



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR  
PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

**AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH  
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING  
September 18, 2009  
Deerfield, Illinois**

**Minutes**

The AAPOR September 2009 Executive Council Meeting was held at the offices of the Sherwood Group, Inc., AAPOR's new management organization.

In attendance: All EC members except Reg Baker. John Waxman and Barbara Gunderson from the Sherwood Group were also in attendance.

The council meeting was called to order by Peter Miller, President.

Members of the staff from the Sherwood Group were introduced to the EC members.

Minutes from August conference call were revised to change the second recommendation from the Membership and Chapter Relations Committee and two minor edits were made. The minutes as revised were unanimously approved.

**Discussion of Working Relationship with Sherwood Group**

The President outlined his proposed new directions for the Council in its working relationship with AAPOR's new management association, the Sherwood Group. He proposed that the Executive Council evolve towards an increased focus on strategy and program development rather than program management. The Council's focus should include policy development, leadership development and strategic thinking. This new focus will require greater delegation of day to day operational issues by the EC and its committees to Sherwood so that the Council can focus on the strategic issues.

The expanded role of staff anticipated under the contract with Sherwood will create some redundancy between past volunteer responsibilities and new staff responsibilities. The Council and its committees should delegate the tasks to Sherwood, rather than worrying about who specifically should do what. Sherwood will advise the Council how best to implement the goals set by the Council.

A first priority in developing new roles and working relationships should be for the Council to revisit the AAPOR Strategic Plan. The Plan as developed three years ago is primarily a concept paper. The Council should review the plan and consider whether priorities have shifted since the plan was developed. Then, the Council needs to move forward to determine how we can implement the priorities.

The role of councilors and committees is a key organizational area for AAPOR. We need to consider structures that would get councilors out of day to day chair responsibilities to better use their time talents. The councilors should act as liaison between the Council and their committees, not spend their time in the weeds of committee work. Staff support for the committees from Sherwood should assist this process.

The two year length of tenure of members on the Council was raised as another potential organizational issue. Council members may not be productive until their second year after they have become familiar with AAPOR policies and Council and committee processes. Since this length is probably typical for professional organizations, and unlikely to be changed, the key issue becomes how to get new members up to speed as quickly as possible.

Better documentation and organization of information was suggested to improve councilors' orientation and education, given limited tenure. Policies, position descriptions and other key organizational information need to be reviewed, updated and posted to Sharepoint. The Sharepoint architecture needs to be rationalized so that members can find information that they need easily on the website. In addition councilors noted that better and earlier orientation to AAPOR/EC systems, policies and procedures is needed. The management association also noted that more leadership development would benefit the council. Sherwood plans to address both efforts in the coming months.

It was also noted that the timing of EC elections affects the opportunity for orientation for new members. The first meeting of the new council is at the annual conference. Newly elected members may be notified only a few weeks before the meeting. There is little time for orientation before the first meeting. Sherwood will examine the timing of the elections and prepare recommendations for improving new member orientation before the first meeting.

The Council discussed the critical need of a shared understanding of what AAPOR is and what it does. Two possible directions were offered for the council's consideration: (1) a professional organization with a focus on education and professional development of its members; (2) a professional organization with a focus on public awareness and education about its members' profession – polling.

The role of the Conference Operations Committee raises the strategic issue of staff versus volunteer responsibilities. The current role of the Operations Committee developed when there was little staff support. Sherwood was asked to review and make recommendations about where AAPOR should be using its volunteers, including the Operations Committee, and where it should be using staff, to maximize efficiency and minimize redundancy.

John Waxman informed the Council that Sherwood is currently seeking a permanent Executive Director for AAPOR. The search for a permanent director is likely to take

several months. John Waxman will be acting as executive director for AAPOR until a permanent director is found.

## **Executive Council Initiatives for 2009-2010**

### **President**

The President reported that his priority for the next year was to give AAPOR a more positive rather than negative orientation. This means getting AAPOR recognized as promoting polling and survey transparency, rather than enforcing standards. One approach would be to get organizations to pledge transparency in their surveys. Those who pledge to meet AAPOR standards of transparency would be rewarded by being listed by AAPOR.

Towards this end, there needs to be outreach and discussion of the challenges and barriers to survey transparency with members and other organizations in our profession. The Standards Committee will try to identify what survey organizations see as the difficulties in meeting AAPOR standards for transparency and how AAPOR could help them to meet disclosure requirements.

This is part of a theme of AAPOR as the “go to” organization for ethics. This could play into membership building and education. It might provide opportunities, like certification. Certification, like a listing of standard pledging organizations, might provide a market reason for doing the right thing.

General caution, AAPOR is not judging quality, only transparency.

Next steps will be to approach organizations and ask about why it is difficult to meet disclosure requirements. Use blogs and other means to increase the dialogue about barriers to transparency. Off the record discussions may increase the frankness of this dialogue.

### **Communications**

The AAPOR website is being updated. Communications is considering different pages depending on interest. Looking for opportunities, like job banks.

### **Membership and Chapter Relations**

The committee is investigating better use of membership information. They are considering export functions from the main database, e-mail features, and utility of information for member searches. Continue interest in what information is most useful for tracking membership and membership trends.

Membership will also be adding a chapter events calendar to the AAPOR website.

Membership needs a new booth and brochures as part of its efforts to increase membership. The Council also needs to discuss membership goals in the context of who we are and what we want to achieve. How many members do we want to have --- do we have too few, too many, etc.

## **Standards**

The Standards Committee is working on a revision of the AAPOR Code which will be brought before the Executive Committee for review.

## **Task Forces**

Cell Phone Task Force has 21 members. It has met and approved subcommittees and their members who will report back to the committee. The committee will report to the Executive Council in March 2010.

The On-Line Panel Task Force has produced a draft report which is currently under review by committee members.

There was discussion of a committee on Survey Findings as Legal Evidence for the next year.

## **Treasurer Report**

Increased management costs will be at least partially offset by increased net revenue from conference. It will be important to continue to restrict expenses to the extent possible to avoid any overrun of the 2009 budget.

Endowment Committee: it was the sense of the council that the primary role of the endowment committee should be development, rather than investment management or program management. The goal of the committee should be to develop strategies for increasing the endowment.

## **Budgeting Procedures**

There will be a new approach to developing the AAPOR budget for 2010. Sherwood will send a budget request document to committee chairs asking what they want to do next year and what amount and types of support they will need. Sherwood will use the committee worksheets to prepare a draft budget for the November meeting. The Executive Committee will review the budget in November and approve a final revised budget in December.

Sherwood noted that the AAPOR budget is designed as an accrual budget, but needs some revisions in procedures to be a true accrual budget. For example, pre-paid conference expenses need to be properly recorded for the conference year. They will be

working on this. They also recommended removing true “pass-throughs” like chapter dues, from the budget.

Sherwood also recommended that management fees should be allocated by function. At the present time, management time for the conference is not expensed against the conference. As a result, the conference is showing an inflated net revenue because staff costs are not included.

### **Future Conference Sites**

Future conference sites will be evaluated by Sherwood on a multi-year basis to determine whether AAPOR can obtain preferential rates in desirable locations compared to single site decisions.

Mileage radius for federal employee per diem rates limit Baltimore and Washington as sites for conferences.

### **Executive Session**

#### **Motions voted out of executive session.**

Motion: “AAPOR’s Executive Council accepts the Evaluation Committee Report and Recommendation of Public Censure for Strategic Vision LLC” Moved by Stephen Blumberg and Seconded by Paul Lavrakas; Passed unanimously.

Motion: “AAPOR’s Executive Council authorizes a case study to be prepared for AAPOR Council regarding recent complaints of possible violations of AAPOR code.” Stephen Blumberg moved and Roger Tourangeau seconded. Passed unanimously.

Motion: “The AAPOR Executive Council approves the press release as the public action to be taken regarding the public censure to be taken against Strategic Vision LLC.” Stephen Blumberg moved and Paul Lavrakas seconded. Passed unanimously.

### **Conference Update**

Moved: “AAPOR’s Executive Council approves the poster design for the 2010 Annual Conference.” Moved by Peter Miller and seconded by Dick Kulka.

WAPOR is meeting in a different hotel, where they have their rooms. Joint sessions will be held on Thursday. Program and abstract submissions are also conducted jointly.

Save the date notice have been sent to 130 companies who have supported the conference in the past. Sherwood is working with the Conference Development committee on the marketing prospectus. They are trying to make the sponsorship and underwriting choices clearer to avoid any confusion.

The Plenary will be moderated in town hall fashion on the subject of opportunity through diversity. Diversity may include study populations, survey methods, and uses, among other things.

### **AAPOR Representative to Board of Journal of Consumer Research**

The current AAPOR representative will be contacted to see if she is willing to continue as our representative.

### **New Business**

Sherwood will be taking minutes at all EC meetings and conference calls

The next EC meeting will be November 19 from 10-4 in Chicago.

### **Adjourned**