



**MINNESOTA
NEWSMEDIA
INSTITUTE**

**Minnesota News Media Institute
Board of Directors**

11:00 am Thursday, December 4, 2025

Present: Justin Lessman, Jackson; Crystal Miller, Albert Lea; Tara Brandl, Tracy; Kelly Boldan, Willmar; Doug Hanneman; Steve Jameson, Mankato, Ted Almen, Kerkhoven. MNA Staff: Lisa Hils, Lisa Schwarz, Laura Niemi. Guest, Laura Wendle, All in One Accounting via virtual.

Absent: Elisia Cohen, Minneapolis

Welcome and call to order: Lessman called the meeting to order at 10.57 am

Approval of Minutes: **MOTION** by Boldan with a second from Hanneman to approve April 24, 2025 MNI Board meeting minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

Review 2025 Board Meeting Dates. Hills provided a copy of the meeting dates and encouraged Board members to plan accordingly. Brandl informed the Board that October 15 & 16, 2026 is MEA weekend and requested the possibility of moving the meeting date.

MNI Financial Reports. Brandl and Wendle, presented the year-end projection for MNI. Brandl reported a meeting of the finance committee on 12.2.25 reviewed the Q325 disbursements and financial statements. **MOTION** by Jameson with a second from Boldan to approve the September - November disbursements and financial statements. Motion passed unanimously.

Board reviewed and discussed the 2026 MNI Budget. Discussion about \$10,000 amount for Fundraising and Grants as budget of \$10,000 was not achieved in 2025. Amount remained in budget as a reasonable amount with the understanding of the uncertainty of the fundraising/grant market and opportunities.

Revisited the need for an active Fundraising Committee. Goal would be to have a committee to assist on grants/meetings and 1 or 2 fundraisers a year. Jameson volunteered to chair the committee. Others on the committee will be: Albrecht, Brandl, Boldan and Hanneman. First goal is to create an event at the upcoming January Convention.

Review of the past year for fundraising. Schwarz reported a MNI applied for grants, or portion of grants valued at \$2.2 million in 2025. Applications outlined on Page 11/12 of report provided. No grants were awarded to MNA.

Acknowledged issues: 1) Press Forward, on a local and national level, is investing donations and energy on new business and not on existing industry/business. 2) MNF and MNI are confused within our own membership.

Board tabled approving the budget until the April Board meeting when financials are available from the convention in January 2026.

Engagement letter from SDK for annual audit. Hills presented the engagement letter for required annual audit. **MOTION** by Miller with a Second by Boldan to accept the letter for the December/January audit. Passed unanimously.

Fundraising Report – Schwarz

2025 summary and 2026 opportunities:

- Two donors increased their annual donation
- Summer Board meeting donations

- Paddle raise at convention – amount slight down from previous year
- Ask embedded in registrations at check out for registration and online donations have created a lucrative, low impact.
- Note: Ask on dues invoice has been removed as QuickBooks does not accommodate unspecific amounts.

Fee for MNI fiscal sponsorship:

- MNI charges 4% fee for fiscal sponsorships. Current sponsorships includes The Timberjay where MNI receives 4% of distribution amounts. Other associations charge about 7%.
- After discussion, a **MOTION** by Brandl with a 2nd from Jameson to increase fiscal sponsorship management fees in 2026 to 6% fee and in 2027 to 8%. Changes would require a 30-day notice. Pass unanimously.

Give to the Max Day.

- Increase of donations by 350%. 2024 amount was \$356 and 2025 was \$1601. It is a beginning and work will continue.

Grant Applications pending.

- Community Collaboration – pending award distribution in December.

U of M survey – Hills

Hills reported that MNI Board Member Elisia Cohen, Hubbard School of Broadcasting provided a written report regarding the newspaper survey being conducted by her staff. They are going to regroup, it has been difficult to get publishers to respond. Elisia will meet with Lisa Hills prior to the convention.

Programs – Niemi and Schwarz

- **Lunch & Learn** – AI session on 10.14 was a great session with 22 attendees, 20 being publishers. Next session is 1.16.26 and the topic is newsroom. These sessions are virtual, free of charge and 4 scheduled annually. Open to all members.
- **Internship Program** – 10 internships completed in 2025 for payout of \$9,301.
- **Online Media Campus** – To date 85 webinars have been viewed, slightly ahead of what was viewed last year at this time.
- **CJU – Schwarz** – 4th year of the program and 12 of the 13 students graduated. Six of the students were from first time sponsors, 1 was from out of state, 7 students from papers who have sent students previously. All are working for their sponsor papers one month out from graduation. Survey reflects an increase in ethics, knowledge and confidence.

Instructors discussed the possibility of “mini” sessions. Sessions that are 2-4 hours in length and focus on specific topics such as intermediate feature reporting, public affairs reporting, photography, news and sports reporting. Intent will be to host two of these sessions in 2026. This will help to expand the brand and services to members.

CJU Finances. Tuition total for 4th year was \$3,450. Paid stipends and fees for Bethel technical assistance was \$2,600 resulting in a net of \$1000 for MNI.

Convention Update

- Student session – Schwarz reported that Robb Murray, The Free Press, Mankato will present a session for college students. There will also be a table in the registration area as a gathering spot for meeting up. Students will have orange nametags.

- BNC – College we had 177 entries and the Professional contest had 4,102. Judging recently ended and winner letters will be out prior to the 12.15.26 early bird registration deadline.
- Silent Auction/Raffle – Board members are again asked to bring a silent acution item. Community baskets are always popular. If anyone has access to a big ticket item, that would also be welcomed. So far we have 27 items valuing about \$3,000 at this time. A 50/50 raffle will once again beheld and board members will be the point of contact for ticket sales.
- Sponsorships & Trade Show – 5 booths have been sold, 7 sponsorships with a total income of \$11,450. Contact Lisa Schwarz if you have contacts or ideas for sponsors.

Annual Policy Statement: Hills will provide annual policy statements for the board to review and sign.

CORRECTION: Hills apologized to Hanneman for incorrect information at the April meeting regarding his term on the MNI Board. His term did not end, and he will remain on the MNI board for another year.

Adjournment: The board adjourned at 12:35 p.m. on a **MOTION** by Miller, second by Boldan. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Niemi

MNA Program and Member Services Manager

MNA and MNI quarterly financial reports are available to be reviewed by Active and Associate members in good standing upon request by contacting the MNA Executive Director or any MNA board member.