

It is common for associations to struggle with assorted legacy structures that aren’t adapting to a modern world.

More communication to and with communities is needed.

The board considered the possibility of establishing a taskforce from the communities to look at the nature of communities and possible alternate or complementary models. This taskforce would need to have advocates to help promote the new ideas that they come up with.

SIGs and chapters seem to be facing different issues, which should be addressed separately.

Action item:

* Create a taskforce to look at community models – formed with members of two strong communities, two struggling communities, and one student community. Ms Pao to look at who could lead that taskforce.

The meeting adjourned at 5:12pm.

# Saturday, 5 November

The meeting commenced at 8:29am.

Ms Hunt asked the board to engage in an energetic day, focussed on creating strategic initiatives for STC.

# Election Slate

Mr Aschwanden reported on the Nominating Committee process of putting together the election slate, which included people self-nominating, and approaching individuals to consider applying for the board. Those individuals who were interested were interviewed by two members of the Nominating Committee. Mr Aschwanden was not involved in interviews or selecting the slate; the members of Nominating Committee did that without his direct involvement.

Both sets of Nominating Committee interview teams put together a suggested slate. If there were disagreements, the chair would ask questions about the pros and cons to help formulate a final slate.

Ms Hunt asked any current board members who were nominated for the slate to leave the room. Mr Baehr, Ms Pao and Ms Wilson left the meeting at 8:45am.

Mr Aschwanden presented the proposed slate to the board.

*Move that the board accept the preliminary slate as suggested by the Nominating Committee. The motion was seconded. The motion did not pass.*

Mr Baehr, Ms Pao and Ms Wilson re-joined the meeting at 9:00am.

# Strategy: Start, Stop, Continue

The board discussed strategy in terms of what we should start, stop, and continue.

**Summit**

A range of ideas were shared and discussed in relation to the Summit.

The meeting adjourned for a break at 10:20am.

The meeting re-convened at 10:30am.

Summit sessions need to be aligned with certification/CEUs.

Leadership day

The board discussed ideas for Leadership day to be focussed on particular outcomes for communities. Maybe split into tracks, such as newbies vs experienced, etc.

**Mentor Board**

The mentor board is being utilised, though it does seem to be under-utilised at the moment. A new one is being launched with Boxwood. This area needs a new launch – webinars, training to launch and expose to the membership. Maybe have something at leadership day about mentoring.

Continue for now, as we wait for additional data to be reported back to the board in 2017.

# Communities Discussion – SIGs and Chapters

Communities are more important to some members than others. The board discussed a variety of matters around how communities are formed, how some are successful and engaging, and others less so, how the need to opt in to communities has changed the membership levels.

The board discussed its concerns around succession planning in communities, filling positions in chapters, and whether the office holders can be simplified so that it is less overwhelming to fill those positions.

Our goals for a community taskforce are to find ways/ find models to achieve the following:

* Reduce complexity
* Train leaders
* Provide a customer-oriented, consistent base experience
* Give back to society in some way (taskforces, projects, etc.)

Ensure that the task force is not restrained by the current model. How would they rebuild the society’s communities from scratch without knowing what we did yesterday? Think about the customer that they need to be serving in 5 years.

**SIGs - continued**

The SIG outreach team have been getting in touch with SIG leaders. SIGs generate income for the society. It was commented that SIGs should try to align with the certification areas, and contribute to the BoK.

There is currently little data independently gathered on SIG activities, usefulness, and engagement. A question was asked around how we might be able to activate and disband SIGs more easily, as interest builds in a certain area.

The board recommends that the taskforce provides suggestions for measuring engagement.

A common challenge among many communities with the organisation is leadership, and that some leadership structures stay in place without handing over to new leadership more frequently.

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 12:26pm.

The meeting re-convened at 1:19pm.

# Community Dissolution Policy and Procedure

A policy and procedure was developed after the dissolution of a chapter this year.

The policy states that if a community has 60 or more members, there should be a waiting period of one year before dissolving. This number of members is seen as sufficient to be viable and healthy, and large enough to find new leadership. There are currently a small number of chapters larger than 60 members; most SIGs have at least 130 members.

Amongst other details, the dissolution procedure seeks to ensure that a sufficient percentage of members vote for the dissolution of the community to satisfy the board that the dissolution is the desire of the majority of the community.

# Strategy

SIGs should re-charter every two years; this should be a simple process, including documenting member numbers, activities that have been run in the part year, and so on. There are currently no SIG charters. A policy for this was established in July 2014.

Most SIGs operate on a calendar year; not all chapters operate on the same schedule. For example, student chapters follow their college/university schedule.

The CAC is to work on a BoK contribution procedure from the SIGs. The requirement to participate in BoK content creation is already in the SIG document.

The process for re-chartering the SIGs is: Catch up on SIGs without charters; due on 1 February. Communication should be sent form the board/President on behalf of the board, copying Ms Pohland, Ms Gilliam, and Ms Pao. Ms Pao is to send the contact list for SIGs to Ms Hunt.

**ISA Competitions**

The majority of the board agreed to cease holding an international competition from 2017-2018. Local chapter competitions should continue, without the winners moving on to an international competition. It was suggested that some competitions may be able to continue participating in the Summit, such as the Academic SIG student poster competition.

Would there be ways for members to gain the professional feedback that they receive through competitions in another way at the Summit? It was expressed that the feedback is the most valuable element of the competition.

**Honors and Awards**

The board considered that in the future the criteria for both Fellows and Associate Fellows Honors should more stringent than they currently are.

**Awards**

Aspects of the CAA and Pacesetter award were discussed.

**Education**

Academics need to be included as speakers. We need to ensure that a divide between academics and practitioners is not being perpetuated.

Various ideas including webinars, tagging of content, teasers, virtual conferences, different channels for education, speaker variety, and appealing titles, were discussed.

The Education Advisory Panel is reviewing course outlines, as well as providing titles to the staff.

It was also suggested that a Train the Trainer course could be run at Summit, to help those members and attendees who have great ideas be able to deliver more education to members.

**Certification**

In the next year, we plan to develop the Practitioner level, and in 2018, develop the Expert level.

A syllabus has been created and reviewed for the Practitioner level. An examination has been developed that is part exam, part artefact evaluation. There will be a combination of APMG and STC involvement in marking the overall exam. Content in the BoK will be tagged for the Practitioner level.

The possibility of using STC community and non-community events as CEUs was discussed. Concerns were raised over the unknown quality of some events that might be considered to be included for CEUs.

Certification reach beyond current STC members was discussed.

**Publications**

The variety of society publications were discussed. The Blog is one of our highest traffic sites, it contains society news, and also has teasers and links to other areas.

Our publications could be valuable to members who are not members of our communities.

Intercom costs money, but is the #1 benefit when members are surveyed. It was suggested that more tools/technology focus could be added on an ongoing basis.

The Tech Comm Today eNewsletter has the highest open rate of anything we mail out.

The Salary Database is sponsored. Many members ask for it. Only US salary data is available.

The Technical Communication journal is on a positive path. It costs the society money to publish the journal. Many universities have subscriptions. A journal provides credibility and trust to the association. As many institutions subscribe to the journal, it costs a lot less than it would otherwise.

**TCBoK**

The CAC is working with SIGs on content contribution. Content is being tagged in the BoK if it relates to the certification level.

The meeting adjourned at 4:25pm.

The meeting re-convened at 4:35pm.

The board decided that the name be for our six brand areas should be Brand Guidelines.

*Move that the Board accept the 2017 Budget as presented. The motion was seconded. The motion passed.*

The meeting adjourned at 4:55pm.