

**VES Board Meeting Minutes
November 10, 2021– 6:00pm
Via Zoom Conference**

Board officers present:

Lisa Cooke, *Chair*; Emma Clifton Perry, *1st Vice Chair*; David Tanaka, *2nd Vice Chair*; Jeff Okun, *Treasurer*; Gavin Graham, *Secretary*

Board members present:

Jan Adamczyk, Laurie Blavin, Kathryn Brillhart, Colin Campbell (*alternate*), Nicholas Casanova, Bob Coleman, Dayne Cowan, Kim Davidson, Himanshu Gandhi (*alternate*), Michael Fink, Bryan Grill (*alternate*), Dennis Hoffman, Thomas Knop, Brooke Lyndon-Stanford, Arnon Manor (*alternate*), Tim McGovern, Maggie Oh, Susan O'Neal, Jim Rygiel, David Valentin (*alternate*), Joe Weidenbach, Philipp Wolf (*alternate*), Susan Zwerman

Board members absent:

Neishaw Ali, Camille Eden, Kim Lavery, Josselin Mahot, Karen Murphy, Janet Muswell Hamilton, Lisa Sepp-Wilson, Bill Villarreal

Guests: Newly Elected 2022 Board members present:

Rita Cahill, Mike Chambers, Johnny Han (*alternate*), Adam Howard (*alternate*), Andres Martinez, Robin Prybil (*alternate*), Dane Smith (*alternate*), Richard Winn Taylor II

Guests: Section Members present: Roy Anthony, *Secretary, Toronto*; Zach Bell, *Co-Chair, Georgia*; Steve Garrad, *Co-Chair, Vancouver*; Marine Lelievre, *Co-Chair, Montreal*; Jose Marin, *Co-Chair, New York*; Justin Porter, *Co-Chair, Australia*; Cheryl Vanderbilt, *Co-Chair, Bay Area*

VES Staff present: Naomi Goldman, Debbie McBeth, Eric Roth, Ben Schneider, Nancy Ward

Minutes: Lori Bowman

Call to Order – Lisa Cooke

- Lisa called the meeting to order. Gavin Graham confirmed that there was a quorum.
- Announced that the September Board meeting minutes were approved online.
- Noted the incoming and outgoing Board members;
 - **Incoming 2022 Board members:** Rita Cahill, Mike Chambers, Johnny Han, Adam Howard, Andres Martinez, Robin Prybil, Dane Smith, Richard Winn Taylor II
 - **Current Board members returning in 2022:** Neishaw Ali, Laurie Blavin, Lisa Cooke, Mike Fink, Arnon Manor, Karen Murphy, Susan O'Neal, David Valentin, Bill Villarreal, Joe Weidenbach, Susan Zwerman
 - **Board members who are terming out and not returning in 2022:** Kathryn Brillhart, Kim Davidson, Camille Eden, Bryan Grill, Jeff Okun, Lisa Sepp-Wilson, David Tanaka

Executive Director's Report – Eric Roth

- The VES Honors event was in person this year and very successful. It was wonderful to connect and network with members in person again.
- The annual VES Awards show will be an in person event on March 8, 2022 at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills. Jeff Okun and Eric Roth will be the co-executive producers. The deadline for submissions is November 30, 2021. The nomination event is January 15, 2022 at different locations and will be virtual as well. Details will be sent out in the coming weeks.
- Eric opened up nominations for the five Executive Committee member slots. He noted that members can self-nominate or nominate others.
 - **Chair:**
 - Jeff Okun nominated Lisa Cooke and she accepted.
 - **First Vice Chair:**
 - Lisa Cooke nominated Emma Clifton Perry and she accepted.

- **Second Vice Chair:**
 - Laurie Blavin self-nominated.
 - Brooke Lyndon Stanford self-nominated
 - Dayne Cowan self-nominated.
- **Treasurer:**
 - Laurie Blavin self-nominated.
 - Susan O'Neal self-nominated.
 - Andres Martinez self-nominated.
- **Secretary:**
 - Gavin Graham self-nominated.
- Eric noted that the nomination process is still open until the Board meeting on January 12, 2022 when the election will take place. He also confirmed that additional nominations can be sent to the VES office via email.

Statement from the Chair - Lisa Cooke

- Lisa noted that the VES Honors event was an amazing evening and it was wonderful to connect with members in person. She thanked the VES staff for their stellar work handling the logistics when it was decided to change the event from virtual to in person without much advance notice.
- She thanked the Board for all its great accomplishments this past year. She noted that all the committees did phenomenal work.
- The USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative and Women in Animation released a joint study examining the representation of women in the visual effects community and the industry called, "Invisible in Visual Effects: Understanding the Prevalence and Experiences of Women in the Field". The study examined the following:
 - The prevalence of women working across 400 top-grossing films between 2016-2019
 - The prevalence of women in the executive ranks of about 60 visual effects companies
 - Awards recognition of women in the field including the VES awards
 - The study found the overall prevalence of women working in the industry is very low.
- VES supports the robust efforts to advance more women and women of color in the industry but this is also fundamentally a bigger pipeline issue. More work needs to be done to support all aspiring artists and practitioners of every underrepresented group entering the field and to bring forth the next generation of visual effects professionals.
- Lisa noted that she's proud of the strides that VES is making in this area and she is proud to be the first female Chair in the VES and to serve alongside First Vice Chair, Emma Clifton Perry. The 2021 class of VES honorees recognized several outstanding women. Two of the newly inducted Fellows are Brooke Breton and Nancy St. John. The Founders Award and Lifetime Achievement Membership Award went to Rita Cahill.
- The Education Committee is doing amazing work through mentorship and outreach and she looks forward to those efforts continuing.
- VES is now in the third year of the "Ask Me Anything" Visual Effects Tell All series. Lisa noted that many of the people that have been interviewed for the series have been women.
- There's a lot more to do to achieve fuller diversity, equity and inclusion in the industry so Lisa encouraged VES to use its resources through the education, outreach and membership committees and awards programs to lift up exceptional women and underrepresented groups in visual effects and advance the craft and the community.

VES 25th Anniversary Update – Naomi Goldman

- Naomi introduced herself as the support consultant for the VES in the area of public relations, communications, media, social media, and webcasts. She has been working with the Society for nine years.
- 2022 will bring many milestones for VES:
 - 25th year anniversary of the VES
 - 20th year anniversary of the VES Annual Awards
 - 5th year anniversary of the launching of the award-winning VFX Voice magazine. It has built solid sustainability in a short period of time.
 - 5th anniversary of the creation of the VES Hall of Fame. This was done in conjunction with the 20th anniversary of VES.

- The VFX Voice is being used as one of the channels to highlight the 25th anniversary. Will have anniversary branding on the cover of the magazine and house ads, testimonials, and congratulatory quotes throughout the year from influentials in the industry. Will also have special anniversary content in all four 2022 issues. The January issue will include a timeline of milestones and a listing of every VES member.
- Naomi and Eric Roth had a virtual zoom roundtable with all six VES Chairs. It was the first time they had ever been assembled together.
- The hashtags #ves25 and #vessilver will be the basis for some special social media campaigns.
- Will put together sizzle reels with great video content to show congratulatory messages from industry influentials showcasing milestones, “best of” compilations from awards shows and honorees from Honors event who recorded anniversary messages. Preparing key message document for the Board and the Section leadership for them to use in their capacity as messengers and ambassadors for the VES to highlight the anniversaries and milestones.
- Looking at special webcasts tied to milestones and anniversaries. Will be integrating cool anniversary content into the March Awards Show. Thinking about ways that the Sections can celebrate the milestones in their regions.
- Talking to trade and consumer media to arrange for some sit downs with VES to talk about the Society’s accomplishments, where we’ve been, where we are and the look ahead.
- Naomi asked Board members to contact her via email (ngoldman77@gmail.com) with additional ideas to commemorate and celebrate the upcoming milestone year. She also encouraged members to provide written or video testimonials.
- Richard Winn Taylor acknowledged the success of the VFX Voice which has been one of the greatest benefits for VES members. Recommended the creation of 25th anniversary cards that members could use to write notes to colleagues.

Treasurer’s Report – Jeff Okun

- Jeff noted that the VES is in an excellent financial position. He thanked Eric, Controller PJ Schumacher and the staff for doing a great job keeping the finances in order, particularly during the pandemic.

Education Committee Update – Arnon Manor

- Continuing outreach efforts to schools, organizations with presentations and webinars. Rose Duignan and Fortunato Frattasio are working hard on the outreach efforts. These efforts are making an impact and the goal is to expand to schools nationally and globally this coming year.
- There have been updates to the education resource web page which is a great source of information.
- The Peer to Peer Mentorship Program is being developed for the second round.
- Contacting LinkedIn to see how animation and visual effects jobs can be highlighted and aimed towards professionals outside of the industry. This effort is aimed at bringing people into the industry who have transferable skills from experience in other industries.
- Had successful meeting with Bryan Grill to talk about reaching out to veterans to recruit them into the industry. Bryan discovered an organization called the JVS (<https://www.jvs-social.org/veteran-services/>). This is a potential new connection to bring new blood into the visual effects, animation and gaming industries. Arnon thanked Bryan for all his work on this effort.
- CTE (California Technical Education) certification is a California-based program that can be developed as a pilot program for educating high schoolers and bringing new blood into the industry from underrepresented and non-traditional sources. The committee is in the final stages of developing a curriculum for an education program and will be submitting the registration to procure state and federal approval in order to start the program in 2022. We’re reaching out to employers in the visual effects, animation and gaming industries to have them sign letters of commitment to take on graduating apprentices and students. The State of California Department of Education has given its official seal of approval for this program. The long term goal is to replicate this program around the world.

Membership Committee Report – Joe Weidenbach

- Thanked the Membership Committee and Ben Schneider and the VES staff for all their amazing work handling the membership applications.

- The VES received 131 applications for the 2021 Fall Membership review cycle, including 25 returning members. There are currently 4,116 members of the VES. The Society has grown into 14 Sections and individual members in 44 nations worldwide. A geographical distribution of all applicants in the current cycle was included in the report. The Committee put forth the following 4 motions:
- **Motion #1: The Membership Committee recommends that the 99 applicants listed on the report be accepted as Members of the VES. Seconded. Vote taken. Motion passed.**
- **Motion #2: The Membership Committee recommends that the 25 returning members listed in the report be accepted as Members of the VES. Seconded. Vote taken. Motion passed.** Mike Chambers noted that this is the largest number of returning members the VES has ever had in one cycle.
- **Motion #3: The Membership Committee recommends the 5 applicants listed below be denied membership AT THIS TIME. Seconded. Vote taken. Motion passed.**
 - **Stuart Bruzek (missing 2 Letters of Recommendation and work history)**
 - **Marina Llic (missing 2 Letters of Recommendation)**
 - **Abdou Karimi (missing 2 Letters of Recommendation)**
 - **Pierre Leduc (missing 2 Letters of Recommendation and work history)**
 - **James Pastorius (missing 2 Letters of Recommendation and work history)**
- **Motion #4: The Membership Committee recommends that the Board accept Benjamin Rayner as an exception to the rule of 5 years of experience within the last 10 years.**
 - The Committee noted that Benjamin Rayner has met the required five years of experience in VFX or related industries but falls just short of the '5 years within the last 10 years' qualification for application. The Committee feels he is a good candidate for Membership and his Letters of Recommendations are solid. The rules say the Committee cannot move him forward for Membership but the Board, at its discretion, can choose to accept him.
 - Benjamin's resume and letters of recommendation were included in the report in addition to two letters from VES members endorsing his application.
 - **Motion seconded.**
 - There was some discussion about the justification for making an exceptional approval, with some Board Members giving personal endorsements, additional justification that his work outside of VFX was in parallel fields (photography, technical education), and noting that he is currently working in the industry with strong links in the Australian VFX community.
 - **Vote taken. Motion passed.**
 - Susan O'Neal acknowledged Joe Weidenbach for all his work on the Membership Committee. Joe thanked Susan for setting the groundwork for the committee.
 - Arnon Manor asked if the Committee tracks the members who do not renew and if there's a way to find out the net variance between returning members last year and this year. Mike Chambers answered that members who don't renew or drop out are tracked by the office as part of the membership renewal process. Susan O'Neal noted there are usually 5-7 returning members on average during each cycle so 25 is a significant increase.
 - Eric noted that VES lost more members last year than this past cycle. He added that they lost approximately 170 members this past cycle which was considerably less than last year. The VES office works very hard to maintain membership and provided flexibility to members who were having difficulty paying their membership dues during the pandemic. Eric was pleased to hear that this cycle had the largest number of returning members to date.
 - Susan O'Neal offered to track where returning members over the past two years have come from and use this data to recruit future members of the VES.

New Business

- Kim Davidson said that he's terming out but will come back to the Board in another year.
- Tim McGovern said there were amazing speeches at the Honors event but he wanted to highlight these words spoken by Richard Taylor: "We visually affect society". He suggested this would be a wonderful slogan for the VES.
- Richard Taylor noted that it's an honor to be back on the Board. He acknowledged that the people in the VES are some of the most talented people in the world. The work they do affects the consciousness of the world through imagery and creating an image on a screen is a powerful tool.
- Bob Coleman is interested in the topic of "the effect of remote working now in the visual effects industry." Suggested this be explored in the VES by encouraging discussion and eliciting feedback

from artists around the world. Gavin Graham responded that the Technology Committee has been exploring this further already. Gavin will send out an email to follow up on this recommendation and recruit members for further discussion. Colin Campbell volunteered to be part of this discussion or join a committee if one is formed. Lisa Cooke added that if Bob wants to form a committee to discuss this topic then this can be put on the next Board meeting agenda for approval.

- Richard Winn Taylor reminded Naomi Goldman about creating cards for VES members.
- Laurie Blavin addressed the recent purchase of Weta Digital's Tools and Technology by Unity, a video game engine software firm. Kim Davidson confirmed that a 3D pipeline will be put in the cloud. There are 200 engineers at Weta who are moving to the Unity payroll to work on this.
- Jeff Okun thanked Lisa Cooke and the Executive Committee for their amazing work and contributions over the past year. He also thanked everyone for making contributions to his wife's charity run for cancer which raised \$125,000.
- Lisa Cooke thanked Jeff Okun, Emma Clifton Perry, David Tanaka and Gavin Graham for all their work this year. She thanked the Board for their dedication and contributions and the outgoing Board members for their service.
- Brooke Lyndon-Stanford also acknowledged Lisa Cooke for her phenomenal work as Chair. He added that he enjoyed seeing everyone in person at the Honors event and looks forward to more in person events in the future.

Lisa adjourned the meeting at 7:15pm

Next BOD meeting: January 12, 2022

Submitted by Lori Bowman, edits by Gavin Graham and Eric Roth