

**American Association For Public Opinion Research**  
**Executive Council Meeting**  
**March 12, 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
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 11:05 a.m. CST by Peter Miller.*

The minutes of the February 19, 2010, Executive Council teleconference were reviewed and one minor correction made. Roger Tourangeau moved, seconded by Paul Lavrakas, that the revised minutes be approved. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Treasurers Report**

The pre-audited final 2009 financial report is posted on SharePoint along with the January 2010 financials. The 2009 financial report shows a net gain of \$456,000. This is a result of the \$473,000 Oxford University Press agreement and its impact on the financials. The rules of accounting state that the entire amount of the contract should be recognized in the year in which the pledge is committed. The commitment is for \$75K per year with that amount, escalating by a cost-of-living adjustment in each of the five subsequent years. The total value is estimated at \$473,000 including the cost of living adjustments. Seventy five thousand dollars have been allocated to cover 2009 expenses, leaving \$393,000+ on the balance sheet as an asset, although the funds are not collected. Seventy five thousand dollars [plus COLA] will be withdrawn each year going forward to cover the journal office expenses. This is now a restricted account and will continually decrease over the next 5 years. This represents a new way of reporting the revenue, but no other significant changes to procedure.

Without considering this additional amount of revenue, the budget reflects a 2009 net gain of \$58K. This amount is lower than last projected due to a few minor modifications from the last draft budget. There was \$6,600 in additional expense related to the journal.

The January financial statement reflects revenue that is substantially higher than in January of 2009. This is largely a result of early efforts to collect sponsorship and exhibitor revenue for the 2010 Conference, but it is not necessarily an indication that AAPOR will achieve higher sponsorship and exhibitor revenue for 2010 overall.

Waxman announced that Sherwood's staff accountant for AAPOR, Stacy Roop, has left her position with Sherwood. Andrew Massengill has been hired as a new staff accountant and will work with AAPOR.

The auditors are in the office completing the field work for the AAPOR audit. Sherwood is providing all the necessary paperwork and it is expected the audit will be completed in the next two weeks. Aside from the new procedure for reporting the journal pledge, no issues or concerns have been noted thus far during the audit process.

### **Standards Report**

#### **Online Task Force:**

The Task Force completed the action items identified at the last meeting. A list of those who contributed to the report has been added and an executive summary was developed. Don Dillman has suggested a change in the verbiage about current Internet penetration levels. The current wording may be too optimistic. A closer look at the research data indicates the reported percentages of household Internet usage may misrepresent the level as too high due to very low usage among many respondents. The suggestion was to revise the language on household Internet penetration to be less optimistic.

**Motion:** The Executive Council accepts the Online Task Force report and will begin to disseminate the information. Moved by Roger Tourangeau and seconded by Paul Lavrakas.

**Discussion:** The Council commended the Task Force for their work on the report. Council members were asked to send corrections to Reg Baker directly. The Task Force will work with Mike Mokrzycki and staff on a dissemination strategy. The results of the report will be announced in the April newsletter. The report should be released prior to the annual conference allowing members time to review it before any related sessions.

**Vote:** The motion was passed unanimously.

#### **Code Revision:**

The committee is close to finalizing a Code that can be sent to the membership for comment. The one unresolved issue from the last Council meeting was to determine which disclosure items belong in each of the two tiers. The recommendations from the Standards Committee and Code Review Committee were distributed to the Council for review. The current recommendations have the minimum amount required at the time the report is released, all other items to be

available in 30 days. This was not a unanimous decision by the two committees, but this was the general sense of the committees.

**Discussion:** AAPOR seeks to be as open as possible within the boundaries of feasibility, and also seeks to achieve maximum adherence to the Code. Council recognizes that these objectives could conflict with one another. The revised Code is compatible with what the National Council on Public Polls (NCPP) recommends for compliance to the standards.

**Motion:** The Executive Council agrees with the proposed revisions to the Code of Professional Ethics and Practices, along with the rationale for the revisions. The Executive Council further authorizes that the proposed revisions and rationale be distributed to the membership for comment. Interested members will be invited to submit written comments for Council's consideration.

Moved by Roger Tourangeau and seconded by Nancy Whelchel.

**Vote:** The motion was passed unanimously.

The membership will have 2 weeks to respond with comments on the revised Code. Stephen Blumberg will compile the comments for review at the next council meeting. Blumberg agreed with Council's recommendation to soften the language on 'Rejection' in the rationale.

If Council agrees on the final version of the Code during the April teleconference, the revised Code can be sent to the membership for a vote and the results could be announced at the Annual Conference. It is advisable for the current Council members to approve the revised Code. There are no Bylaw considerations that would prohibit approving the revised Code in this time frame. The Bylaws require 25% of all eligible members to vote. There is no requirement for advanced notice of the vote or on how long voting needs to remain open.

### **Conference Report**

The final program is in its first draft. All session chairs and discussants have been assigned and will be contacted shortly with instructions. Past AAPOR Award winners will be added to the program. All Task Force members will also be recognized for their efforts in the final program.

The plenary session will focus on transparency and truth in polls and surveys. The plenary panel will include representatives from OMB, NCPP, CASRO, WAPOR and AAPOR, each of whom will discuss the way their individual organizations approach the question of integrity in research. The general framework will include how the disclosure method, which is employed by a number of organizations, compares against the prescriptive method that is employed by the federal government and discuss what is achieved by these different approaches. Mark Blumenthal will discuss his approach to scoring the quality of disclosure. Following these presentations there will be a moderated, interactive discussion.

**Motion:** Executive Council approves the basic concept of the plenary session.

Moved by Roger Tourangeau and seconded by Dick Kulka.

**Vote:** The motion was passed unanimously.

The hotel room block is currently 53% reserved. The deadlines for hotel and conference registration will be promoted to attendees over the coming weeks. The attendance and room pick-up numbers are tracking consistently with 2009.

The combined sponsorship, underwriting, exhibit and advertising revenue are \$115K against a budget of \$125K. The sponsorship contract with SPSS is still pending, negotiations are continuing. Rob Santos will be contacting SAS to follow up on a sponsorship opportunity.

The Sudman Student Paper award winner will be finalized the week of March 15. Executive Council members should send items for the post-conference survey directly to Rob Santos. He and Dave DesRoches will be working on the survey questions in the coming weeks.

Tom Smith has urged Council to extend an invitation to the original attendees of the Central City meeting of 1946 to attend the 65<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. He is attempting to contact attendees to determine if any of them are willing and able to attend the 2010 meeting. There is currently no money in the conference budget to cover their expenses. This could coincide nicely with the archive exhibit at the conference and could be incorporated into the video presentation at the banquet. The role of these attendees will be determined at a later date. The Executive Council supported Smith's proposal. The conference committee will work with Tom Smith on the details as necessary.

### **Strategic Planning Update**

The Executive Council will meet on April 1 in Washington, D.C. A review of the Strategic Planning Committees analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) report will be sent to the Executive Council in advance of this meeting for review. The expected outcome of the April meeting is to have an outline of the strategic plan, a set of possible areas/initiatives to focus on and criteria to measure progress. The mission statement developed by the committee should be used to guide the strategic planning process.

**Discussion:** The mission statement is an attempt to rephrase the basic purposes of AAPOR stated in the Bylaws, how we define ourselves as an organization. The field has shifted from mostly opinion researchers to a greater proportion of AAPOR members seeing themselves as survey researchers. The term "survey research" seems broader and more appropriate at this time. Council will need to determine the current nature of AAPOR and its membership. This will help with long term objectives and how to achieve them. It was noted that since "public opinion" is part of the organization's name it should be part of the mission statement.

The mission statement may need to include an outward looking statement and define a role for AAPOR in education about the field in the public sphere. The Committee believes that by including the phrase "promoting best practices and dissemination" it implies outreach and education. The language may need to be more explicit on this point. Additional bullet points may need to be added to include points such as promoting the use of these methods in public life because we believe it has a benefit to society.

Executive Council members should send any additional comments on the mission statement to Roger Tourangeau before the April 1 meeting.

### **Cell Phone Task Force Report**

This is a 21- person Task Force developed to update the report issued in 2008. The Task Force has a first draft that is being revised. A final version is expected to be presented to the Executive Council by early April. The goal is to reach agreement before the conference, if possible. Members of the Task Force will discuss the report at a round table session at the conference, and also in a short course.

Reg Baker and Paul Lavrakas attended the European Mobile Research Conference in London where cell phone research was discussed. Paul Lavrakas briefed the conference attendees on what is happening on the issue in the U.S. The attendees are looking forward to reviewing the report from 2008 and the upcoming 2010 report. Some global guidelines are being developed for cell phone interviews. The Task Force will want to take this into consideration in their discussions.

### **Survey-Based Legal Evidence Task Force**

This 11-person Task Force met for the first time a week ago. They are currently developing the mission of the group. In April they expect to have a formal proposal to submit to the Executive Council detailing the mission of the Task Force.

### **Communications Report**

Newsletter drafts are currently being submitted. Communications Committee members are willing to offer their expertise to help Sherwood staff on the bigger picture communication issues, i.e. messaging to members and interested parties. The committee will act as an advisory body.

Stephen Blumberg, Michael Mokrzycki and Barb Gunderson will meet with the AAPOR archives curator at the University of Chicago on Friday, March 19, to determine what is actually being stored at this time. Following the visit, they will make recommendations regarding revisions to restrictions of sensitive Standards archives as well as unprocessed POQ records. The Executive Council will make the decision on who should have unrestricted access to the archives.

The question was raised regarding whether there are any items that should be destroyed rather than archived. The curator has recommended AAPOR maintain records that give researchers or interested parties an understanding of how AAPOR came to the important decisions that have been made over the years. It is important to retain material and documents that relate to the core issues of how AAPOR operates as an organization. The curator has already stated that AAPOR can withdraw items we no longer need or no longer want to be archived. If there are items that should not have been archived, they can be removed and destroyed if necessary.

Some determination should be made regarding how Council tends to AAPOR history issues. Sherwood staff could potentially provide more continuity in this role.

There is disparity between the Document Retention Policy implemented in 2009 and what is currently stored in the archives. John Boyle and Barb O'Hare will review the policy and clarify the current procedures or make recommendations for changes to the policy. There are some financial records currently being stored that we may not need to archive any longer according to the policy. John Boyle will review the policy and make a recommendation. Nevertheless, it was noted that the Document Retention Policy generally addresses what material AAPOR must retain for legal and financial purposes, and for how long, whereas the material in the AAPOR archives serves a more historical purpose. Consequently, it may not be possible, or desirable, to fully merge the Document Retention Policy and the archive retention policy.

### **Membership Report**

AAPOR has 1,750 members as of February 28, 2010. Seventy percent of the eligible membership has renewed to date.

A membership report was provided for the council to review. In Figure 1 of the report it was shown that regular conference attendance is highest for our newer members and also 9% of those who joined AAPOR prior to 2003 attended the conference each of the past seven years. Figure 2 demonstrated Annual Meeting attendance by member type. Those who had their membership fee paid by their employer were most likely to also attend the conference (47%). Among those who self-paid their membership fee, those on the higher end of the self-reported income scale were more likely to attend than those in lower income brackets (36% vs. 23%). Only 3 of the 85 Honorary AAPOR members attend the 2009 conference. Figure 3 demonstrated that based on affiliation, government employees held the highest attendance for the 2009 conference.

There are a number of members who wait to renew their membership through their conference fees so their employer will pay the membership fee in conjunction with the conference registration. Historically, about 250 people join in the coming months leading up to the conference. With this expected influx of additional membership dues related to the conference, we are on track for our membership numbers.

### **New Business**

The Policy Impact Award will be awarded this year. The winners and those nominees not selected have been informed. The committee selected ABC News, for their Afghanistan Polling. There were 9 nominations for 2010.

The search for an executive director continues.

*At 12:30 p.m. CST the Executive Council met in executive session until the meeting was adjourned.*