

**VES Board Meeting Minutes
November 8, 2023 - 6:00pm
Via Zoom Conference**

Board members present:

Neishaw Ali; Laurie Blavin; Kathryn Brillhart; Rita Cahill; Colin Campbell; Mike Chambers, VES; Lisa Cooke; Kim Davidson; Gavin Graham; Dennis Hoffman; Brooke Lyndon-Stanford; Arnon Manor; Andres Martinez; Tim McLaughlin (*alternate*); Maggie Oh; Jeff Okun, VES; Susan O'Neal; Robin Prybil (*alternate*); Jim Rygiel; Lisa Sepp-Wilson; Dane Smith (*alternate*); David Tanaka, VES; David Valentin (*alternate*); Bill Villarreal; Joe Weidenbach; Rebecca West; Philipp Wolf; Susan Zwerman, VES

Board members absent:

Andrew Bly (*alternate*); Nicolas Casanova; Mike Fink, VES; Johnny Han (*alternate*); Adam Howard (*alternate*); Karen Murphy; Daniel Rosen (*alternate*); Suhit Saha; Richard Winn Taylor II, VES

Incoming 2024 Board members present:

Alan Boucek, Fred Chapman, Emma Clifton Perry, John Decker, Quentin Martin, Ariele Podreider Lenzi, Lopsie Schwartz, Sam Winkler

Section Members present: Zach Bell, *Chair, Georgia*; Rachel Copp, *Co-Chair, New Zealand*; Eric Greenlied, *Co-Chair, Washington*; Jose Marin, *Chair, New York*; Mark Spatny, *Co-Chair, Los Angeles*; Agon Ushaku, *Co-Chair, Germany*; Eric Wachtman, *Co-Chair, Oregon*

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

Minutes: Lori Bowman

Call to Order – Lisa Cooke

- Lisa called the meeting to order and confirmed that there was a quorum. She noted that the meeting is being recorded. Lisa announced that the September 2023 Board meeting minutes were approved online.
- Announced that the SAG strike is over.
- Congratulated the incoming Board members for 2024: Alan Boucek, Emma Clifton Perry, Rose Duignan, Quentin Martin, Janet Muswell Hamilton, Lopsie Schwartz, and Fred Chapman (*alternate*).
- The following 3 people are tied for the 30th Board seat: Ariele Podreider Lenzi, John Decker and Sam Winkler. There will be a run-off vote ending on 11/9 to determine who will fill the full Board seat and who the two alternates will be.
- Lisa noted that the incoming Board members who are present at this meeting are observers only. The current Board will conduct all business and discussions in tonight's meeting. The term for incoming Board members begins on Wednesday, January 10, 2024 at the first Board meeting of the year.
- Announced that the current Board members who were re-elected for the 2024-25 term are: Neishaw Ali, Rita Cahill, Mike Chambers, Susan O'Neal, Robin Prybil, David Valentin, Bill Villarreal, and Susan Zwerman. Their term begins on January 10 as well.
- Thanked the following outgoing members who are terming out for their service: Laurie Blavin; Lisa Cooke; Mike Fink, VES; Arnon Manor; Andres Martinez; Karen Murphy; Richard Winn Taylor II, VES; Joe Weidenbach; Johnny Han; Adam Howard; and Dane Smith.

Executive Director's Report – Nancy Ward

- Nancy welcomed the new Board members. She noted that the VES office will contact the new members to set up a brief meeting in the coming weeks. Nancy will provide Board materials and review them with each new member.
- The VES Honors celebration was held on October 13 and was a great success. Hosted over 160 attendees. The Honors event program book, photos and recording are available on the webpage under VES Honors.
- The Section Board of Managers nominations are under way for the 2024-25 term. Elections begin in late November but nominations are still being accepted.
- Nancy thanked outgoing Board Chair Lisa Cooke for her 6 years of service on the Board and 3 years of leadership as Board Chair. She is the definition of service and commitment. She's worked tirelessly to lead the growing VES global organization with clarity, compassion, and an open door policy. Lisa has always welcomed input from the global membership. Despite all the challenges she encountered,

Lisa held the highest vision for the Society. She spearheaded the creation of the VES Emerging Technology Award and she's been instrumental in connecting and elevating the Sections and honoring the Section leadership. She has spent the last year leading the VES through an intensive strategic planning initiative to create a roadmap to grow and enrich the Society for many years to come. Nancy asked Board members to extend an enormous thank you to Lisa for all her phenomenal work as Chair.

- The VES Awards Show is scheduled on Wednesday, February 21, 2024 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. Nomination submissions are open through November 30. The global nomination event will be held on Saturday, January 13. There will be 30 panels participating, both virtual and onsite. Expecting 450 judges worldwide. Encouraging everyone to attend and sign up to judge the best visual effects of the year.
- Extended congratulations to Jeff Okun and Susie Zwerman on the newly published *The VES Virtual Production Handbook*. This is a must-read for every production professional, featuring real-world insights from 82 experts. VES members receive a 20% discount on the handbook. Details have been sent to members via email.
- Nancy opened up nominations for the five 2024 VES Executive Committee seats. These nominations are non-binding and will be open now and thru the January 10 Board meeting. Those interested in a seat on the Committee can submit their nominations now or later. Nominees can change their mind before the deadline. Formal nominations and voting will take place at the January meeting with the new Board.
 - Nancy asked Lisa Cooke to share the responsibilities and qualifications required to be Board Chair. Lisa noted that being the VES chair is a rewarding and humbling experience. It involves meetings: weekly (sometimes daily) check-ins with the Executive Director, monthly EC meetings, bi-monthly Board meetings, and bi-monthly all Section meetings. It's important to have zoom calls with all the Sections to keep abreast of what's going on globally. The meetings will fluctuate in number. The Chair runs the Board meetings according to Robert's Rules. The Chair will host many events and needs to be comfortable with public speaking. There is some travel involved to attend events and conferences. Requires working directly with Executive Director to listen to their concerns. Be aware that the staff cannot always implement every initiative or idea. Some cannot be acted on right away and require resources, staffing and planning. Need ability to listen to all ideas and to do what's best for the organization. Need ability to be team player and compromise. Be aware of unintended consequences. Need to have thick skin to handle criticism.
 - Chair Emeritus Mike Chambers added that it's important to have a thick skin, sense of humor and be willing to help VES grow and become better. Focus on important issues and be able to handle criticism.
 - Chair Emeritus Jeff Okun noted that it's important to represent the best interests of the Society. Talking to all the Sections is essential. The organization is vastly diverse so it can be challenging to keep everyone satisfied. The Chair and Board members should have no personal agenda. The agenda should always be what's best for the membership.
 - The criteria to be Board Chair as set forth in the VES Policies are as follows:
 - Candidates for Board Chair must have served on the Board in the previous year and must have served on the Executive Committee for a minimum of 1 year during the past 3 years or the candidate must have served on the board for 3 of the last 5 years (including alternates). If no one meets this criteria then the Board can defer to special circumstances. However, this year we have many qualified candidates. Those who are interested in the Chair seat can contact VES headquarters to see if they meet the criteria.
 - Nancy opened up the floor for EC seats.
 - **Chair nominations.** Can self-nominate or nominate someone else.
 - **Emma Clifton Perry** self-nominated. Nancy noted that headquarters will check on her eligibility.
 - **Philipp Wolf** self-nominated.
 - Arnon Manor nominated **Neishaw Ali** and she accepted.
 - Colin Campbell nominated **David Tanaka**. David noted he would take it under consideration.
 - **First Vice Chair nominations**
 - **Emma Clifton Perry** self-nominated.
 - **Susan O'Neal** self-nominated.
 - **Second Vice Chair nominations**
 - **David Tanaka** will take it under consideration.
 - **Dennis Hoffman** self-nominated.
 - **Lisa Sepp-Wilson** self-nominated.
 - **Treasurer nominations**
 - **Jeff Okun** self-nominated.

- **Dennis Hoffman** self-nominated.
- **Secretary nominations**
 - **Gavin Graham** self-nominated.
 - Mike Chambers nominated **Rita Cahill** and she accepted.

Treasurer's Report – Jeff Okun

- Jeff noted that the VES is in fantastic financial shape. Accounts Payable are low and the total liquid cash assets are high. We continue to do well. A great amount of funds come from membership dues and there was a record number of people applying for membership in the past membership cycle.

Statement from the Chair – Lisa Cooke

- Lisa noted that the Board meetings are run by Robert's Rules. Some of these rules include:
 - If Board members want to take the floor at a Board meeting, they must either get on the agenda in advance of the meeting or bring up the issue under new business. New business does not get voted on during the meeting in which it is introduced.
 - Meetings are also run according to the VES Code of Conduct which requires mutual respect and courtesy for one another. No one speaks twice before everyone who wants to speak has had the chance to speak once. Member must raise their hand in order to speak and wait to be recognized before commenting.
- The SAG strike appears to be over but it has dramatically impacted visual effects practitioners all over the world. IATSE is working on creating a visual effects union in the U.S. As an honorary society with members in over 45 countries who represent the full breadth of professionals in the global effects industry, the VES does not advise or play a role in issues around labor negotiations and/or unionization. VES is aware that its members are suffering from job losses as production has shut down. Members have been referred to the VES Member Assistance Program, which offers free counseling, and free legal and financial advice in every country that VES has a presence. Will continue to update and develop the job board and other member benefits to support the members during this difficult time.
- Despite the industry crisis, VES remains healthy and strong and growing. Member retention rate this year was at 96%. Had the highest number of new applicants ever during the last membership cycle in September when close to 400 people applied for membership. A number of new areas are currently gathering signatures to form new Sections. The VES needs to be prepared for growth.
- Thanked Susan O'Neal for the recent updates to the job board.
- The Executive Committee is working on streamlining the VES Bylaws to make them simpler and more straightforward. Working with an attorney to ensure that the Bylaws are in compliance. They will be ready for presentation to the Board for approval and a membership vote in 2024.
- The VES Annual Membership Meeting will be held via zoom during the week of December 11. The specific date is TBD. Lisa and Nancy will be updating the members and also open up the floor to questions and answers in a format similar to a town hall. Encouraged board members to attend.
- Reminded current and incoming board members to take an active role in the VES by volunteering and joining committees. Board responsibilities include attendance at meetings, participation in fundraising where possible and participation in one or more committees.
- All board meetings are recorded and the recording is available on the VES website until the minutes are published.
- World VFX Day is on December 8 which is the date of Georges Méliès birthday. VES is participating in the event. Inviting Sections to participate however they would like. This is the first year of this event and it will be shared on VES social media feeds.

Strategic Planning Discussion – Lisa Cooke

- Lisa reviewed the power point presentation of the Strategic Plan proposal. Lisa noted it's a fluid document that is meant to identify priorities and serve as a road map for VES for the next 3-5 years. This has been a year-long process. Upon approval of this proposal by the Board, the VES staff will work with the Board to further the proposal initiatives based on available resources, budget and staffing.
- The Strategic Plan Board Presentation is summarized as follows:
 - **VES Process**
 - Open Call to VES Board of Directors
 - Established 10 sub-committees to explore an array of issues and opportunities for VES
 - Reviewed all sub-committee reports
 - Hired Center for Nonprofit Management to facilitate process, discussions and prioritization
 - Surveyed Board of Directors and VES Staff – examined results
 - Held separate interactive discussions with Executive Committee and Staff
 - Presentation of Strategic Planning Recommendations to Board for adoption

- **Strat Plan Sub-committees formed to review the following key areas and issues**
 - Branding and Communications
 - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
 - Education, Mentorship and Job Opps
 - Globalization
 - Impact and Visibility
 - Member Experience
 - Mission and Vision Statements
 - Next Gen Leadership
 - Operations and Financials
 - Talent Pipeline
- **SWOT Exercise**
 - Identified Strengths, Weaknesses/Challenges, Opportunities and Threats
- **Mission and Vision**
 - What adjectives would you use to describe VES?
 - What guides our direction?
 - VES Vision Statement: A preeminent honorary global organization, the Visual Effects Society, its membership and the visual effects industry are recognized and respected worldwide.
 - VES Mission Statement: To advance and promote visual effects and empower our global honorary society membership through professional education, enriching benefits, fostering community and industry recognition.
- **Core Values:** We believe...VES enriches members' lives through the following beliefs:
 - Industry Leadership
 - Membership Support
 - Global Community Connection
 - Education
 - Recognition and Respect
 - Industry Excellence
- **Priorities and Goals/Key Initiatives**
 - Strategically Grow Membership
 - Initiatives: Section Structure, Global Membership, Next Generation of Leadership program, Visual Effects Pipeline
 - Communication and Brand Perception
 - Initiatives: Brand Development, Communication Plan Implementation
 - Enrich Member Education and Educational Research
 - Initiatives: Enhance Education Offerings, Global Program Expansion
 - Foster Strong Partners/Alliances
 - Initiatives: Current Partnerships, Identify and Assess New Partnerships
 - Enrich Member Benefits
 - Initiatives: VES Membership Assistance Program, Other Members Benefits
 - Reinforce Board Infrastructure
 - Initiatives: Board Expectations, Board Configuration
- **Motion: “Lisa Cooke made motion that the Strategic Plan be adopted as a guide moving forward.” Seconded.**
- **Discussion followed:**
 - Dennis Hoffman recommended that the motion be delayed and that this item be moved to the January agenda so current and new Board members have more time to review the plan.
 - Lisa noted that this document has taken a year to create and the current Board created it so the current Board should be able to adopt it. This document is a road map to moving forward and can be changed and adjusted. Would like to recognize the work that the Board put into it and adopt it as a guide now to move forward. Additional members agreed with Lisa that the motion should be voted on in this meeting.
 - **Vote taken. Majority in favor. Motion passed.**
- **Motion: “Lisa Cooke made motion to make a policy to hold one year’s operating expenses plus 25% in restricted reserves for emergencies.” Seconded. Vote taken. All in favor. Motion passed.**
- **Motion: “Lisa Cooke made motion to approve the formation of a committee to populate in 2024 to review the global organizational structure of the VES and evaluate the Section structure.”** Kathryn Brillhart asked if the committee members can include Section representation. It was agreed that it was essential to include Section members and members at large on this committee. **Vote taken. Majority in favor. Motion passed.**

- **Motion: “Lisa Cooke made motion to approve the formation of a new Member Benefit Education committee that focuses on teaching new technologies so members can be successful”.** Lisa noted that the new committee would focus on internal educational benefits for members while the existing Education committee can focus solely on educational outreach efforts. Discussion followed about the fact that there may be issues with overlapping goals and division of labor between the two committees which may cause some confusion. It was noted that there may also be problems recruiting members for both committees.
- **Amended Motion: “Lisa amended the original motion as follows: Move to approve the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee to be populated in 2024 to review the current member educational programs, evaluate what can be done to improve them and determine what kind of committee structure will be needed for this purpose.”** **Seconded. Vote taken. Majority in favor. Motion passed.**
- **Motion: “Lisa made motion to revise the Founders Award to include a Lifetime Membership.”** **Seconded.** Lisa clarified that separate Lifetime membership honors will still be awarded but all Founders Award recipients will receive a Lifetime Membership going forward. **Vote taken. Majority in favor. Motion passed.**

Membership Committee – Joe Weidenbach and Susan O’Neal

- The committee received 392 applications for the 2023 Fall cycle, including 44 returning members. There are currently 4,515 members of the VES. Since the inception of the Society in 1997, the VES has grown into a global organization with 15 Sections and individual members in 48 nations worldwide.
- Thanked Ben Schneider and the VES staff for all their heroic efforts in vetting all these applications and preparing them for the committee.
- The committee is recommending the 4 Motions detailed as follows:
 - **Motion #1: “The Membership Committee recommends that the 330 applicants listed on the committee report be accepted as Members of the VES.”** **Seconded. Vote taken. Majority in favor. Motion passed.**
 - **Motion #2: “The Membership Committee recommends that the 43 returning members listed on the committee report be accepted as Members of the VES.** **Seconded. Vote taken. Majority in favor. Motion passed.**
 - **Motion #3: “The Membership Committee recommends that returning member Naipeng Carl Wang be denied membership AT THIS TIME.** The applicant is missing their resume/work history. They have not responded after repeated attempts to contact them to request the missing paperwork. **Seconded. Vote taken. Majority in favor. Motion passed.**
 - **Motion #4: “The Membership Committee recommends that the 18 applicants listed on the committee report be denied membership AT THIS TIME.”** Of these 18 applicants, 14 are missing supporting documents such as work history and Letters of Recommendation, and 4 lack the appropriate years of experience. The details regarding the missing documents are noted in the committee report. **Seconded. Vote taken. Majority in favor. Motion passed.**
 - Joe and Lisa thanked the Committee members for all their hard work in vetting the applications.

UPDATES from VES Committees

Archive Committee – David Tanaka

- The Committee has been hard at work on the VES Digital Museum. Highlights include:
 - 49 VES Luminary Video interviews to date. There are 6 interviews in stages of post review and about to be released. There are new interviews that have just been recorded which include Tim McGovern and Lightstorm Entertainment Producer Jon Landau.
 - Over 20,000 photographs have been uploaded with over 800 unique individual tags.
 - The backlog of previously archived videos are being resolved with the aid of two part time archivists.
 - Halfway through the process of properly archiving all news articles pertaining to the VES dating as far back as 1997 when the Society was founded.
 - Completed cataloging over 165 physical assets. Have been working with VES members and VFX houses to collect digital assets to be included in upcoming curated exhibitions on the techniques and artifacts that tell the story of the history of visual effects.
 - The online platform has been built and currently checking the systems for bugs and making minor tweaks as needed before access is given to the global membership. The next step is to develop a testing and roll out plan which is estimated to take place in 2024.
 - David and Lisa Cooke are the committee Co-Chairs. Gave a shout out to committee members Ross Auerbach, Shannon Cassidy, Charles Mesa and Nancy Ward. Also thanked part time archivists Anita and Mitchell as well as Gene Kozicki, Van Ling, Jim Sullivan, Sandra Joy Aguilar and Ben Schneider for all their significant contributions.

Awards Committee – Lopsie Schwartz

- The Committee had to change existing software, workflow and infrastructure due to the discontinuation of Frankie and the exit of Sohonet. Ftrack, the company that has been used to host the Online Nomination event, has notified the committee that their Frankie product is End-of-Life and advised that they move to a different system. Working with outside contractors to resolve this issue. Will be a year-long process. The committee report goes into more detail.
- The Technology Award's inaugural run went smoothly and working out any small kinks for this year.
- Preparing for the Nomination event. It has grown in size and complexity which has led to necessary structural changes. There will be a change in the View and Vote interface this year.

Health & Wellbeing Committee – Philipp Wolfe

- Have spoken with the VES Board of Managers in the Sections. Discussed the Member Assistance Program (MAP) and had Q&A sessions with them.
- Trying to improve the visibility of MAP. Thanked VES headquarters for an exemplary job in advertising MAP to members at large and to Sections. Will continue to promote the significant benefits and perks that MAP provides.
- HQ posted Telus Health webinars on the website. These were created to further promote MAP. The webinars provide an in-depth view of the program's benefits and how members can leverage it.
- In discussion with organization called Gym Pass to negotiate an arrangement where members have access to a global gym membership program. The cost is high but will continue to pursue this benefit for members to see if Gym Pass can offer a more competitive price.
- Helped the Toronto Section set up their panel "Strategies for Difficult Times". There is a recording of this panel available to members. Ben Schneider can provide the link for the recording.
- Continuing outreach to potential partners that could provide additional valuable discounts and benefits to members.
- Posted info from Derby Ergonomic Resources on how to set up an office work station and create a healthy workplace.
- Encouraged members to join the committee since additional manpower is needed to assist with reaching out to organizations, merchants and vendors to set up additional benefits and perks for VES members. Currently need help vetting phone numbers that are posted on the website to make sure they are up to date. Emma clarified that the phone numbers they are vetting are not just for VES members. They are available to the general public and anyone who browses the website.

Work from Home Committee – Gavin Graham

- Reviewing the results of the survey on the industry climate. Received 1,148 responses in total. The big take away is that the majority of people who responded are currently working from home. Only 53 of the 1,148 respondents are permanently working in an office. Those who are working from home are more content due to flexibility and a less rigid schedule. The report provides more details.
- The final report will be shared with the VES membership at large as soon as the analysis is complete.

Education Committee – Arnon Manor and Neishaw Ali

- Committee members Rose Duignan and Fortunato Frattasio have been doing amazing work on the Schools Outreach effort. Neishaw is also making great strides with the Peer to Peer Mentorship program. Jose Marin does a lot of important outreach work through the New York Section.
- Encouraged the incoming Board members to join the committee.
- Lisa clarified that those who want to join a committee do not have to be on the Board. Section members and members at large can join committees. It's a rewarding way to give back to the Society.

New Business

- Mark Spatny reviewed a proposal for use of the initials "VES" in credits. Lisa noted that this issue can be dealt with in 2024 with the new Board. The Fellows committee will also take it under advisement with Section input. The new Board would have to approve any changes.
 - Mark noted that he's been working on this proposal for a year and reached out to Sections for input. He gave some additional background info on the proposal. Lisa stressed that there should not be any debates on this issue at this time. Mike Chambers and Jeff Okun responded to Mark's proposal and comments. Mike summarized that the key issue is how to get more people nominated for the VES Fellows honor which entitles them to use the VES letters.
 - Lisa again noted that this issue will be deferred to 2024 when the new Board is in place. She recommended that a committee be formed to address this issue and to include Fellows, Section representation and members at large. Mike Chambers noted that Lisa will be Chair of the Fellows Committee since she is the outgoing Board Chair. He recommended that Lisa propose the creation of this committee and be the Chair of the committee. Lisa confirmed that they will move ahead with this in 2024.

- Kathryn Brillhart asked if Board members can have access to other Board members' emails. Nancy said there will be a mail forwarder set up in January for the new Board and that the email address will be shared with all Board members.
- Lisa thanked the Board for the opportunity and honor to serve as Board Chair for the last 3 years. She thanked the Executive Committee, Board members and Section Leadership with special thanks to Jeff Okun, Susan O'Neal, David Tanaka, Rita Cahill, Mike Chambers and Nancy Ward for their extraordinary work and commitment to the VES. Wished everyone great success in the next year in moving VES into the future.

Lisa adjourned the meeting at 8:05pm

Next BOD meeting: January 10, 2024 at 6pm PST

Submitted by Lori Bowman

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