

**VES Board Meeting Minutes**  
**March 10, 2021 – 7:00pm**  
**Via Zoom Conference**

***Board members present:***

Jan Adamczyk, Neishaw Ali, Laurie Blavin, Kathryn Brillhart, Colin Campbell (*alternate*), Nicholas Casanova, Emma Clifton Perry, Bob Coleman, Lisa Cooke, Dayne Cowan, Kim Davidson, Camille Eden, Michael Fink, Himanshu Gandhi (*alternate*), Gavin Graham, Bryan Grill (*alternate*), Dennis Hoffman, Thomas Knop, Brooke Lyndon-Stanford, Arnon Manor (*alternate*), Tim McGovern, Janet Muswell Hamilton, Maggie Oh, Jeff Okun, Susan O'Neal, Jim Rygiel, Lisa Sepp-Wilson, David Tanaka, David Valentin (*alternate*), Bill Villarreal, Joe Weidenbach, Phillipp Wolf (*alternate*), Susan Zwerman

***Board members absent:***

Kim Lavery, Josselin Mahot, Karen Murphy

***Guests:*** Zach Bell, Co-Chair, Georgia Section; Tavia Charlton, Co-Chair, Toronto Section; David Eschrich, Co-Chair, New York Section; Steve Garrad, Co-Chair, Vancouver Section; Frederick Lissau, Co-Chair, Los Angeles Section; Reid Paul, Co-Chair, Los Angeles Section; Justin Porter, Co-Chair, Australia Section; Paolo Tamburrino, Co-Chair, Toronto; Cheryl Vanderbilt, Co-Chair, Bay Area Section

***VES Staff present:*** Jeff Casper, Debbie McBeth, Eric Roth, Ben Schneider, Nancy Ward

***Minutes:*** Lori Bowman

**Call to Order – Lisa Cooke**

- Lisa called the meeting to order. Took roll call to confirm attendees. Gavin Graham announced that there was a quorum.
- Announced that the January 13, 2021 Board meeting minutes were approved online.

**Executive Director's Report – Eric Roth**

- The VES Awards Show will be broadcast on April 6, 2021. Eric acknowledged Jeff Okun for being the creative force behind the planning of this year's Awards Show. Eric reminded the Board members that they must sign up for the Show in advance and a unique link will sent for virtual access. Scanline is creating an I-Line production stage for the event.
- Jeff Okun thanked Bryan Grill for his assistance in connecting with Scanline.
- Eric alerted everyone that an email will be sent out to members soon with details about the Show.

**Statement from the New Chair Lisa Cooke**

- Lisa noted that she's excited to be the new Chair and enthusiastic about the work that the VES can accomplish this year.
- Lisa and the Executive Committee have spoken to many Board members and Section Chairs via zoom to get feedback and will continue to set up zoom meetings so they can meet with all Board and Section leadership. The general consensus from these meetings so far is the need to strengthen the bonds of the VES global membership this year.
- Noted that the VES Awards Nomination event was a success and thanked everyone for all their work on the event.
- Lisa reviewed Robert's Rules of Order to remind everyone how the Board meetings are conducted. The Rules were designed to promote fairness, order and courtesy to help move the meetings forward. The basic principles are as follows:
  - Once a motion is put forward and seconded, a discussion will take place. No one can speak twice until everyone else who wants to speak has had a chance to speak once.
  - Those who want to speak must raise their hand to be recognized before speaking.
  - In the interest of moving the meeting forward, Lisa noted she may put a time limit on comments if a discussion is going on for too long.
  - The purpose of New Business is to introduce a new topic or relay a new piece of information. New Business is informational only and not open for discussion. Any topic

- that is presented in New Business can be put on the agenda for an upcoming meeting at which time it will be open to discussion and motions.
- Zoom attendees are asked to keep their hands up when votes are counted to give the Board Secretary enough time to make an accurate count.
  - Lisa clarified that Section Chairs are ex-officio members of the Board and can speak during discussions but cannot vote. Section Chairs can only speak on topics on the agenda and cannot bring up unrelated topics.
  - Lisa summarized that Robert's Rules gives everyone a fair chance to be heard and keeps the meetings moving forward.
  - Lisa is proposing scheduling the next Board meeting in May during lunch time (Los Angeles time) to make it easier for members in different time zones to attend at a reasonable time. This will enable members from the UK and Europe to join the meeting earlier in the evening instead of the middle of the night. Will confirm the time for the May meeting at a later date with plenty of advance notice so members can plan accordingly.
  - Lisa encouraged all Board members to join committees. If anyone needs guidance on which committee to join, the Executive Committee can assist.

#### **Treasurer's Report – Jeff Okun**

- The VES is in very good financial shape. Will have more discussion about the financial picture later in the meeting.

#### **Update on Nomination Process for Hall of Fame, Special Awards and Honorary Awards – Lisa Cooke & Bill Villarreal**

- A committee was formed to review the nomination process for these award categories. The current committee members are Josselin Mahot, Thomas Knop, David Tanaka, Neishaw Ali, Emma Clifton Perry, Gavin Graham, Jeff Okun and Bill Villarreal. The committee members have a global reach with representation from the Bay Area, Toronto, Montreal, Los Angeles, New Zealand, France and Germany.
- Lisa recommended that everyone familiarize themselves with each award nominee's accomplishments to be well informed before casting their votes.
- Bill Villarreal reviewed the nomination process. Members will receive an email invite in the next week with instructions on how to nominate visual effects colleagues. The awards will be given out at the 2021 Honors event later in the year.
- The five award categories include Honorary Membership, Lifetime Membership, Founders Award, Hall of Fame and VES Fellows. The Fellows Award nomination needs to include two letters of recommendation that describes why the nominee deserves to receive this honor. One letter needs to accompany the nomination and the second letter can come later. The email invite will include complete descriptions of the award categories and candidate criteria. A list of the past recipients will also be included. Members will have two weeks to review and submit nominations. A reminder will be sent out a week later. At the end of the submission period, the Honors Committee will review, vet and organize the nominations. The electronic voting will begin in mid-April. There will be a two-week voting period to cast votes and winners will be announced at the May Board meeting.

#### **Approve Change in Status of VES Education Committee from Adhoc to Standing Committee – Arnon Manor**

- ***Motion: "Mike Fink made motion to approve change in status of VES Education Committee from Adhoc to Standing Committee." Motion seconded. Vote taken. Motion passed.***

#### **Health and Wellbeing Committee Update – Emma Clifton Perry and Phillipp Wolf**

- Emma reviewed the Committee Report. The committee met in January and members include Emma Clifton Perry, Phillipp Wolfe, Neishaw Ali, Nicolas Casanova, Dayne Cowan, Dennis Hoffman and Thomas Knop.
- The issues to be tackled first include:
  - Health and Wellbeing Resources for members worldwide
  - List of potential health & wellness related benefits for members
  - List of international health insurance companies to approach for discounts
  - Research into possible EAP (employee access programs) scheme collaborations
  - Progress on webinar series in collaboration with the city of Montreal
  - VES website page to host Health & Wellbeing content

- The committee has collated a large spreadsheet of resources for any region of the world with over 10 VES members. There are 21 regions identified including Italy, Sweden, Brazil, Spain, Japan, Singapore, India, France, Washington, Georgia, Australia, New Zealand, Toronto, Germany, Montreal, New York, Vancouver, London, USA-general, Bay Area and Los Angeles.
- Thanked Brooke Lyndon-Stanford for his considerable online work researching a wide range of potential companies with a global reach to approach for potential discounts. The committee collated a list of 37 companies to potentially contact for discounts for the VES global membership.
- A list of nine global health insurance providers has been collated and given to VES headquarters to investigate further to determine if these providers can provide premium discounts for members. These are not USA-based and will not replace the health insurance providers currently used by US-based members. These providers will be researched for members who are working outside of their normal country of origin and need coverage in the country they are working in. The list of providers is included in the committee report.
- Phillip and Emma have discussed the EAP (employee access program) initiative with VES headquarters and it is currently being researched by VES staff.
- Phillip reviewed the progress on the web series. He's produced a 5-part series featuring industry professionals in conversation with clinical psychologists and mental health performance consultants. The City of Montreal is funding the project in conjunction with the Quebec Film Commission, the VES Montreal section and Access VFX. The current line-up of industry professionals includes John Dykstra, Mark Osborne, Kaitlyn Yang, Chris White and hoping to confirm Dan Levy soon. The goal is to complete the series by mid or late April and release them through the VES website and through podcast websites like Spotify, Apple and Youtube. Other guilds and platforms like Access VFX or Producers Guild of America will be used to cross-pollinate.
- The committee is working with Debbie McBeth in the VES office to create a dedicated Health and Wellbeing page on the VES website. The page will host the health and wellness resources researched by the committee and be open to members and non-members to increase the reach to the industry at large.
- ***Motion: "Emma made motion to add Brooke Lyndon-Stanford and Janet Muswell Hamilton to the Health and Wellness Committee." Seconded. Vote taken. Motion passed.***
- Lisa Cooke thanked Emma, Phillip and the H&W Committee for all their hard work on researching and procuring these resources.

#### **Education Committee Update – Arnon Manor**

- Arnon announced that new members have joined the committee and encouraged others to join since the committee's work is expanding.
- The Mentorship Initiative is going well. The committee reached out to existing mentorship programs like Women in Animation, Access VFX, and Rise Up Animation. Have connected VES members with mentors in those organizations. Still working on a Peer to Peer mentorship which is an internal program within the VES with members who are mentors and mentees. Will have an update on that program's progress soon. Teamed up with the Brick Foundation and did a panel on mentorship and education with them last weekend hosted by Camille Eden.
- Arnon has been in contact with the individual who runs the California Department of Education and has created CTE certifications in film making. Looking into applying these certifications to visual effects with emphasis on diversity, inclusion and underrepresented demographics. This will provide entry level positions in visual effects for students directly out of high school. The committee is connecting VES member mentees with the LAUSD school district magnet programs in arts and communication so they can give presentations at these schools. Thanked Jeff Okun for his participation in this effort.
- The next phase will be to expand from Los Angeles-based education programs to global programs. Will be talking to Phillip Wolf in the Montreal Section about coordinating education programs in that region.
- Neishaw Ali noted that the Peer to Peer program is underway and the committee has matched 43 mentors with 43 mentees. 9 mentors and 2 mentees are still left to be matched while the committee looks for the best fit for them.

### **Discussion of Possible Student/Junior Memberships – Susan Thurmond O’Neal**

- Susan did research on what has been discussed by the Board in the past about creating student or junior memberships or mentorships in the VES. She noted that there were comments about the importance of mentoring and educating people as part of the VES 503(b) non-profit status. A student tier was suggested in 2014. A master’s tier was suggested in 2017 for people with 10+ years of experience. There was a VES Future Committee in 2017 that addressed the expansion of the VES and recommended a “Friends of VES” tier or student membership but the Board felt that would be problematic.
- Susan noted that there had been past discussions about the fact that VES is an honorary society and should require a minimum of 5 years of experience so members have earned the honor to be a member. She emphasized that the VES should still provide volunteer and/or mentorship opportunities to students.
- Susan did research on other organizations to see if they provided student or junior memberships. She discovered that BAFTA has paid membership for students to provide them access to events. Women in Animation and the TV Academy have student tier memberships.
- Susan indicated that she will write up her findings and distribute to Board members.
- Lisa opened up the issue for discussion:
  - Bob Coleman emphasized the need to be very clear about the goals and objectives of a student tier. It would be problematic if the VES elicits money from students for a membership. There is already a VES student award that provides participation and recognition for them by the Society. Would like to see a written proposal outlining the goals and objectives of a student tier membership and how this benefits VES membership.
  - Emma Clifton Perry noted that she was wary of the unintended consequences of a student membership tier. What are the cost implications of this type of membership? What are the overhead logistics of monitoring student memberships to determine when they are no longer eligible? Emma suggested providing a limited student membership where they receive a free or discounted subscription to VFX Voice magazine or opportunities to attend screenings or events for a concessionary fee.
  - Mike Fink voiced his concern that a student membership tier would not be practical because full time students have so many educational commitments and responsibilities and could be unreliable in making time commitments to VES. He suggested finding a way to support students but not in a membership capacity.
  - Kathryn Brillhart acknowledged that there is a gray area between when students graduate and before they have the 5 years of experience required to join the VES. Would it be possible to have a mid-tier level and restructure the full membership qualifications? She recommended that a proposal be written up that addresses this gray area and how to structure pricing tiers and different participation requirements based on experience.
  - Joe Weidenbach noted the issue is how to bring mentees into the fold and get them involved. Already have ways to get students involved through Section events and there is an opportunity for students to network with industry professionals at these events. The other issue is whether a student membership will diminish the value of the VES membership.
  - Brooke Lyndon-Stanford said there is a need to give students a sense of belonging and create inclusivity. Suggested that a group be formed to discuss this issue and present to the Board to review and vote on.
  - Dennis Hoffman said that a student tier is the wrong approach for the VES. Students should make becoming a member an aspirational goal because VES is a professional organization. The proper process is to gain experience and then apply to the Society. He supports an outreach program of mentors and mentees to introduce and expose students to the evolving fields of visual effects and animation.
  - Tavia Charlton noted that it’s important for VES to continue to be valid for students who are looking for work in the industry. Inclusion for students is an important component and should be a goal for VES through mentorship, education and job fairs.
  - Arnon noted that his weekly contact with schools in his role on the Education Committee has made him aware of the desire for students to work in the visual effects industry. If the objective and goal of the Society is to be inclusive and diverse then VES needs to open doors for students and help plant the seeds for their future careers.
  - Colin Campbell supported the expansion of the mentorship program that includes entry level professionals and students who are still in school.

- Lisa Cooke added that she is currently working on a career day with NASA rocket scientists who worked on the Mars Perseverance Rover. They are planning a panel aimed at high school students to talk about careers in rocket science and the work on the Mars rover project. The panel will be recorded and sent to schools with underprivileged students. Lisa suggested a similar project be coordinated by VES in the form of a zoom panel. She supports outreach efforts in the schools with mentor/mentee programs.
- Neishaw Ali supports utilizing the Education Committee to work with the studios and students through mentorship programs so that joining the VES can be an aspirational goal for them.
- Reid Paul noted that when the associate membership tier existed in the VES it was problematic because those members often worked just as hard or more than active members but didn't receive full benefits. He added this could be a problem with student tier memberships as well. The best thing to do for them is to hire them after graduation.
- Himanshu noted that young blood is needed in the VES but it's important for entry level practitioners to earn the experience in the industry to qualify for VES membership.
- Brooke recommended the formation of a sub-committee or working group to discuss and write up a proposal to address ways of providing student support and participation in the VES and the industry.
- Eric Roth suggested that proper parliamentary procedure would be for Arnon, Brooke and other volunteers to get together to define the student membership or mentorship issue, make an argument with rationale, determine cost and long-term impacts and bring it back to the Executive Committee for review. When the Executive Committee gives its stamp of approval, the proposal can be brought to the Board for discussion in a future meeting and a formal motion can be made to proceed.
- Next steps: Arnon Manor, Brooke Lyndon-Stanford, Neishaw Ali, Tavia Charlton and Jan Adamczyk agreed to form a working group to discuss this issue further and write up a proposal.

#### **Discussion of VES Yearly Budget – Lisa Cooke and Eric Roth**

- Eric clarified that the budget will not be presented for approval until the May meeting. The budget is normally presented to the Board in March for approval but this process will be delayed because the Awards Show has been delayed until April due to the pandemic.
- Eric noted that if a budget were put together with the Awards Show coming in as net neutral (no profit or loss), the projected loss would be \$450,000. The live Awards Show last year made a net profit of \$570,000 so this explains why there will be a loss this year since the Show will be a virtual event. An additional cost of \$5,000 will be incurred to provide covid tests for all Awards presenters. VES won't be getting the table sponsorship revenue that a live event brings in although there will still be some revenue from virtual sponsorships.
- Current reserves are equivalent to 2 years of the operating budget so the VES would still be financially solvent with a net neutral scenario. Any monies needed for Sections and committees and other activities and events will still be available.
- The actual budget will be presented for approval in the May Board meeting following the Awards Show.

#### **New Business**

- Colin Campbell noted that Cinefex magazine has ended its run after many years and asked if the VFX Voice magazine will fill the void and create content that Cinefex would normally cover. Eric responded that there is a publisher, advisory committee and a stable of writers for VFX Voice. He suggested that anyone with suggestions or recommendations should send their comments to Eric or Nancy Ward and they will share with the publisher for discussion. Mike Fink noted that Cinefex had been challenged over the last few years because much of their content is available for free on Youtube and other platforms. He noted that the VFX Voice is successful in its own right. Lisa added that there are no plans to change the content of the publication. She noted that she's attending the next VFX Voice editorial meeting and will welcome comments from Board members off line.
- ***Motion: "Susan O'Neal made motion to add Frederick Lissau to the Membership Committee." Seconded. Vote taken. Motion approved.***

**Lisa adjourned the meeting at 8:28pm**

***Upcoming Dates: Next Board meeting on May 12, 2021***

*Submitted by Lori Bowman*