



SOCIETY OF AMERICAN TRAVEL WRITERS  
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## Meeting Minutes — SATW 2017 Spring Associates Council Meeting

**Monday, May 22, 2017**

**Riviera Palm Springs Hotel, Palm Springs, CA**

### **SATW Associates Council Officers and SATW Board Members Present**

- Deborah Wakefield, Associates Council Chair
- Molly Blaisdell, Associates Council Treasurer
- Marcus Hibdon, SATW Treasurer
- Minutes taken by Melody Foote, filling in for SATW Associates Council Secretary Meryl Pearlstein

### **MINUTES**

Associates Council Chair Deborah Wakefield called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m. She started the meeting by introducing the SATW Associates Council and SATW board members present.

#### **President-elect Candidates**

Deborah introduced the two candidates for SATW President-elect: Elizabeth Harryman and David Swanson. David and Elizabeth each addressed the Associates for 5 minutes, presenting their platforms. For more information on their respective platforms, click on the link below (Elizabeth and David's statements are on the same page; scroll down to see both).

President-elect Candidate Statements:

<https://www.satw.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageID=4005>

Both candidates took questions from the meeting attendees and encouraged Associates to reach out to them if they had additional questions.

#### **Associates Council Candidates**

The SATW Associates Council has two officer positions up for election: Associates Council Vice Chair and Associates Council Secretary. The candidates for those positions are:

Vice Chair—Gail MacIntyre, director of communications for SeaWorld & Aquatica San Antonio, is running unopposed.

Secretary—Ken Sloan, president and CEO of the Mountain Lakes (SC) Convention and Visitors Bureau, is running unopposed.

Voting for the SATW elections will be held between June 1 and 30, 2017. Deborah encouraged everyone to vote.

## Associates Council Treasurer's Report

Associates Council Treasurer Molly Blaisdell reported:

- the Council has (as of April 2017) \$39,294.60 in CDs.
- the current cash balance (as of April 2017) = \$6,767.02.
- total investments + cash = \$46,061.62
- the Council recently cashed out one CD because cash reserves are going down.
- the Associates Council has not received any dues revenue from headquarters in three years.

A question was asked regarding the Associate Council's annual operating expenses. Deborah answered that expenses are approximately \$8,000 per year, including the Council's annual \$7,500 sponsorship of the PRSA Travel and Tourism Conference. Deborah mentioned that this sponsorship gives SATW added visibility at the annual PRSA-SATW Travel and Tourism Conference, allows us to speak to the conference delegates on the benefits of SATW membership, and includes a reciprocal PRSA sponsorship of an Associate-focused professional development session at the annual SATW Society convention.

Another meeting attendee asked if the Associates Council was the only council that hadn't received dues revenue from headquarters. Deborah answered that, due to the Society's ongoing financial difficulties, no Councils or Chapters have received dues revenue for three years.

## Proposed Society Dues Increase

*(Note: Voting on the proposed dues increase discussed below closed after this Associates Council meeting took place. As recently reported by SATW President Catharine Hamm, the dues increase did not pass.)*

SATW Treasurer Marcus Hibdon presented background information on the proposed dues increase. All members recently received a ballot regarding the proposed increase of \$150 a year for Associates. According to Marcus:

- SATW has \$620,000 in assets now, which is not enough money.
- Since 2011, the Society has lost \$600,000 on conventions.
- Our reserves aren't going to last. For the next fiscal year, SATW has a projected \$60,000 deficit.
- The proposed dues increase—if passed—would raise \$50,000, which gets the Society close to a break-even point.
- If the proposed increase passes, it won't hit SATW budget until 2018. If it doesn't pass, the Society will have to come up with another plan.

A meeting attendee asked if canceling Chapter and Council meetings would positively affect SATW's finances. Marcus answered that canceling meetings would *not* save the Society any money, as Councils and Chapters have their own budgets/finances that are separate from the Society's finances. Councils and Chapters pay for their own meetings; funds for these events do not come out of the Society budget.

A meeting attendee asked about canceling the annual convention to save money. Deborah answered that the Society bylaws require that the Society hold an annual meeting.

A meeting attendee asked if the Chapters and Councils could make a donation to the Society. Marcus answered that he wasn't sure if one division of a nonprofit could make a donation to a second division of the same nonprofit. And, even if that were possible, Marcus explained that such a donation would only solve the problem in the short term. The Society needs to find a long-term solution to this financial problem.

Suggestions for enhancing income included:

- Increasing the number of Associate members
- Pool Associate influence to convince businesses used by large numbers of Associates (Meltwater, Cision, Simpleview, Salesforce, etc.) to become convention sponsors.

### **Annual Society Convention—Portland, Oregon**

Convention Chair Michelle Rodriguez gave a brief report on the upcoming convention. The dates for the convention are Oct. 29-Nov 3, 2017. Pricing will be announced soon.

### **New/Old Business**

The 2018 PRSA-SATW Travel and Tourism Conference will be held in New Orleans. The scheduled dates are June 3-6, 2018.

Deborah asked for any additional old or new business. None was presented.

### **Adjournment**

Marcus Hibdon made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Wendy Haase seconded the motion. Deborah called for the vote, and the motion was passed. The meeting adjourned at 6:44 p.m.