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MINNESOTA  
NEWSPAPER  
ASSOCIATION

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## Proceedings of the MNA Board of Directors

Thursday, April 24, 2025

MNA offices, Minneapolis

**Present:** President Justin Lessman, Jackson; Immediate Past President Crystal Miller, Albert Lea; First Vice President Tara Brandl, Tracy; Second Vice President Kelly Boldan, Willmar; Third Vice President Steve Jameson, Mankato; Directors Ted Almen, Kerkhoven, and Tim Douglass, Glenwood; Treasurer Bill Albrecht, Coon Rapids; Executive Director Lisa Hills, Director of Development & Communications Lisa Schwarz, MNA; Controller/CFO Laura Wendle, All In One Accounting (remote).

**Meeting was called to order** at 1 p.m. by President Justin Lessman.

**Minutes of the Jan. 29, 2025**, board meeting were approved unanimously on a **MOTION** by Almen, second by Brandl.

### **MNA financial reports:**

- MNA Statement of Activities and balance sheet were reviewed by Wendle. Operating income is outperforming the budget and the 2024 YTD. Operating expenses are slightly over budget but under YTD 2024. Financial statements were approved unanimously on a **MOTION** by Boldan, second by Albrecht.
- December 2024 & January, February, March 2025 disbursements, staff expense reports and MNA credit card statements were recommended for approval by Brandl and subsequently approved unanimously on a **MOTION** by Douglass, second by Jameson.
- Hills presented a review of the financials for the Better Newspaper Contest, convention and trade show. The board discussed hotel and catering attrition costs, etc. Discussion centered on improving convention attendance with suggestions including:
  - discounts for multiple registrants
  - rescheduling away from month-end
  - altering the days of convention to accommodate weeklies
  - Wednesday afternoon session
  - shorter sessions
  - more sessions
  - sponsored sessions
  - promoting company meetings on Wednesday in exchange for a donation to MNI;
  - Almen requested a list of non-registrants for board outreach.

Brandl said she will share a house ad with MNA for distribution to members about newspaper office closures so staff can attend convention. Hills said MNA can provide a discount code to board members to hand out to new registrants.

## **Executive Director's Report - Lisa Hills**

Hills reported good Q1 momentum at MNA, citing ad revenue, partnerships, progress on a new ad network program, earlier convention planning and a new digital advertiser from the Office of Cannabis Management.

She updated the board on the status of a request for MNA to join a new national coalition: America's Newspapers State Advocacy Coalition (ANSAC). At this time, Hills recommended a wait-and-see approach. No action taken.

### **Other financial discussions:**

- Hills requested action to close MNA's Park State Bank account and move the balance to MNA's Wells Fargo account. Approved unanimously on a **MOTION** by Miller, second by Jameson.
- Hills reported on a new self-service public notice portal offered through Illinois Press Association. The cost to MNA would be \$2,400 per year; MNA would charge user fees to offset the cost. Discussion by board members centered on having systems in place already and/or wanting to keep close contact with local governments to solidify and preserve those business relationships. No action taken.
- Hills reported on management services MNA is providing for other state press associations. MNA is now managing contests for Washington, North Dakota and Wisconsin. Lessman inquired if we're charging enough to provide those services. Hills said she thinks we are. She also reported assisting North Dakota's ad placement service on an emergency basis that led to discussions of a permanent arrangement, which MNA declined. No action taken.
- Lessman appointed himself, Albrecht, Boldan, Jameson and Hills to a task force to evaluate and establish a new or adapted MNA dues structure that is beneficial for both members and the association. Lessman asked Hills to reassemble her research on other associations' approaches and set a date for the first task force meeting, which will be in person.

### **Legislative report:**

- Public notice: Hills reported that a lack of newspapers in Scott County is creating serious political issues for public notice preservation. While local governments are publishing notices in surrounding publications, they are expressing concerns that those publications are not providing coverage of their communities. Hills believes MNA needs to take steps to help resolve the issue.
- Services tax: MNA lobbyist Sarah Strong doesn't believe the measure, which includes a tax on advertising, will move forward this session. MNA continues to monitor the situation.
- Support Local Journalism bill, which would direct state marketing dollars to local news organizations and develop reporting data on such spending, has been included in the Senate omnibus bill. Hill reported that state agencies are starting to ask for exemptions; compromise language encourages spending in local news instead of requiring it. MNA is standing firm on the reporting requirement.

### **Committee reports:**

- **Advertising**, presented by Miller/Brandl. **MOTION** by Boldan to approve the committee report, seconded by Douglass. Motion was approved unanimously.
- **Journalism Education**, presented by Boldan. **MOTION** by Brandl to approve the committee report, seconded by Miller. Motion was approved unanimously.
- **Member Services**, presented by Jameson. **MOTION** by Brandl, seconded by Albrecht to approve the committee report. Motion was approved unanimously.

**Other business:**

- Draft of new online associate and active membership criteria was presented by Schwarz. The board discussed verbiage and requirements. The drafts were approved unanimously pending legal review and changes including the effective date; language to specify that the platform must be owned or licensed by the publisher; minimum frequency of updates, and alignment of language to current legislation. The **MOTION** was offered by Miller, seconded by Douglass. The membership categories will go into effect after legal review.
- Lessman updated the board on the dates and location of 2025 MNA Summer Board Meeting.

**Meeting was adjourned** by unanimous vote on a **MOTION** by Boldan and second by Albrecht.

**Respectfully submitted,**

Lisa Schwarz

Director of Development & Communications