

Notes from IBMA's Town Hall Meeting

September 29, 2016

WOB Business Conference

Notes taken by Regina Derzon, IBMA Board Secretary

(* Denotes action items and/or items for further consideration)

The annual IBMA Town Hall Meeting was held on Thursday, September 29, 2016 beginning at 9:45 a.m. during the IBMA Business Conference in Raleigh, North Carolina. A majority of Board members were present: Joe Mullins, Ben Surratt, Denise Jarvinen, Regina Derzon, Mike Drudge, Becky Buller, William Lewis, Stephen Mouglin, Steve Martin, Jeremy Darrow, John Goad, Wayne Taylor, Bob Webster, Marian Leighton Levy, Alan Tompkins, Silvio Ferretti. IBMA Executive Director Paul Schiminger was also present. There were more than 100 additional attendees.

Joe Mullins expressed gratitude to Tim Surrett, recently resigned IBMA Board Chair, and wished him good health on behalf of the Board and IBMA. Joe also expressed gratitude to Ben Surratt for stepping in after Tim's illness and serving as *de facto* Board Chair.

Joe noted that the Board holds meetings two times a year in person (one at WOB and one in the late spring in Nashville) plus usually two or more teleconference meetings in the interim. The Executive Committee consists of the 4 elected officers plus one additional member of the Board along with the Executive Director as a non-voting *ex officio* member.

Joe reported that the Business Conference attendance is up by at least 20% from last year.

Joe acknowledged newly-elected Board member Jeremy Darrow.

Additionally, there are approximately 2500 IBMA members (professional and grassroots). Joe encouraged everyone to help expand membership by saying "if you don't pitch in your part, you won't have a part to pitch in." Joe reminded members that the reason for the WOB event is to support the Bluegrass Trust Fund. The Bluegrass Trust Fund is a not-for-profit which offers financial assistance to bluegrass music professionals in time of emergency need.

Stephen Ruffo congratulated Paul and the Board for the inclusivity and tone of the conference. The audience concurred.

The future of IBMA being held in Raleigh was discussed. We are guaranteed through 2018 and are in negotiations for future years.

*Pete Wernick mentioned that the loss of institutional memory was a problem for IBMA and he encouraged the Board and staff to check in with past leaders. The Board and Paul concurred.

*Pete Wernick suggested that the membership form could be modified to include a check box "I was recommended by X person" and offer a slight discount to the recommending member. He suggested we try it for a year.

*Pete Wernick suggested that IBMA should be able to develop an IBMA volunteer list and coordinate the effort to increase involvement on the part of the membership.

*Several members expressed concerns about the IBMA website – out of date; lacking specific details, etc. It was suggested that we use volunteers to help. Paul acknowledged that the website needs work and it remains a priority for the organization and the staff.

*It was suggested that we extend time for the Constituency Meetings going forward. It was believed that one hour is not sufficient time to meet for most of these groups.

*Joe reminded the attendees that college students enrolled in a bluegrass music program get a year of free membership in IBMA (and the resulting discounts). We will make sure this is broadcast more broadly to the members and to the appropriate school programs.

*It was suggested that we have IBMA membership forms (cards) available to folks attending various events and festivals. Paul noted that members can request those be sent to them or, better yet, a downloadable form can be made available on the website for anyone needing them.

*Patrice O’Neill acknowledged the change made in paying the bands that perform during WOB. She added that she would like to see a line item in the budget for paying outside experts during the Business Conference. Paul explained that the IBMA budget is basically a break-even budget and there is little, if any, room for expansion of expenses at this time. He added that we would like to get to the point financially where we can offer honorariums for speakers. Raising the level of sponsorship revenue will be one of the keys to that occurring.

Mike Marceau notified the audience that the radio station WAMU’s Bluegrass Country (88.5FM) which broadcasts from the Washington, DC area (and streams online) is seeking a new owner. If a new owner is not found, the station will go away as of December 31, 2016. He encouraged folks to contact him if they had questions.

Ted Lehman reminded folks that we continue to seek grassroots members (non-voting members) to join IBMA.

*Roy Moore (Broadcaster/Host of the “The Old Country Store,” WQFS-FM Guilford College, Greensboro, NC) noted the Broadcasters are requesting an additional spot on the WOB schedule for the Broadcasters to meet with Record Label representatives. The desire is to have a longer opportunity to discuss getting products into the Broadcasters’ hands, keeping lists up-to-date, playlists, etc. Such a meeting was a past practice some years ago but has not been on the schedule since the move to Raleigh.

Ken Irwin thanked the Board for the change in the format of the Town Hall Meeting, especially with a quick entry into the Q&A from members. Regina Derzon noted that the notes from this THM will be posted on the website as soon as practical.

Ken also noted that the IBMA-L (listserv) is not very active.

Justin Hiltner (one of the moderators of the session “Bluegrass Belongs to Us All: Creating an Inclusive Environment at Your Event, Gig, and in your Career”) commented on the importance of the Diversity Showcase. He stated that regardless of anyone’s beliefs, it is good for IBMA on a business level to be open.

Kitsy Kuykendall reminded everyone that “IBMA is a bluegrass organization and that’s what we need to remember ... that’s what we do.”

*Dustin Boyd (Planet Bluegrass) recommended that IBMA get materials out to events around the country and beyond. Additionally, he recommended we conduct more in-depth seminars and take some sessions to the next level. Jeremy Darrow (Education Committee Chair) noted there will be more “201” level seminars in the future.

*Trisha Tubbs commented that the IBMA website should include information about the history and legacy of bluegrass music. Also, she noted that the Hall of Fame should include Hazel Dickens. She suggested that someone should review the demographics of the Hall of Fame electors. Joe Mullins clarified that the Hall of Fame will induct three members beginning next year. This change was voted on by the IBMA Board at the June 2016 meeting (“...change the annual number of Hall of Fame inductees from 2 per year to 3. We will continue to induct a non-performer every other year.”).

Trish suggested that seminars could be conducted via WebEx or a similar application. A portion of the fee for participating could go to the presenter.

(For consideration: If we pay people to conduct a webinar, what about seminar presenters at the Business Conference? Is that different?)

Trisha encouraged folks to participate in the Leadership Bluegrass program. She asked how many people in the room had gone through Leadership Bluegrass. There was a large show of hands.

Kitsy talked about Pete Kuykendall’s involvement in the beginning of the Leadership Bluegrass program.

Aengus Finnan (Folk Alliance) acknowledged the civil and collaborative conference theme.