

VES Board Meeting Minutes
May 10, 2023 - 6:00pm
Via Zoom Conference

Board members present:

Andrew Bly (*alternate*); Kathryn Brillhart; Rita Cahill; Colin Campbell; Lisa Cooke; Kim Davidson; Gavin Graham; Brooke Lyndon-Stanford; Arnon Manor; Andres Martinez; Karen Murphy; Maggie Oh; Jeff Okun, VES; Susan O'Neal; Robin Prybil (*alternate*); Daniel Rosen (*alternate*); Jim Rygiel; Suhit Saha; Lisa Sepp-Wilson; Dane Smith (*alternate*); David Tanaka, VES; David Valentin; Bill Villarreal; Joe Weidenbach; Rebecca West; Richard Winn Taylor II, VES; Philipp Wolf; Susan Zwerman, VES

Board members absent:

Neishaw Ali; Laurie Blavin; Nicolas Casanova; Mike Chambers, VES; Mike Fink, VES; Johnny Han (*alternate*); Dennis Hoffman; Adam Howard (*alternate*); Tim McLaughlin (*alternate*)

Section Members present: Roy C. Anthony, *Co-Chair, Toronto*; Zach Bell, *Chair, Georgia*; Stefan Bernscherer, *Chair, Montreal*; Alan Boucek, *Chair, Bay Area*; Steve Garrad, *Co-Chair, Vancouver*; Eric Greenlief, *Co-Chair, Washington*; Noel Hoffman, *Co-Chair, Vancouver*; Lance Lones, *Co-Chair, New Zealand*; Jose Marin, *Chair, New York*; Rutul Patel, *Co-Chair, India*

VES Staff present: Ross Auerbach, Shannon Cassidy, Charles Mesa, Ben Schneider, Jim Sullivan, Nancy Ward

Minutes: Lori Bowman

Call to Order – Lisa Cooke

- Lisa called the meeting to order. Rita Cahill confirmed a quorum. Lisa noted that the March 2023 VES Board meeting minutes were approved online.
- Reminded Board members that the meeting follows Robert's Rules which requires that every member must raise their hand to be called on to speak and no one can speak twice until all others who wish to speak have spoken once. All meeting discussions and reference documents are confidential.

Executive Director's Report – Nancy Ward

- Finalizing prospective honorees for the VES Honors event in October. Nominations are currently open for these categories: Fellows, Founders, Lifetime and Honorary members and Hall of Fame honorees. Definitions and criteria for these awards can be found on the VES website by clicking on the Awards tab and selecting VES Honors. Can also submit for honorees for next February's Awards Show. Voting will start on June 1.
- Fellows nominations require two letters of recommendation and are due by June 15. The Fellows Committee will begin vetting in July and prepare for a Board vote in August. Fellows will be announced at the September Board meeting.
- The Honors celebration will take place on Friday, October 13. The event has taken place at the Skirball Center in the past but the VES staff is exploring alternate venues such as a theatre or outdoor space that is ADA-compliant and can accommodate audio-video needs, catering, parking for 200 attendees, and can be covered by the VES budget. Staff will proceed with Skirball unless a suitable alternative is identified.
- The new VES website is in process. We are finalizing the home page design and VES staff is working with the web developer to make sure all backend issues are fixed on the current site.
- Annual dues renewal for VES members started in May 1. Response has been overwhelmingly positive.
- The planning for the 22nd annual VES Awards Show in February 2024 is well underway. Coordinating dates with the Academy and the Awards committee. The schedule will be released in the coming weeks.

Treasurer's Report – Jeff Okun

- Jeff noted that all the financials look good and the financial picture is exceeding expectations. He noted that the VES Awards Show is an expensive event that raises a lot of money for the Society.

Statement from the Chair – Lisa Cooke

- Lisa has been reaching out to each VES Section to engage with them and get feedback. She noted it has been an honor to speak with every Section and express appreciation for what they do as ambassadors of their regions. It's been helpful to learn what is working and what is not working in each Section. Will also reach out to Sections to get input during the VES strategic planning process.

- Lisa and Nancy have recorded a leadership video message for the VES members which is available online. They will be doing this on a quarterly basis to keep members up to date on VES happenings, activities and benefits.
- The Oregon Section was recently formed and is the 15th VES Section. They recently nominated their Board of Managers which consists of 13 members. Lisa will reach out them when they are up and running.
- Reminded everyone that the September 13 Board meeting will begin at 1:00pm PT to accommodate Board members who are in different time zones and cannot usually attend the 6pm PT meetings.
- All Board meetings are recorded so that Board members can listen at a later time if they did not attend the meeting in real time. The recording will be available online temporarily until the written minutes are posted.
- Nominations are open for honorees (including Fellows) for the VES Honors event. Voting will take place in early June. Encouraged everyone to nominate and submit names of people who have made significant contributions to VES (including Section members).
- Developing new job board. The current ProductionHub job board will be taken down and a blog will be set up with links to various job boards and job search tips so members can provide feedback.
- Lisa noted she has an open door policy and encouraged anyone to contact her with any input and ideas. She also encouraged members to join committees.

Strategic Planning – Lisa Cooke

- The strategic planning process is under way and most of the committees have begun their work. Still need members for the ‘Mission/Vision’ committee whose focus is to review the current mission statement and determine if it’s still relevant or if it needs to be updated. Also need members for the “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” committee and the “Building Pipeline of Visual FX Talent” committee. The latter committee reaches out to students and schools to encourage them to consider a career in visual effects to grow the future pipeline of talent. Those interested in joining a committee can email Nancy Ward at ward@vesglobal.org. To facilitate the strategic planning process, there may will be a check-in meeting on July 12 at 6pm for the chairs and members of the strategic planning committees. The agenda will include a discussion of where the committees are in the process, present and address issues, and review timelines. Committee reports are due on a staggered schedule in June, July and August. The reports will be finalized and the strategic plan will be compiled by October. Will submit the final recommendations at the November Board meeting. Section leadership is encouraged to join the strategic planning committees.

Update from VES Committees

Membership Committee – Susan O’Neal

- There was a record-breaking 283 membership applications in this cycle including 29 returning members. The years of experience attributed to the round of applicants was broken down as follows:
 - 5-9 years (58)
 - 10-19 years (124)
 - 20-29 years (88)
 - 30-37 years (13)
- Thanked Ben Schneider and the front office for all the hard work in assisting with the application process.
- There are currently 4,202 VES members. The Society has grown into a global organization since its inception in 1997. There are 15 Sections and individual members in 45 nations. A geographical distribution of all the applicants in the current cycle was provided in the membership committee report.
- ***Motion: The Membership Committee recommends that the 240 applicants listed on the committee report be accepted as members of the VES. Seconded. Vote taken and motion passed.***
- ***Motion: The Membership Committee recommends that the 29 returning members listed in the report be accepted as members of the VES. Seconded. Vote taken and motion passed.***
- ***Motion: The Membership Committee recommends that the 16 applicants listed on the committee report be denied membership AT THIS TIME.*** 15 of the applicants were missing supporting documents such as work history and Letters of Recommendation. 1 applicant lacked appropriate years of experience. There are 2 returning members on this list who just needed to provide their work history or resume to rejoin but they have not responded to reminders. All of these applicants have been encouraged to re-apply. ***Seconded. Vote taken and motion passed.***
- Susan explained the application process. The spring application deadline was March 15. Upon receipt of the applications, Ben flags any missing required documents and will contact the applicant throughout the membership cycle. These applicants are contacted numerous times to have an opportunity to complete their application.

Archive Committee – Lisa Cooke and David Tanaka

- There are a number of completed Luminary videos. Will be moving on to document physical assets so members were encouraged to reach out to anyone who has visual effects assets that can be photographed for the Archives.
- David Tanaka reviewed the editorial pipeline. These Luminary videos are near completion: Toni Pace Carstensen, Michael Hoffman and Van Ling. Those currently in process include Randy Dutra, Dennis Muren and Lynwen Brennan. They take about 6 months to complete. Many of the editors on the project started out as junior editors and have gained a lot of expertise so the process has become a very well-oiled machine. Always in need of volunteers for additional editorial support. When the recent batches are complete, the luminary videos will total 38.
- Lisa thanked David for his exemplary editorial supervision overseeing this project.
- Nancy Ward gave an update on the Archive Museum. Identified a platform and taking the time needed to make sure that every entry in the online museum is accurately identified, described and meta-tagged so that it will provide a rich user experience when launched. VES has been collecting materials for over 25 years including photographs, interviews, papers and 3,000+ videos. Requires a lot of legwork to accurately identify the individuals in the photos. Making great progress and hoping to launch the online museum later this year. Lisa noted this is a long-term legacy project that is a valuable resource for the industry.

Health & Wellbeing Committee – Philipp Wolf

- Philipp noted that they can use more committee members.
- Just released a new membership benefit that provides a 40% discount on the app called Breathwrk which is a great resource to help relieve stress. Philipp provided the link in the chat box. There is a code for each member when they log into the VES website to access this benefit.
- In process of releasing Darby's "Office Ergonomics Guidelines" for members.
- Working on second season of Health and Wellbeing web series.
- Working on additional benefits for members.
- Looking at ways to facilitate global first aid training.
- Lisa thanked Philipp and the committee for all their work providing benefits for the VES membership.

Education Committee – Arnon Manor

- Initiating third year of Peer to Peer mentorship program. Encouraged members to spread the word. Recommended that mentorship be provided by VES members to younger visual effects professionals who are not VES members to enhance their work experience and groom them for membership in the Society. This could be described as a Peer to potential Peer program.
- Having success with VES Vets pilot program to introduce military veterans into the visual effects industry. One of the Foundation partners, JVS, is offering to pay a full salary or partial salary to vets who can get placed at a visual effects gaming or animation facility. Looking for facilities that would be willing to provide opportunities to veterans. Thanked Bryan Grill for leading this initiative to find non-traditional avenues to recruit people into the visual effects industry.
- An AI Sub-Committee has been created by the Education Committee to provide a membership education tool on the topic of Artificial Intelligence to discuss its pros/cons and how it's going to affect the industry on a short-term and long-term basis. Encouraged members to join this committee.
- The Student/School Outreach committee led by Rose Duignan is part of the Education Committee. This group can provide input for the strategic planning effort.
- Announced that Board member and Education Committee member Mike Fink is retiring and recommended that he be recognized for his many contributions to VES.

Work from Home Committee – Gavin Graham

- FMX panel went well and will post the event on the VES website at the end of May when the FMX exclusivity on the recording is over. Thanked Colin Campbell, Neil, Emma Clifton Perry and Rachel Copp for their participation.
- The survey to get feedback on how the industry is doing has gone live and has already had 90 responses as of this date. Encouraged everyone to go to the online link and complete the survey. Will review responses and feedback to determine the committee's next steps.

New Business

- Philipp Wolf noted that he is working with others on how to identify the next generation of leadership candidates as part of the strategic planning initiative and will be reaching out to the Board of Directors and each Sections' Board of Managers to get feedback.
- Nancy Ward announced and welcomed the following new VES staff members:

- Charles Mesa is the new Content Manager and handles video, graphics, visual imagery and editing duties. He is working with David Tanaka on the editing process for the luminary videos. He's also working with Jeff Okun on the new VES website designs. He joined VES two months ago.
- Ross Auerbach is the new Program Manager (Nancy Ward's former position). He will be managing *VFX Voice* magazine, assisting with the Archive Committee work, handling sponsorships, managing the Autodesk "Ask Me Anything - VFX Pros Tell All" diversity initiative and taking on other responsibilities as needed.
- Andres Martinez requested that email addresses on VES member profiles be visible again when the new website is up and running to be able to reach out to peers and colleagues. Nancy Ward responded that each member has the option to make their email public or private and can't mandate that they share their personal contact info. She will explore this issue with the website design team to see if there is a work-around solution.
- Jeff Okun offered condolences to Brooke Lyndon-Stanford for his mother's recent passing. Brooke thanked Jeff and expressed his appreciation to everyone who has reached out to him.
- Richard Taylor announced the recent passing of VES member Raulette Woods. She was very involved in the annual Awards ceremony and an integral part of the Society. He recommended that an obituary be posted in *VFX Voice* or website to acknowledge her dedicated service to VES. Nancy will reach out to staff to determine who handles this and will get back to everyone with details.
- Jeff Okun noted the importance of identifying younger visual effect professionals in the VES to join the Board and take more leadership positions.
- Andres Martinez asked if the VES Handbook can be translated to Spanish for the Latin American community. Susan Zwerman noted that the Handbook publisher has a division that handles translation into various languages. She will find out if they will need someone to fine tune the translation and will contact Andres offline.
- Arnon asked if the VES Handbook is available at a reduced rate for educators and students. Susan noted that there is a discount rate for the 85 contributors to the Handbook. Susan will find out if there are discounts available for others and respond to Arnon offline.
- Lisa Cooke thanked everyone for their hard work and contributions to VES. She added that the strategic planning effort this year is of utmost importance because the VES Strategic Plan has not been updated for ten years. She encouraged all to participate in this process because these efforts will guide VES into the future. Please contact Nancy Ward if interested in participating.
- Lisa reminded everyone to submit nominations for this year's VES honorees.

Lisa adjourned the meeting at 7:00pm

Strategic Planning Committees: July 12, 2023 at 6pm PDT (for Strategic Planning Committees only)

Next BOD meeting: September 13, 2023 at 1pm PDT

Submitted by Lori Bowman

*Submitted by Rita Cahill
Secretary, Board of Directors*