

Virginia Coalition for Open Government
(Draft) Minutes, Winter Board Meeting
Friday, March 14, 2008
Hotel Roanoke
Roanoke, VA

Present: Wat Hopkins, president; Dorothy Abernathy, vice president; Ed Jones, secretary; Lee Albright; Cy Dillon; John Edwards; Craig Fifer; Peter Maroney; Lawrence McConnell; John Moen; Matt Paxton; Ginger Stanley, Virginia Press Association; Peter Easter, Virginia Association of Broadcasters; Jennifer Perkins, executive director; Megan Rhyne, associate director.

President Hopkins called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the fall board meeting in Richmond. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Jennifer Perkins reported that she and Megan Rhyne continue to deal with a number of public inquiries regarding access. Peter Maroney suggested that VCOG keep track of the trends in inquiries.

Rhyne said an offer will be made this week for a summer intern from a Virginia law school. Rhyne also authored an op-ed piece for the coming Sunshine Week.

Perkins said an \$8,000 grant from the National Freedom of Information Coalition is being processed. She hopes to finish a newsletter in the near future.

Perkins discussed her activities during the recent General Assembly session. She expressed regret over the passage of a bill that would create an exemption for anonymous donors to the University of Virginia. A proposal to restrict access to information about concealed weapons permits was referred to the FOI Advisory Council. Peter Easter and Ginger Stanley both reported that it's growing increasingly difficult to win on access issues in the assembly, with many of the FOI champions having retired. Craig Fifer, who also serves on the FOI Advisory Council, said the council is considering ways to encourage the referral of legislative proposals concerning FOI and access to the council for first review.

John Edwards and Easter were recognized for being chosen as new inductees into the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame

Perkins discussed the budget and cash-flow situation. She said updated information for the current budget year will be provided electronically to the board by the end of April. She noted

that \$22,000 will eventually be transferred from reserves to the operating account, as provided for in the budget. Hopkins indicated that Perkins might consider proposing for the next budget year that up to 5 percent of undesignated reserves be made available during the year for the operating budget. Guidelines already restrict transfers to interest rather than principal.

Perkins announced preliminary details for the Access Conference near Fredericksburg in May. Special rates will be available at the Wingate Inn of Fredericksburg. Perkins will be working on program details. Lucy Dalglish, Matt Paxton, Lawrence McConnell and Ed Jones will advise her on possible award recipients.

Perkins said she would be focusing on fundraising during the summer months.

Maroney moved approval of seven new member applicants. Cy Dillon seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. Perkins may bring a proposal to the next board meeting to change the bylaws on membership approval, eliminating the need for board review of member applicants.

The possibility of supporting candidates to fill two vacancies on the FOI Advisory Council was discussed. Edwards said that Jones and former VCOG Executive Director Frosty Landon would be strong candidates. Edwards moved, with McConnell seconding, that those two persons be approached to serve and that VCOG support their candidacies in all appropriate ways.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ed Jones
Secretary