

VES Board Meeting Minutes
March 13, 2024 - 6:00pm (PDT)
Via Zoom Conference

Board members present:

Andrew Bly (*alternate*); Alan Boucek; Kathryn Brillhart; Rita Cahill; Colin Campbell; Mike Chambers, *VES*; Fred Chapman (*alternate*); Emma Clifton Perry; Kim Davidson; John Decker (*alternate*); Rose Duignan, Gavin Graham; Dennis Hoffman; Brooke Lyndon-Stanford; Quentin Martin; Janet Muswell Hamilton, *VES*; Maggie Oh; Jeff Okun, *VES*; Susan O'Neal; Robin Prybil; Daniel Rosen (*alternate*); Jim Rygiel; Suhit Saha; Lopsie Schwartz; Lisa Sepp-Wilson; David Tanaka, *VES*; David Valentin; Bill Villarreal; Rebecca West; Sam Winkler; Philipp Wolf; Susan Zwerman, *VES*

Board members absent:

Neishaw Ali; Nicolas Casanova; Tim McLaughlin (*alternate*); Ariele Podreider Lenzi (*alternate*)

Section Members present: Zach Bell, *Co-Chair, Georgia*; Stefan Bernscherer, *Chair, Montreal*; John Cherniack, *Co-Chair, Oregon*; Michael Conte, *Chair, Bay Area*; Laurence Cymet, *Chair, Toronto*; Shane Davis, *Vice-Chair, Texas*; Eric Greenlief, *Co-Chair, Washington*; David Johnson, *Co-Chair, Georgia*; Jose Marin, *Chair, New York*; Theresa Patten-Koeckert, *Co-Chair, Los Angeles*; Ari Reisner, *Vice-Chair, New York*; Agon Ushaku, *Chair, Germany*; Eric Wachtman, *Co-Chair, Oregon*.

VES Staff present: Ross Auerbach, Shannon Cassidy, Naomi Goldman, Ben Schneider, Jim Sullivan, Nancy Ward

Minutes: Lori Bowman

Call to Order – Kim Davidson

- Kim called the meeting to order and confirmed that there was a quorum. He announced that the January 2024 Board meeting minutes were approved online.
- Kim reminded the Board that all meeting discussions are confidential.
- All Board meetings are conducted per Robert's Rules of Order. When a motion is put forward, it needs to be seconded by another Board member. Once seconded, discussion on the motion can proceed. All members may speak once before anyone is allowed to speak a second time. After discussion on a motion is completed, the motion is put to a vote to be approved or opposed. New business at the end of the meeting is for the purpose of introducing new topics but motions cannot be made during this time.

Statement from the Chair – Kim Davidson

- Kim reviewed the 6 categories of the VES Strategic Plan
 - 1) Communication and Brand Perception – an important part of this is the new VES website.
 - 2) Member Education and Outreach – The Education Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee to provide career-enhancing member education are working on these issues.
 - 3) Fostering Strong Partnerships and Alliances – Janet Hamilton Muswell has a lot of partner connections and she's forming a team to create more partner relationships.
 - 4) Enriching Member Benefits for all Global Members – Many committees are already working on benefits but Kim stressed the need to make sure benefits are equitable for all global members.
 - 5) Infrastructure: Strategically Grow Members – Mike Chambers is working on this issue and will be reporting his recommendations to members at the next Board meeting.
 - 6) Reinforce Board Infrastructure – This covers a number of initiatives but includes streamlining the Executive Committee voting process.
- Kim noted that the extensive work on the Strategic Plan will fall to the Committees and the VES staff working in alignment together. In an effort to make the Board meetings more effective, Kim has organized a 20-minute breakout session during this Board meeting. Kim would also like to reinstate the July Board meeting but attendance won't count and won't be mandatory since some members may be on vacation. There will likely be another breakout session planned for the July 10 meeting. He said these sessions can be effective in allowing all Board members to be heard and to get input from everyone. The September Board meeting will be at 1:00pm Pacific time to allow members in other time zones to join the meetings.

- VES is hosting two panels at the annual FMX event in Stuttgart, Germany in April. One of them is the “VES Handbook of Virtual Production” panel and the other is titled, “No CGI is Really Just Invisible CGI” with Jonas Ussing, Co-Owner, Space Office VFX. These panels will provide exposure and respect for visual effects practitioners and provide a better understanding of the work that they do. Details on the FMX conference can be found at <https://fmx.de>.
- Kim noted that notes from the breakout sessions that will occur later in this meeting can be sent to boardchair@vesglobal.org.
- He noted Jeff Okun is drafting a proposal for a more streamlined voting process for the annual Executive Committee election and will present it at the next Board meeting for review and approval.

Treasurer’s Report – Jeff Okun

- VES is in very good financial standing. The quarterly financial statement is in the Board meeting packet.
- The expenses of the Awards show are on the books but the income from the show has not been reflected yet.
- Dennis Hoffman asked if a report can be generated that compares the 2023 projected budget with the actual expenses incurred in 2023 for historical reference. Nancy noted she will address this request.

Executive Director’s Report – Nancy Ward

- VES Awards Show:
 - The 22nd annual VES Awards were held on February 21, 2024 and was a success. VES hosted almost 1,200 people and celebrated visual effects excellence in 25 categories. Nancy thanked the Awards Committee for all their hard work. She also thanked the Show sponsors.
 - Producer and VFX producer Joyce Cox, VES, received a Lifetime Achievement Award and actor/director/producer William Shatner received the VES Award for Creative Excellence at the Awards Show.
 - This was the best year yet financially for the Awards Show. The event recording, photos and program book are all posted on the VES website under the Awards tab. The edited Show recording is scheduled to be posted on the website later in the week for member viewing behind the firewall.
- An email blast will be going out soon to the VES membership at large regarding identifying and recommending prospective honorees for the 2024 Honors celebration and the 23rd Annual VES Awards. This includes the categories of Fellows, Founders, Lifetime members, Honorary members and Hall of Fame honorees.
- Per the Industry Outreach and Thought Leadership Initiative, the Technology Committee will be starting a generative AI series for VES members and the social media community at large. The first webinar in the series is scheduled on April 9.
- The New York Section is bringing back their New York VES Awards Celebration. It’s tentatively scheduled this April. This was previously an annual post-VES Awards event hosted by the New York Section for about 7 years until it was curtailed due to the pandemic. The upcoming event will honor the New York-based VES award winners over the past 3 years. More details to come.
- Kim added that all the Sections have been encouraged in the past to do post-awards celebrations. These events help to raise the profile for the VES and honor award winners in their own regions.

VES 2024 Annual Budget – Nancy Ward

- This year’s budget has allowances to fulfill the Strategic Plan Initiatives and additional staffing to support the evolution of the organization. This is a self-funding budget and projected to end the year in the black with a net gain. The goal is to be fiscally conservative. As a service based non-profit, VES needs to keep its labor costs under 50% of gross revenue. The VES came in at just under 38% of gross revenue.
- The Section budgets are determined by a formula based on the number of Section members. The total allocation for the 16 Sections is noted in the budget.
- The VES would not be a successful organization without the committed and talented people who volunteer their time on the Board and the committees. Nancy thanked everyone for their time and valuable contributions to VES.
- ***Motion: Kim Davidson made the motion to “Approve the 2024 VES Annual Budget as presented”. Susan Zwerman seconded.***
- Nancy noted that she will follow up on Dennis Hoffman’s previous request to create a budget-to-actuals report. Dennis added that it will be valuable to have this info to track how the organization is performing overall. Nancy noted that VES underspent last year so there was more revenue than projected.
- Kim noted that not every expense tracks evenly on a quarterly basis. He asked Dennis to indicate what particular expenses he may be interested in tracking.

- Mike Chambers added that it would be interesting to see how the VFX Voice magazine has performed financially over time since it took several years for the magazine to break even due to its initial high costs.
- Susan Zwerman asked if the royalties section under the VES Handbook is for the Virtual Production Handbook. Nancy confirmed it's for the Virtual Production Handbook and the number on the report is an estimate. Susan announced that the publisher for the VP Handbook told her that it was doing very well and they would be interested in doing a second edition. Nancy noted that she will break out the projections under the Handbook category into 2 entries: one for the VES Handbook and one for the Virtual Production Handbook.
- ***Vote taken on the Motion to approve the 2024 VES budget. Motion passed.***

Board Break-out Groups

- Kim explained that everyone will be randomly placed in breakout groups of 4-5 people. Each person will be asked to introduce themselves within their group and tell everyone one thing that is on their mind today – either personal or VES-related. The group discussions will last for 20 minutes and should focus on ideas or suggestions for getting Board members and Section Board members more involved during meetings and between meetings. He also recommended that the groups discuss ideas for future breakout sessions. One person in each group needs to take notes. The notes can be sent to boardchair@vesglobal.org. Ben sent Board members their group number and the link to join.
- The Board reconvened after the breakout session and there was positive feedback about the breakouts.
- Dan Rosen acknowledged the VES staff for all their hard work in assisting the Awards Committee with the Awards Show. Nancy agreed that the staff deserves recognition for their hard work.
- Mike Chambers encouraged everyone to share their notes from their breakout groups. Kim asked everyone to note two things that they liked about the breakout groups and send them to this email: boardchair@vesglobal.org. Feedback can also be sent to Kim's and Nancy's VES email addresses.
- Breakout group discussion summary notes are shown in the ADDENDUM.

New Business– Kim Davidson

- Susan O'Neal encouraged Board members to join the Membership Committee. The latest applicant cycle has almost 350 applications so the Committee needs help vetting all the paperwork. The Committee meets twice a year in April and October before the May and November Board meetings, respectively. The Committee breaks out in groups and reviews the spring cycle applications on weekends in April. Those interested in joining the Committee can contact Susan at susan@bltreclruiting.com.
- Rose Duignan is Co-Vice-Chair of the Education Committee and her mission has been to reach out to schools and the next generation of prospective visual effects, animation and games practitioners. She noted that the educational resources page is located on the main VES website. There are links on that page to twelve 40-minute presentations from major film pioneers and their contributions to the visual effects pipeline. Over 2,000 students have viewed these presentations. There is also a link on the webpage to an A-Z list of all the visual effects, animation and games companies in the world with live links to their websites. The list was created by Susan Zwerman and Camille Eden. Rose would like to propose that the Luminary videos that were spearheaded by the Archives Committee and include over 30 interviews also be available to the public and be moved from the "VES members only" firewall to an open firewall so students and non-members can access them. Some of the luminaries featured in the videos include Peter Anderson, Ed Catmull, Pete Docter, Dan Curry, John Dkystra and Richard Edlund. Rose noted that the Archives Committee is opposed to sharing these videos outside the member-only firewall would require the approval of the Board Chair and Executive Director. Rose would like to ask the Executive Committee to consider this recommendation and she is asking for the Board's support as well. Discussion on this recommendation followed.
 - Dennis Hoffman agreed with the recommendation and noted the importance of posting these historical and educational recordings which will expand VES' exposure and bring more respect to the organization.
 - Susan Zwerman supported this recommendation and added that the resource page on the website would be a great place for the Luminary videos to be posted.
 - Katherine Brillhart agreed that it would be a great idea and noted that it's important to provide more visibility to the public about the history and legacy of visual effects.
 - Mike Chambers agreed with the recommendation and noted that the VES owns the videos so there shouldn't be any rights issues.
 - David Tanaka is the Co-Chair of the Archives Committee. He added that there are some concerns in that the interviews are cut with inserts, movie clips, etc which may pose some legal issues if moved outside the firewall. The interviews themselves are not a problem. He is not

opposed to the recommendation, but he suggested that it be explored further and the VES may need to consider doing special cuts of the videos to avoid any legal issues.

- Rose explained that she was given permission from former Executive Director Eric Roth a couple of years ago to do the presentations which are currently on the website and which include lots of clips. She noted that there were no legal issues with these presentations at that time. Kim Davidson explained that they may need to seek third party guidance to determine if there are any legal implications in making the Luminary videos accessible outside the firewall.
- Kim asked Rose to write up the benefits of this recommendation and describe what this can accomplish for the VES. Comments to support Rose's recommendation can be sent to roseduignan@me.com.

Kim Davidson adjourned the meeting at 7:11pm.

Next BOD meeting: Wednesday, May 8, 2024 at 6pm PDT

2024 Board of Directors Meeting Dates:

January 10, March 13, May 8, July 10, September 11, November 13

Submitted by Lori Bowman

*Submitted by Rita Cahill
Secretary, VES Board of Directors*

ADDENDUM

Summary compiled from the notes sent by 9 breakout groups on March 13.

Breakout groups of 4-5 were selected randomly and given the instructions:

- Select a notetaker and send notes to BoardChair@vesglobal.org after the meeting.
- Introduce yourself and mention one thing on your mind today (< 1 min each)
- Discuss your ideas for how we can get our Board or your Section Board members more engaged, so they participate beyond just the assigned meetings.

It seems that everyone loved the breakouts, and several felt they were too short at 20 minutes. We should do future breakouts. One suggestion was to have BOD “meetups” on alternate months. While only a few groups discussed the given topic, there were valuable discussions on various topics. Topics and comments that stood out are noted below.

There were good ideas but many of us look to the “VES” to do things, when in fact, we are the VES.

Getting more engagement and commitment from Board members and Section BOMs:

(This was touched on in four of the groups.)

Lack of engagement is the nature of a volunteer organization. Leaders should be specific regarding tasks to be done and then ask (or tell). Give each Board member a specific responsibility outside of board meetings. One idea was to have senior Board members assigned to advise new Board members. Another was to assign Board members to a Section with guidance criteria such as discussing and recording Section events in the VES calendar.

Thought leadership | Education | Member Assistance

Most of the other discussions fell under three broad categories: thought leadership, education, and member assistance. While we have a strong member assistance program, we should do more to ensure members are aware of it. We were reminded that this continues to be a tough time for many members. They felt the VES should be thought leaders and educate the industry on various topics. Two of these topics, AI and respect for VFX, stood out.

Artificial Intelligence

Three groups touched on the topic of AI. They felt we needed to do more to educate and be thought leaders.

Lack of recognition and respect for VFX

A few groups discussed the lack of respect for VFX. One group spend the whole time discussing this topic, and one person stating that it is the worst it's ever been. There is an increased need for educating the industry about VFX.