



ROCKY MOUNTAIN DIVISION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR IDENTIFICATION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES FROM THE MEETING JANUARY 7, 2025

I. Call to Order

A. The meeting was called to order at 11:34am by Chair Michelle Podhirny. In attendance were Board Chair Michelle Podhirny, President Scott Miller Vargas, Vice President Amy McCowan, Membership Secretary Mallory Johnson, Treasurer Jessica Rader, Editor Brianna Miller, Historian Elaina Graff, Webmaster Lauren Knudson, Social Media Coordinator Christina Bernardo and Directors Dennis Davenport, Beth McMullen, Tom Nissen and John Zakavec. Executive Secretary Desirae Eha was excused. Regional Representative Heather Hatfield-Schenker and Resolution Committee Chair George Slack were also in attendance.

II. Reading of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

A. There were no additions or corrections to the minutes from the November 5, 2024 Board of Directors meeting. President Miller Vargas moved to accept the minutes as submitted and the motion was seconded by Treasurer Rader. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

III. Correspondence

A. No correspondence was received

IV. Treasurer's Report

A. Treasurer Jessica Rader made a verbal report to the Board. She stated the Division had a total of \$43,606.39; \$30,544.89 in the checking account, \$12,815.50 in the savings account and \$246.00 in the PayPal account as of January 7, 2025. \$21,444.00 is encumbered for the Fall Conference budget, leaving \$22,132.69 in available funds.

Treasurer Rader reported she was experiencing ongoing problems concerning the Division's tax-exempt status with Holtel Colorado. Hotel Colorado will not accept the Division's credit card for tax -exempt payments as the card does not specifically state it is issued to a tax-exempt organization, and the Division's bank does not issue credit cards bearing a tax-exempt disclaimer. Hotel Colorado has not committed in writing that the Division's tax-exempt information is on file despite Past Treasurer Kipple and Treasurer Rader repeatedly sending copies of the RMD's Federal tax-exempt certificate. The Hotel Colorado representative Treasurer Rader had been working with to resolve the issue has left employment. Currently Hotel Colorado does not have the Division's

credit card information on file as required by contract and all payments must be made by check. Treasurer Rader is working with Sandy Ryan of Hotel Colorado to resolve the problem.

Membership Secretary Johnson moved to accept the report, and the motion was seconded by Director Davenport. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

V. Historian's Report

- A. Historian Elaina Graff made a verbal report to the Board. Three orders from the RMD store have been shipped. No other activity to report at this time.

VI. Editor's Report

- A. Editor Brianna Miller made a verbal report to the Board indicating advertising copy was received from Collision and Crime Forensic Solutions and their advertisement was added to the most recent *Silent Witness* edition. The 2024 Conference wrap-up edition, of *The Silent Witness*, Volume 58 Number 4, has been sent to the membership.

Editor Miller stated she is trying to determine when the advertising contracts for several 2024 advertisers expire so she can contact them about renewing their ads for 2025. She is working with Treasurer Rader to determine when each advertiser paid in 2024.

VI. Regional Representative's Report

- A. Regional Representative Heather Hatfield-Schlenker submitted a written report and summarized the report for those who did not receive it in time to read the report prior to the meeting. Regional Representative Hatfield-Schlenker provided specific suggestions and cost estimates for improving visibility for the RMD booth at the Annual IAI Educational Conference that included:
 - Purchasing a custom designed 36" wide x 48" high cloth banner with two grommets at the top and a pole holder for flexible hanging options. The estimated cost is \$100 from signs.com.
 - Using a tablet or small screen to run a promotional video highlighting key RMD Fall Conference details such as dates, location and venue, sessions and speakers. This could be provided by a RMD member attending the IAI Conference at no cost to the Division.

Regional Representative Hatfield-Schlenker also recommended giving away a free 2025 Fall Conference registration in a drawing from the names of people who stop by the RMD booth. There would be no up-front purchase required and the only cost to the Division would be the banquet, snacks and pro-rated venue costs included in each registration fee.

She also suggested printing 500 high quality single-page flyers with essential conference information and a QR code linking to the RMDIAI conference website. Regional Representative Hatfield-Schlenker offered to donate these flyers so there would be no cost to the Division.

"Ask Me About the RMDIAI Conference" custom badge ribbons at a cost of about: \$50 for 100 ribbons through Ribbons Galore were also recommended. These could be worn by RMD members attending the IAI Conference who are helping staff the RMD booth to help facilitate conversations about the 2025 Fall Conference.

Finally, Regional Representative Hatfield-Schlenker recommended the purchase of additional RMD-logoed merchandize such as challenge coins, tote bags and patches to sell at the IAI Conference. She estimated these items could be purchased for approximately \$500.

The Board discussed the suggestions and recommended increasing the challenge coin order to 500 coins. Board Chair Podhirny suggested ordering directly from the manufacturer to reduce costs. President Miller Vargas offered to donate his time to make skinny travel mugs and other RMD merch so long the Division purchased the materials. The Board determined that purchasing additional coins for sale at RMD events, as well as additional RMD merch was warranted, and recommended increasing the budget allocation from the \$800 requested by Regional Representative Hatfield-Schlenker to \$1,300, with unsold merch being offered at the 2025 Fall Conference. Vice President McCowan moved to allocate \$1,300 and the motion was seconded by Director Davenport. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

VII. Webmaster's Report

- A. Webmaster Lauren Knudson submitted a written report indicating that since the November Board of Directors meeting the Jobs and Training section has been updated and some misspellings of Officers and Directors names have been corrected. She is also working with Treasurer Rader and Historian Graff to ensure all store orders are being paid for and filled in a timely manner.

Webmaster Knudson reported she was contacted by Weebly and told the current website hosting package was being discontinued, and that if we renewed our plan on January 14, 2025 the Division would be upgraded to a premium plan at a cost of \$1,632 for two (2) years. This is over twice the \$504 the Division paid in January 2023 for two years of Weebly website hosting. There was some discussion of researching other hosting sites to save money, but Webmaster Knudson said she did not think there was enough time to adequately research and vet alternate host sites in just seven (7) days, and that given the potential obstacles involved in migrating the Division's entire website to a new host she preferred to extend the contract with Weebly.

President Vargas Miller moved to allocate \$1,632 to renew the Weebly contract for 2025 and 2026, and the motion was seconded by Vice President McCowan. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

VIII. Social Media Coordinator's Report

- A. Social Media Coordinator Christine Bernardo provided an update on social media activity. LinkedIn reached 23 new members, Facebook had eight (8) new and Instagram gained six (6) followers. This was a significant decrease in social media activity that Social Media Coordinator Bernardo attributed to the holiday season.

IX. Committee Reports

A. Audit Committee

No Report. The Audit Committee will not meet again until after the 2025 Fall Conference.

B. Membership and Credentials Committee

Membership Secretary Johnson submitted the names of 12 applicants for membership to the Board for consideration:

- Maria Justham, Aurora PD - active
- Katherine Shipley, Aurora PD - active
- Courtney Adams, Aurora PD - active
- Sue Roche, Aurora PD - active
- Christina Caruso, Aurora PD - active
- Fernando Barrios Dominguez, Aurora PD - active
- Chanel Ewing, Aurora PD - active
- Shanina Martinez, Denver PD - active
- Dustin Snyders, Denver PD - active
- Gabrielle Stublensky, Denver PD - active
- Pragatha Kannan, Adams County SO – active
- Elizabeth Velazquez, MSU Denver - student

Membership Secretary Johnson said that payment was pending from applicants Martinez, Snyders and Stublensky. Applicant Velazquez has not yet submitted her transcript confirming her student status. President Miller Vargas moved to accept all 12 applicants for active and associate membership with the condition that payment is received from applicants Martinez, Snyders and Stublensky and that applicant Velazquez submit her transcript before they are granted member status. The motion was seconded by Director Nissen, and the motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Membership Secretary Johnson also reported 73 members have renewed for 2025 but that 56 members remain in arrears for 2024. She has reached out to the members who did not pay in 2024.

She also reported that several members of the Membership Retention and Recruitment Committee helped with verifying the information supplied by applicants for membership.

C. Membership Retention and Recruitment Committee

Chair Mallory Johnson made a verbal report indicating the MRRC met November 2, 2024 and that the next meeting was scheduled for January 8, 2025. There have been no new webinars. The Committee recommended creating incentives or rewards for long term (15 and 20 year) members, as well as for members who refer new applicants. These incentives could be RMD store credit or merchandize.

Chair Johnson also reported the Committee was working to create an "I want to see" webpage to solicit topic ideas for future webinars.

D. Resolution Committee

Chair George Slack submitted a written report indicating Board Chair Podhirny had tasked the Committee with developing a draft policy for the creation of an appointed Sergeant at Arms for each Annual Conference. The draft policy was submitted to the Board and there was a lengthy discussion about the having a Sergeant at Arms who would be the primary point of contact for attendees experiencing problems at conferences.

Regional Representative Hatfield-Schlenker asked what type of incidents had occurred at previous conferences to inspire discussion of a Sergeant at Arms appointment, and if they involved attendees or outside persons. Board Chair Podhirny said both had been involved, with an outside person raising concerns in Estes Park and a non-member attendee behaving in a manner some other attendees believed to be inappropriate in Glenwood Springs.

Directors Davenport and Zakavec expressed concern over the recommendation that the Sergeant at Arms be a sworn peace officer in the state where the conference was held. Board Chair Podhirny told the Board that recommendation was made because peace officers generally have better training and experience in conflict resolution and dealing with potentially disruptive individuals. Director Zakavec warned that having a peace officer in the Sergeant at Arms role this could lead to a situation where the Sergeant at Arms took action that could be construed as interference in an investigation or the Sergeant at Arms could become an outcry witness subject to subpoena if the issue

ended up in court. Director Zakavec also said there are situations where Colorado law requires peace officers to take action and the individual and/or the Division might be liable should the Sergeant at Arms fail to take required action. Directors Davenport and Zakavec also expressed concern over civil liability the Division might face if the Sergeant at Arms removed a paid attendee from the conference. Director Nissen supported the sworn officer concept, stating the Sergeant at Arms needed to fully understand the ramifications of taking or not taking action.

President Miller Vargas suggest that it be made clear the duty of the Sergeant at Arms was simply a primary point of contact for reporting incidents. Treasurer Rader recommended just making an announcement during the opening ceremony to report problems to the President or Vice President. She added that if the Division chose to create a Sergeant at Arms position the Division should cover any liability.

There was also concern over the Sergeant at Arms being an appointed position restricted to current Officers and Directors. The present Board only has four (4) sworn peace officers, limiting the candidate pool. Director Zakavec said he was concerned that if the Sergeant at Arms had enforcement duties it might impact willingness of the Sergeant at Arms' agency to allow their employee to attend the conference as the Sergeant at Arms duties could interfere with workshop attendance.

The Board requested that the Resolution Committee further research if other Divisions have a Sergeant at Arms, if the position is elected or appointed, and what duties are imposed on such positions. Discussion of the proposed policy was tabled until the next Board meeting to provide the Resolution Committee time to research how other Divisions address this issue.

E. Jimmy C. Ramsey Training Reimbursement Program Committee

Chair George Slack submitted a written report indicating that the member who was pre-approved for training in Las Vegas submitted the required documentation and had been reimbursed \$500 for personally paid training expenses

On December 31, 2024, \$3,865.49 in unreimbursed 2024 Ramsey funds reverted to the General Fund. Chair Slack requested the Board set the 2025 Ramsey Program Budget. Treasurer Rader calculated that with the \$21,444 allocated by the Board for the IAI Conference and the \$1,300 approved for the purchase of the banner and merchandize for the IAI conference promotions, 25% of available funding required the allocation of \$5,154.10 for 2025 reimbursements.

F. Conference Planning Committee

Conference Planning Committee Chair McCowan reported the 2025 Conference Planning Committee held its first meeting in November 2024 where they divided into sub-committees for the various conference jobs and discussed the results of both the attendee and exhibitor surveys. Exhibitor surveys indicated that exhibitor representatives would like to see changes made to the layout, food placement and the removal of the tall curtains between the booths. Some representatives also indicated that they disliked the way foot traffic decreased during attendance appreciation prize drawings; the room was full but everyone gathered around the RMD table during the drawings and they had no potential customer to talk to. The possibility of a dedicated Wednesday night activity held in the Exhibition Room was raised.

Attendees were less specific but some said they would like to see more hands-on crime scene classes. They said the photography (Depth of Field) workshop was too basic and they would prefer more advanced programming.

Director Davenport asked if they had said what specific type of crime scene classes respondents requested. VP/committee chair McCowan said most attendee survey responses were not specific, only requesting more advanced training. Editor Miller said she attended a conference where a mock crime scene workshop offered a 30 or 40-minute orientation to scene processing followed by a 2-hour hands-on scene. The workshop concluded with an analysis of how participants processed the scene, what they found, what they missed, etc. She said it was a very good class.

Director Zakavec, a member of the IAI Crime Scene Certification Board, warned that the IAI was becoming increasingly diligent about vetting credits for training and said it is imperative that workshop certificates are signed by the instructor listed on the IAI's records for that workshop. He said it is also necessary to ensure the workshop title on the certificate exactly matches the workshop title the IAI Boards have indicated they will accept for credit. Failure to match title and instructor name/signature to IAI records may result in rejection of the workshop credits, especially for initial certification.

Chair McCowan told the Board the 2025 Fall Conference has been listed on the IAI Division Conferences webpage. Hopefully, this will serve as a "save the date" announcement for out-of-state IAI members as well as a scheduling aid for other Divisions planning a Fall conference. The committee also discussed a possible New Mexico venue for the 2026 conference as well as the informational flyers to be sent to past and prospective exhibitors. The next Planning Committee meeting is scheduled for January 23, 2025.

X. Old Business

- A. Board Chair Podhirny reiterated her suggestion that the Division develop a Code of Conduct that could be attached to both membership applications and to the conference registration requiring prospective members and conference registrants to agree to abide by standards of professional behavior. This suggestion met with general acceptance and Board Chair Podhirny and Resolution Committee chair Slack were asked to research what Codes of Conduct other Divisions might have and bring the results before the Board.
- B. Board Chair Podhirny revisited looking into liability insurance for future conferences in addition to any insurance the Division may have through the Parent Body. Regional Representative Hatfield-Schenker reported that the IAI no longer insures conferences, but the IAI had sent her the names of several insurance companies that do offer such coverage. Discussion turned to whether the Division should pursue Directors and Officers insurance, liability insurance for just the conference, or a combination of the two. Regional Representative Hatfield-Schenker was tasked with contacting some of the companies recommended by the IAI for pricing and policy information and will report back to the Board at the next meeting.
- C. Board Chair Podhirny reintroduced the idea of creating a "Forensic Unit of the Year" or similar motivational tool to increase awareness of and participation in the Division. This award could recognize all of the good work performed by the various forensics and crime scene units in the region served by the Division. President Miller-Vargas suggested spotlighting a difference unit each month on social media. Social Media Coordinator Bernardo reported that she tried to solicit nominations for forensic units from the membership and had no response. She said she was looking into creating a Google nominating form rather than a Word form in the hopes a more user-friendly nomination form would draw a better response. Membership Secretary Johnson recommended including New Mexico and Wyoming in the eligibility. President Miller Vargas agreed, and also suggested that closer to the Fall Conference the Board could look at the forensic units spotlighted on social media and choose one to receive the "Unit of the Year" award at the conference.

XI. New Business

- A. Board Chair Podhirny asked for reasons why members might not be able to physically attend all Board meetings. Inclement weather was the most obvious concern, but Director Davenport cited workload as well as time and distance. Treasurer Rader concurred, saying that as a technical lead she was reluctant to be out of contact for

several hours in case employees in her unit had questions. Vice President McCowan said court was also a potential conflict. There was also concern that requiring mandatory in-person meetings would discourage members who don't work in the Denver-Metro area from applying for Officer or Director positions.

Board Chair Podhirny asked if holding meetings over the noon hour and including lunch would encourage attendance. There is precedent for the Division purchasing meals; this was a common practice in the 1990's and early 2000's, and most conference Board meetings occur during dinner paid by the Division. There was no opposition to this suggestion.

Discussion then moved to whether all or just certain meeting should require mandatory attendance. Board Chair Podhirny suggested the first meeting after the election should be in-person to allow new Board members to get to know one another. She also stressed that meetings when merchandise for sale at the conference store are previewed should be in-person. President Miller Vargas said he believed the final meeting before the conference should also be in-person. Board Chair Podhirny suggested making one-half of the meetings in-person but there was significant concern that setting a specific number of mandatory in-person meetings would be too restrictive and would not allow enough flexibility. The final consensus was that all meetings should be scheduled at a physical location but that a virtual option be available to Board members who are unable to travel to the meeting venue.

The Resolution Committee was tasked with developing a policy concerning virtual meeting attendance and present it to the Board at the next meeting.

XII. Next Meeting

- A. March 27, 2025
12:00 Noon
Future Forward
12521 Washington Street
Thornton, CO 80241

XIII. Adjournment

- A. Director Davenport moved to adjourn the meeting and the motion was seconded by Membership Secretary Johnson. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 1:11pm.