

**FAI Board of Directors Meeting  
February 13, 2019  
Montreal, Canada**

**In attendance:**

Matt Smith (President)  
Lisa Schwartz (Vice President) – Arrived at 10:30 AM  
Deana McCloud (Secretary)  
Alka Sharma (Treasurer)  
Matt Sever (Member at large)

Lynn Cingari  
Michelle Conceison (Arrived at 10:10 AM)  
Lou DeMarco  
Dom Flemons  
Gil Gastelum  
Chloe Goodyear (Not formally seated)  
Joan Kornblith  
Michael Kornfeld  
Sam Lee  
Sara Leishman (Not formally seated)

Gary Paczosa (Arrived at 3:50 PM)  
Amy Reitnouer  
Ellen Stanley (Arrived at 2:10 PM)  
Denise Stiff  
Meg Tarquinio  
Laura Thomas  
Greg Torrington  
Mary Sue Twohy  
Reid Wick

Aengus Finnan, Executive Director

**Regrets:**

Gerald Torres (Not formally seated; arrived for Feb. 14 meeting)  
Winter weather caused multiple delays for flights and has affected arrival times.

President Matt Smith called the meeting to order at 8:47 AM ET with a quick note about the Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest forms that each Director needs to review and sign. Directors took a few moments and completed this process. Questions were posed and answered regarding potential conflicts and signed forms were returned to the Secretary, to be forwarded to the FAI office.

Board kits were provided on Google Docs and in print form if requested. Matt reviewed the agenda for the next two days, and reminded all Directors that new Board members do not vote on motions during the current day's meeting. They will be formally seated at the AGM on February 14. Incoming Directors were encouraged to discuss items during the meeting prior to the seated Board's voting.

Matt also provided a review of procedure for ExCom elections, indicating that only elected Directors are able to run for office. Appointed Directors may not run for ExCom positions (other than the role of Treasurer).

Directors introduced themselves, and new Directors were welcomed. Matt reviewed the procedure to be put on the list and recognized for discussions.

**Review of Minutes**

Michelle Conceison and Michael Kornfeld emailed corrections to the January draft minutes.

Motion: To approve minutes with the edits noted  
Made by: Michael Kornfeld  
Seconded: Joan Kornblith  
Result: Approved

### **Executive Director's Report**

Aengus reviewed access of all document via Google Docs shared drive.

There is a great deal of excitement about the conference, but it has presented challenges with being in a new city outside of the U.S. Staff has been stellar in their performance in solving any issues that arise. Travel issues due to weather have been challenges as well, but those are being sorted out.

### **Membership**

The Board kit provided an overview of member accounts. FAI currently has 114 more accounts than at the same time in 2018, the majority of these accounts are at the organizational level.

### **Conference Updates**

Conference hotel reservations are on track with past years; however, Aengus did mention that the winter weather may impact the overall final numbers as attendees have problems with travel.

The conference app is the easiest way to navigate the schedule.

Aengus reviewed the Canadian alcohol and smoking laws for all attendees. Alcohol is permitted on the second and third floors. There is no tolerance for alcohol in hallways and areas outside of the hotel rooms on private showcase floors. This information will be posted at registration and communicated to attendees.

### **Development**

Donors to date were listed in the Board kit, with thanks given to the Board for 100% participation in fund raising. A snapshot of Development progress through the end of January notes that donations are ahead of pace when compared against budget revenue goals.

### **Annual Report (FY2018 – July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018)**

For the third year, an Annual Report has been produced and sent to all members and stakeholders.

### **Local Conference Facilitators**

Aengus thanked Greg Torrington for all of his work coordinating plans on a local level in Montreal. Reid Wick is in place and is doing advance work for the 2020 conference in New Orleans.

### **FAI Events**

Dom Flemons was thanked for being at the FAI GRAMMY event in Los Angeles and congratulated on his nomination. Amy Reitnouer was thanked for her role in producing the GRAMMY event in partnership with International Bluegrass Music Association and The Blues Foundation, which marked FAI's first formal partnership with these organizations, and an incredible opportunity to raise the visibility of FAI.

Matt Sever and Laura Thomas were thanked for their work in coordinating a recent reception in Austin to increase visibility in that city. 65 people attended to learn more about the organization's growth and activities. FAI will once again be hosting an official showcase during SXSW in March.

### **Task Force/Committees**

Mary Sue Twohy has been chairing the Folk DJ Task Force and leading the progress with the organization's work on the charts. Aengus thanked her for her leadership in these efforts.

Lou DeMarco will be transitioning Development from a Governance Board to create a Fundraising Board.

### **Kansas City Folk Festival (KCFF)**

The future intention for the KCFF is for it to be its own event in Kansas City. FAI staff will be overseeing the plans, but the event will be run by a local Kansas City committee. The progress is a bit slow, so it is recommended that a more modest one-night event be held in 2019.

### **Montreal Dignitary Recognition**

Aengus noted that three letters of welcome are included in the Board Kit and conference program. These letters are from Grand Chief Joseph Tokwiwo Norton of the Mohawk Council; Valerie Plante, Mayor of Montreal, and Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism (the last being a significant milestone since it one step away from receiving a letter from the Prime Minister).

### **UNESCO**

FAI's 2019 Artist in Residence partnership with UNESCO is a significant achievement, and positions FAI to engage with additional higher-level leaders and organizations in the future. FAI's opportunity to have a place at the table during the recent UNESCO meeting in Paris is indicative of the recognition being given to the organization's role in preserving culture and language and was quite a moving experience.

### **2020 Conference Pricing**

Aengus opened a discussion about the new non-member rates and concerns that have been voiced. The rates are the ones that the Board approved during its August meeting, and the matrix provided reflects only the non-member increase. Members still, and always have, a discounted rate. The decades-old Early Bird rate of \$250 is maintained.

Matt Smith noted that the cost of doing business has increased over the years, and reminded Directors that early commitments will save registrants money. It was his opinion that this was not an unreasonable cost for a conference at this level.

A discussion followed about additional discounts and benefits as well as the possibility of auto-registrations to ensure the lowest possible cost with the option to opt out.

Aengus reported that there is a registration booth on site during the conference to register for the 2020 event.

10 Minute Break at 10 AM

### **Stakeholder Research Presentation**

Slover Linett provided an overview presentation of research data and answered questions for 90 minutes.

Break – Reconvene at 11:17 AM ET

### **Research Presentation Follow-Up**

Michelle Conceison will present an overview report of the research data at the AGM on February 14 to inform members of the results.

Aengus will work with Slover Linett to develop a printed report to be published and sent in written format to members and stakeholders. The target date for this information to be sent is March. Michelle noted that the goal is to share interesting statistics, an overview of the Board response to the data, and the strategy for moving forward.

Aengus stated that this study was a \$40k summary, which reflects an introductory cost of doing research at this level. Conducting more detailed research will require more financial support.

Matt Smith provided new Board members a description about the process for selecting Slover Linett and the first steps of this project.

A discussion followed regarding Slover Linett's proposed next steps for further research and the membership of the Research Committee for the next year, specifically to find out if any new Board members have research experience. In addition, there was discussion about the most important next steps. A few of the topics discussed included:

- Audience and economic impact research as target goals for moving forward.
- Factoring in deeper research on diversity in the ongoing study.
- The need to synthesize information from the research data into all FAI does, creating the opportunity to put a mirror to the organization and incorporate feedback.
- Possibility of asking members for feedback about the most important next steps.

A semi-working lunch break began at 12:10 PM ET. During this break, Matt Smith thanked the Research Committee on this progress of this new initiative that will shape the organization and the community for years to come.

Michelle wanted to acknowledge two members of the Committee who aren't on the board, Erin Benjamin and Linda Fahey, for their work to move things forward.

The Board meeting reconvened at 1:00 PM ET.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Alka Sharma reported that the Finance Committee meets monthly to review financials that Jen and Aengus prepare, and she provided the current financial report. She was happy to report that the financials are in very good shape and order. Noted items in regard to data from the Balance Sheet included the following:

- Cash listed is lower due to the buildout of the new space, a \$154,709.50 cash spent, resulting in \$43,845.01 reduced cash in comparison to last year.
- Auditor adjustment under Prepaid Expense of \$10,000 for the research project.
- Leasehold improvements reflect the cost of the buildout and the in-kind donation of \$25,000 for the design of space.

Notes under Income:

- Conference Membership Fees are ahead of budget and comparable to last year.
- As of January 31:
  - Income for Conference Registration is \$443,900.80. The year-end budget is \$417,500.
  - Income for Conference Sponsorships is \$168,597; year-end budget is \$110,000.
  - Total Conference Income is \$846,313.80; year-end budget is \$795,650.
  - Total for Newsletter Ads is \$10,600; year-end budget is \$3,500.

Notes about Expenses:

- Merchant Fees are higher based on increased income.
- Staff travel is higher than budgeted and will be assessed for future budgetary planning.
- Concert Expense is primarily for the GRAMMY party venue. FAI has committed to spend \$3000 on this event with both IBMA and The Blues Foundation also contributing \$3000.

Alka thanked Jen and Aengus for another amazing year.

### **Membership Report**

Amy Reitnouer reported that the Membership Committee is focusing on activating an advisory council. The Committee is working on this proposal and will present it at a future Board meeting. The four sub-councils of this diversity advisory council will be young professionals, diversity, international presence, and alumni.

### **Radio Charts Task Force**

Mary Sue Twohy noted that the task force has been navigating the transition with the radio charts. As of February 13, FAI has officially taken over the Folk DJ Charts. There is more territory to explore with this evolution as the organization gains more visibility in the public eye and reaches the next level.

The Board expressed thanks to anyone who had been part of the volunteer teams previously and their incredible work. A discussion followed about the future of the task force and ongoing work.

Michael Kornfeld extended his compliments and thanks to Mary Sue for all of her hard work to make this possible. Michelle posed a question in regard to staff and funding for this duty. Aengus noted that senior level staff has discuss ways to make this work. There is room within the budget to support the additional activity. Michelle further noted that the Board needs to acknowledge the need to support staffing a designated person to facilitate in the future.

### **Advocacy Committee Report**

Laura Thomas reported that a Mental Health resource sheet (included in the Board Kit) will be provided to conference attendees in conjunction with this year's CommUNITY Gathering. Michelle posed a question about issues related to the mental health of fans and preparing artists to deal with those issues. Aengus replied that this hasn't been part of the conversation to date. Discussions followed about additional advocacy awareness of mental health for all parties.

Michael provided a PRO update for small venue presenters and non-profit organizations presenting concerts for no more than an audience of 200. Survey results were shared with the sub-committee, and Michael is drafting a letter to present to PROs for further discussion.

### **Officer Elections**

Matt Smith reviewed the procedure for ExCom elections. Deana will send a list of the standing committees and current members.

### **Development Committee**

Lou DeMarco provided an update on the budgeted amount for Board members to fundraise, which is \$10,000 total (\$500 per Director). A database of potential donors has been created. This database along with talking points for an ask will be shared with new Directors. In FY 17, ending June 30, 2018, the Board raised over \$4000. Building key relationships is the key to making an ask. Success came primarily from a few Board members. A discussion followed about best practices for engaging donations.

2:24 PM - Break for 10 minutes

### **Diversity Training**

Aengus provided an introduction of diversity and inclusion training. The organization's goals are to take its value statements and institutionalize that vision in policy. That will be a deeper level focus during the Nashville meeting. Aengus introduced guest speaker Sandy Waddell, Human Rights Officer at the Canadian Human Rights Commission in Ottawa.

Beginning at 2:38 PM, Sandy Waddell provided a training session and opened conversations about building inclusion, focusing on terminology and why human rights are important for any organization.

### **ExCom Elections**

Matt Smith opened the floor for those interested in serving as officers for the next election cycle.

Candidates were:

- President – Lisa Schwartz
- Vice-President – Matt Sever
- Secretary – Deana McCloud
- Treasurer – Alka Sharma
- At Large – Ellen Stanley

With only one candidate per category, the unopposed slate was confirmed.

Matt Smith recognized outgoing Board members and expressed the Board's gratitude for their service. Greg Torrington and Sam Lee were thanked for their term of service, and it was noted that two of the longest serving Board members, Mary Sue Twohy and Michelle Conceison would also be cycling off the Board. Thanks to all for their incredible work.

Lisa Schwartz noted that it was a joy to have had Matt Smith as the FAI leader. The organization is grateful for his ability to speak to anyone at any time, while making it look easy. Matt Smith replied that it was a pleasure to serve with everyone, and that he is looking forward to one more year on the Board.

Aengus noted that Matt Smith will be receiving the Spirit of Folk Award, and reminded all Directors to be at the award ceremony. A public reception will be held at 5:00, and a VIP event at 5:30. A PDF of dignitaries and guests has been sent via email.

Motion: To adjourn  
Made by: Alka Sharma

With all business being conducted, the meeting was adjourned at 3:58 PM ET.