

**Minutes**  
**Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Association**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**  
**San Antonio Texas**  
**October 3, 2024**

**Call to Order:** President Eric Schnaible called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. CST.

**Roll Call:** Secretary Chuck Merlo called the roll. A quorum was present.

**Board Members Present:** Chairman John Dorrian (by phone), President Eric Schnaible, Vice President Carla Sylvester, Secretary Chuck Merlo, Julie Briggs, Dick Cole, Jim McGuire, Perry Nouis.

**Board Members Absent:** Linda Chick Haseloff, Cheryl Law

**Others Attending:** Art Forster, Jay DeFrank, John Gura, Christine Queen, Judy Bivens, Clem Gaines, John Terino, Jim Hart, Dave Smith

**Minutes of the Last Board Meeting:** Chairman John Dorrian asked for approval of the minutes of the board meeting conducted August 9, 2024. **Judy Bivens moved** to approve the minutes. **Dick Cole seconded.**  
**Motion Passed.**

**SAF/PA Update:** Colonel Allen Heritage was not present.

**Financial Report:** Chief Financial Officer Phil Ratliff pointed out the balance of the Endowment Fund at the end of August was \$596,341. September added another \$7,000 to bring the balance to more than \$603,000. He transferred \$10,000 to checking to pay for expenses of the annual meeting but at the end of last week, the balance was back up over \$603,000 due to the strength of the stock market. Phil praised financial committee members Jim McGuire and Hank Hufnagel for their hard work and expertise in charting our financial decisions. Jim McGuire was asked if our financial positions were modified on a frequent basis (daily, weekly, monthly). Jim replied that AFPAA has mostly conservative mutual funds and a few aggressive ones and the committee meets on a quarterly basis to review their performance and decide if there needs to be any changes.

He emphasized it is not a short term trading vehicle. The company we are with has a great reputation for performing for and protecting their client. He said the committee feels a very strong fiduciary responsibility to the association and aims to get steady performance rather than shoot for the moon and put funds at great risk. Phil Ratliff pointed out to Jim Hart that AFPAA had more than doubled Jim's goal of having \$300,000 in the Endowment Fund and Jim thanked the committee for their hard work and due diligence. Phil was asked how were the finances for this year's meeting and he reported that unlike last year's meeting in Tampa, the 2024 annual meeting looked like it would actually break even.

**Clem Gaines moved** to approve the financial report. **Jim Hart seconded.**  
**Motion Passed.**

### **Committee Reports**

A. **Annual Meeting Committee:** Perry Nouis stated the hotel events were going to be centered around the same area as where the board was meeting.

1. Itinerary: Perry discussed the full itinerary including Friday's tour of Lackland including the tour of the 37<sup>th</sup> Training Wing, the President's Luncheon. Lt Madison Marsh, the current Miss America, will be joining us for lunch. The President's Award will be given to a Mr. Girt. After the lunch, there will be a briefing by Colonel Wickman of the Air Force Public Affairs Agency. Once we get back to the hotel, the rest of the day is your choice. A number of people have signed up for the river cruise and spaces are still available. Saturday, we have PJ Crowley lined up to discuss world hot spots, General Ed Thomas has some recruiting guys coming to brief us on the Air Force's latest efforts and challenges to bring in quality people. General Alfred Flowers is going to be briefing us on the Air Force budgetary environment. Finally, Ken Raimondi will be talking about Artificial Intelligence. Chuck Merlo said Cindy Dalton would like to have a table set up to highlight the many Air Force band albums her father collected over the years. She planned to offer each album for a minimum five dollar donation to the Dalton Scholarship fund. Perry said he'd have a table set up and she could talk about the albums at the membership meeting. Perry said Beth Horine would represent SAF/PA at the Director's Luncheon. The membership meeting is scheduled for 2 p.m. Saturday followed by the reception and Awards Banquet and Hall of Fame induction that evening.

2. Future Annual Membership Meeting: Perry said there had been requests to get the annual meeting back on the Spring schedule. He and Phil Ratliff had talked with Bud Ross about changing the hotel reservation from Fall 2025 to April/May 2026 timeframe. Jay DeFrank suggested instead of going to the West coast, could we talk to SAF/PA about conducting the annual meeting around the PA Worldwide. It would be nice to do something in conjunction with SAF/PA so we could bring the two organizations together. Jay said both Jerry Renne and Allen Herritage seemed amenable to it when it was discussed during the transition. Perry said he would explore that possibility. Jim McGuire asked if this would put a greater burden on SAF/PA project officers already working either the Worldwide or AFA. Jay said we could possibly ask a PA shop at a local base like in the DC area to assist us. Art Forster suggested setting up an event during AFA like the luncheon sponsored by AIA. Different board members wanted to ensure that whatever was planned it would not be an additional burden on SAF/PA. Jay added if Worldwide was held in conjunction with AFA, we could actually offer speakers or members for a panel to SAF/PA since the competition for speakers is so great between the two events. Perry said Bud Ross is supposed to forward recommendations for the next Annual Membership Meeting to share with the board. Eric Schnaible thanked Perry and his committee for the great lineup.

**B. Membership:** Christine Queen reported although membership numbers went down earlier in the year because we deleted members who had not paid their dues, the numbers were starting to climb again. She said BAE Systems was sponsoring the printing of the directory. Christine thanked Jim McGuire and Carla Sylvester for recruiting a new Life Member. Christine said there was only one member left on the Life payment plan. Christine explained the process for requesting funding from BAE for the directory and she always sends a candy bouquet to those at the organization who assist us. Mike Paoli asked what is being done to grow the membership and suggested an annual membership meeting in conjunction with SAF/PA Worldwide might help recruiting. Christine explained how present members recruit or sponsor new members. Additionally, membership applications are offered to DINFOS graduates and we have had a number of enlisted and officer graduates pay for three year memberships. Art Forster said he thought membership from DINFOS graduates would increase once AFPAA's Hall of Fame display up on the school house wall.

**C. Website:** Jim McGuire said there wasn't much new about the website itself but that AFPAA had entered into a partnership with Club Express. Club Express is a company that offers membership management, software programs and processes for clubs and associations. It is the best of the companies offering these types of services and the Army Public Affairs Association and a number of other veterans groups use them. The goal is to eventually start moving some of the website functions over to Club Express because they offer a much more robust and secure system. While Jim can do simple programming for features or items seen by visitors to our website, anything like financial transactions, we have to ask our current web hosts to do that for us. While they have been extremely supportive of us over the years, in the background some of those systems are very old. The transition to Club Express will provide us a much more robust and secure system. Jim said the transition was very slow because so much work is involved to get things done in the background. Right now, we are in a test phase where we are limited to eight members. Those people, many of whom are in the meeting right now, will be monitoring their portion of the system. For example, Jim McGuire, Phil Ratliff and John Gura are all administrators. We also have coordinators who handle specific transactions like Christine is the membership coordinator. We are in the process of learning how to work the system and at some point we will transition those parts that are transaction-based. For example, applying for or renewing a membership, making a donation to the Endowment Fund and meeting registration. It will take awhile but Jim is building a homepage for the Club Express website for that purpose. Longer term, we will open it up for all the members and we'll start moving each of the pages on the present website to the Club Express location. It's going to be a lot of work but the final product will be worth it. Club Express with their great support will help those who follow us assume our positions and responsibilities. Art Forster asked for a discussion of the price difference between our present web hosts and Club Express. Phil Ratliff and Jim McGuire explained we presently have four providers. Club Express will replace all four. Presently we are paying PayPal for every single transaction for meeting registration, membership, challenge coins, etc. Constant Contact is our provider for The Blast. Rackspace does our group emails/group aliases. Precision Pros does the website hosting. We will pay Club Express a negligible amount per member per month for their services and for financial transactions, Club Express will charge a fraction of what PayPal charges us. Jim McGuire said the cost for Club Express amounts to thirty cents a member each

month or between \$150 to \$200 a month. Phil said this would be substantially less than what we pay the other three companies while providing AFPAA with more professional services and greater cyber protection. A question was raised if pop-up advertising would be allowed on the Club Express pages and Jim replied it wouldn't. He also showed board members what a member page would look like using one of the coordinators' page.

**D. Communication/Newsletter:** Dick Cole reported the next newsletter was on track and would be published after the annual meeting to include the news and photos in the issue. Dick was setting a Shutterfly account so photos of the annual meeting could be uploaded and downloaded by participants at no cost. Jim McGuire said he would use the same photos on the AFPAA website. Dick said he and Phil Ratliff had been discussing getting a mailing permit of our own to lower our postage costs in distributing the newsletter. Presently our printer mails out the newsletter. They also sort out the mailing by zip code (which is required) and deliver the newsletters to the post office. So the cost includes all those services. Phil Ratliff said the advantage of using our own permit is we could get a lower rate permit as a veterans organization. This would lower our mailing cost by 35 percent. The only complication is the mailing permit must be filed in the same locality as the post office being used. Our printer is in Alexandria and so the organization would need to have someone in our organization living there register it for us. Dick is checking with the owner to see if they would be willing to continue those services but use our mailing permit but he hasn't yet responded. John Gura said if we do pursue our own permit, to make sure which class postage we would be using since presently the newsletters are first class. Christine McQueen suggested we ask younger members of the organization if they want to receive an electronic version rather than a mailed hard copy to further reduce costs. Dick Cole said older members of the organization many times wanted a printed hard copy they could hold in their hands. Mike Paoli related a story about how in 2010 he was dressed down by a 90-year old, one of the founding fathers of PA, for not having a smartphone. That as a PA professional I should be keeping up on the latest technology. So as a member of PA, regardless of age, we should be advocating the use of the latest communications technology. He didn't think we should be holding back simply because a few members want to hold a hard copy in their hands. Jim McGuire said as soon as the newsletter is about to be mailed, he posts a .pdf copy on the website that can be downloaded and printed by each individual member if

they want a hard copy. He stated the Club Express will also upgrade our membership application which can include additional questions. One question already built into the Club Express website is “Do you want to receive an electronic copy or a printed copy of the newsletter?” Dick Cole said the file sizes of the .pdf copies can be quite large and presents a problem when emailing them. Christine and Jay DeFrank said since a link is available on our website that wouldn’t be a problem. If the .pdf file size is extremely large when Dick transmits the issue to Jim McGuire for the website, the use of a dropbox prevents any problem. Christine was asked how many members do not have an email address. She said about fifteen. Christine said there is also a problem with some members using their company-related email rather than their personal one and this can cause problems with firewalls and bounce back.

**E. Oral History Program:** John Gura reported we have 42 oral histories online. Two more are in the pipeline. The system we have keeps track of statistics and in the month of September, we had 87 visits. The average amount of time spent on each visit was a little over an hour so people are reading the histories. John stated he was looking for volunteers who would be willing to conduct interviews as well as suggestions of people who are good subjects for an oral history.

**F. Facebook:** Judy Bivens said while we only have about 500 dues-paying members, there are around a thousand members on our Facebook page. She said the additional Facebook followers are current or former PAs and even spouses who must answer a series of questions regarding their rank and where they have or are presently serving. This allows us to weed out bots or people who don’t have any connection with our career field. Our most engaged posts are those that include photos and memories. That is really popular with our Facebook followers. She encouraged members to post this type of thing because it encourages interaction with others in our group. Eric Schnaible asked if we ever have had a problem with Facebook members “flaming” others like he’s seen on other Air Force pages. Judy said there was only one time she had to step in and remind people to be kind and civil to each other but it really hasn’t been a problem. Judy was asked if we use the page to promote membership in AFPAA. Judy said we do and Christine Queen said we use Facebook to highlight new members. Chuck Merlo had a concern about discussing practices we used when we were on active duty that really aren’t applicable anymore....like Unit Public Affairs Representatives. Mike

Paoli replied there is not an “official” UPAR program but on his base, they use a volunteer program to help feed their internal communications. Chuck related how PAs were assigned to each flying squadron on Tyndall AFB, even flying with them, so PAs had a better understanding of the mission and had formed personal relations with key members of the squadrons. This allowed for trust to be developed between them which was critical later when a major accident occurred and they had to be available for a press briefing and questions. Judy said this would fit under “Best Practices” and would be a good subject to share.

**G. Social Media/Value Added:** Jay DeFrank said Colonel Beth Horine had created an AFPAA LinkedIn page and encouraged members to visit it. He said there was a lot of unrecognized value in social media even with just the two the organization has...Facebook and LinkedIn. It requires us to work as a group to realize their potential. You have to follow them, Like them, share things and post things to keep the momentum going but more importantly keep the visibility and the engagement going. The way the algorithm on Facebook works is the more engagement takes place, the more Facebook will show it to you and other people who have a similar interest. If you're a low engagement site, you're not going to come up that often. He related how he visits a wide range of Facebook sites for just short times a day and one he found exceptionally fascinating involved notable people or incidents. They're broken down, in keeping with everyone's low attention spans these days, to be able to be read in about 20 seconds. But they're fascinating so you engage with them. If we had a way to break out interesting little things about our Hall of Famers and from our Oral Histories, they are such a rich resource, he thought it would spur the same type of engagement and interest. One of those resources is his own oral history he has been building. MJ Jadick had heard me talking about breaking these things up into small clips and she just sent him seven brief clips that someone MJ works with had created. If we did something like this with the information we already possess, there is no reason they couldn't become video clips and video podcasts. If we had the manpower to select and create clips such as this, we could easily place them on Facebook and crossfeed them with the Air Force Public Affairs Facebook page or to put them on LinkedIn. DeeDee Hatfield and Angela Billings are on LinkedIn all the time with these fascinating little anecdotes. I want to make a pitch at our Annual Meeting for our members to get engaged with social media. Not just liking and sharing things but to also help John Gura to do some outreach on specific subject oral histories. Jay had a

discussion with Allen Herritage regarding his idea for oral histories on our members' experiences and deployments during the global war on terrorism. But he seemed more interested in our members' experiences transitioning from the blue suit to the civilian world. Not just industry but we also have people who moved into academia, the non-profit sector and other government jobs. What he seemed interested in was our member's experiences on how to succeed and things that hindered their success. If we had the manpower, we could do oral histories on specific subjects and then post them on the oral history site catalogued by subject. One thought he had, guardedly, is if we had interns who would work on this for credit. He said guardedly because interns require supervision to keep them on track and to prevent them possible doing something that might create a problem for the organization. But Jay said he used interns during his time with the Air Force, industry and non-profits. They served on both the press desk in the Air Force and at Pratt & Whitney, they got some of their best new employees from their cadre of interns. We could get some interns to help us or even volunteers from the active force on their non-duty time to assist us at no cost to the organization. There was some discussion regarding legal and liability issues. Dick Cole talked about his time at the University of Maryland when he was working with Mike Gannon and they were always looking for work/study subjects they could set up for students. Mike is still on the UM faculty and there might be an inroad there to set up some students to assist us in the DC area. Jay said Allen Freitag may provide us a similar capability at UNC. He also added we could reach out through AFROTC channels because there may be cadets in our area who might be interested in doing an internship with a military-related organization. Jay said if the board thinks that is a path worth pursuing (conceptually), would it be okay to solicit the members if they know interns that might be looking for credit.

## **Old Business:**

- A. Hall of Fame:** Art Forster mentioned the representative of the Glen Miller family at our induction ceremony was to be Dennis Spragg, curator of the Glenn Miller collection at the University of Colorado. Unfortunately, he recently suffered a fall at home and is unable to travel. The Miller collection includes all his professional papers and music. Spragg is also affiliated with the Glenn Miller Museum in Miller's hometown in Iowa. Glenn Miller's daughter, Johnnie Miller,



who is 80 is aware of the ceremony but would not be in attendance because of health issues.

- 1) DINFOS Display Design: Art said he had received good feedback from the proposal for the wall display at DINFOS which had circulated. He was looking at incorporating the suggestions including featuring the old Air Corps patch worn in WWII by General Hap Arnold as well as the public affairs badge. Art said he thought the cost of the display was modest for the amount of work involved and they have identified a space in the schoolhouse where it would be placed. Art also said they would give the Air Force Public Affairs Agency an opportunity to comment on the display since they had come on board with some questions and concerns of our organization in the past. Chuck Merlo inquired if Art was working with a company on the list of approved suppliers. Art said he had just recently received the list from Jay DeFrank and hadn't gotten a chance to go through it. Art said he had selected a contractor that had already done multiple displays at DINFOS and had all the required security checks and ID badges so it should be a smooth transition. John Gura asked if the display would be permanent or would it change as new members were added to the Hall of Fame. Art said the display was permanent because it will be a standalone and it would need to be unchanging since DINFOS could not provide any assistance with it. For example, a video monitor was not included because DINFOS staff would not be available to even turn it on or off. That is why a QR code was incorporated into the design which would allow someone to go to the AFPAA website for information on all the inductees, not just the Pioneer class shown on the display.
- 2) DINFOS Display Cost: Art asked if there were additional comments about the cost. Jim McGuire, as Phil Ratliff's proxy, said Phil thought the display was too expensive and if it came up for a vote, he would vote no. Julie Briggs disagreed and thought the cost was on target. She did ask how large is the display. Art said it would cover an entire wall. Julie said for that large of a display, she thought the price was economical. Chuck Merlo said since the display would serve AFPAA and the students of DINFOS for years to come, he would not want it cheapened to meet an otherwise reasonable cost goal. He thought the cost was not out of line. Jay DeFrank said he would advise present board members it was well worth the cost to do it right...

anything that doesn't look first-class would not make a good first impression of who we are. Lou Timmons said an artist gave an initial figure on a proposed display came up with a price double what was now proposed. Lou also stated the location, across from the Air Force Public Affairs display, was excellent. Chuck Merlo asked if we should canvass members for donations to defray the cost. Art Forster said that with almost \$600,000 in the bank, we shouldn't have to do that for an \$8,000 expenditure. John Dorrian asked if we should have a vote on the expenditure. Art said we should defer the vote until we have the final design. We should also present this to the Air Force Public Affairs Agency before moving forward. Art said he would work with Lou Timmons to come up with an email to Jerry Renne and Alan Herriage on how best to present this to the public affairs agency. Jay DeFrank agreed saying it would show our good faith in listening to their concerns in the past and it helps build a good relationship. Jim McGuire and John Dorrian both agreed. Clem Gaines mentioned they have built a good relationship with the new DINFOS Deputy Commandant, Colonel Kim Bender, and this should help as we move forward with the display.

**B. Dalton Scholarship:** Chuck Merlo thanked Julie Briggs and Mike Paoli for their assistance in reviewing and selecting the recipients and to Carla Sylvester for her advice and counsel. Six recipients were selected this year because a scholarship from the first year was not used. Three of the six had already contacted him and two have been paid. He thanked Phil Ratliff for getting the funds to the recipients in such a timely manner.

**C. Logo and Bylaws:** Jim Hart reported the logo information has been filed with the U.S. Patent Office. The office has acknowledged receipt of the application. It takes some time to get approved and Jim will notify the board when that occurs. The Bylaws as published on the website and the directory represent the most up-to-date information. There is one small technical change referencing associate members that needs to be made but since it doesn't affect recruitment or membership in any way, it will not be altered until we have another change in the bylaws. Jim McGuire raised a question about updating the registered agent's address on the website, but this issue was deferred for a future board meeting.

**D. Club Express:** Jim McGuire provided an update on the progress of the Club Express project, detailing the transfer of the membership database

from the Excel spreadsheet Christine has maintained, the establishment of a merchant account so we could handle financial transactions through Club Express so we would no longer have to depend on PayPal, and the assignment of three administrators and five coordinators. The administrators are Jim McGuire, Phil Ratliff and John Gura. Administrators can access any part of the control panel for our account. Coordinators will only be able to access the areas of the control panel for which they are responsible. He also mentioned the creation of training videos and tutorials for the coordinators and administrators. Jim stated a lot more work needs to be done before we go public with the members. Since it is Club Express's policy to send out a welcome note to all the members, we want to make sure members are aware of the changes and how they can access the system. There will be an article in the latest newsletter about Club Express and there will need to be training provided at the Annual Meeting in October. John Dorrian thanked Jim for the enormous amount of work he had undertaken to make AFPA's use of Club Express possible. John said it brings enormous improvements to how we operate our organization and benefits everyone.

**E. Archives Project:** Jim McGuire said there was an article in the latest newsletter regarding the archives project and soliciting help from members in locating documents/items that might be important to our historical records. Linda Chick Haseloff is the archives coordinator on Club Express. There will be a document library where we'll be able to store all the archive material Linda is able to collect and categorize. It will be much easier to be able to search for materials once they have been inputted into Club Express and the system is up and running. Art Forster asked if Linda had gotten all the documents Tom Dolney had been storing. Jim and Perry Nouis stated they were aware Tom and Linda had been in communication but didn't know if any documents Linda had received.

## **New Business**

**A. President's Report:** Eric Schnaible asked Perry Nouis if there were any indications why members haven't registered for the annual meeting in greater numbers. Perry said information and solicitations for the annual meeting registration have gone out on Blast and it's been in the newsletter but registration is lagging by about 20 to 30 members. The only change in the registration this year is by mail vs online but Perry couldn't see how that would have made such a difference to responses.

**B. DINFOS Alumni Training Day:** Clem Gaines stated he had attended the alumni training day at DINFOS on August 8th. At one of the training sessions, he met a woman whose first boss was Mark Rosenker and she talked about his leadership and capabilities. Clem said his point was that you never know who you will meet at these training sessions and encouraged others to attend the training when offered.

**Chairman John Dorrian:** John asked for any further comments.

With no further business, **Carla Sylvester moved to adjourn, Jim McGuire seconded and the motion passed.** The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:05 p.m. EST.

Minutes prepared by Secretary Chuck Merlo.