MINNESOTA NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION

Proceedings of the

Minnesota Newspaper Association Board of Directors

Thursday, Oct. 15, 2026

MNA offices, Minneapolis

Present: Tara Brandl, Tracy; Kelly Boldan, Willmar; Crystal Miller, Albert Lea; Ted Almen, Kerkhoven; Rachel Miller, Henderson; MNA: Lisa Hills, Justin Lessman, Lisa Schwarz; Sarah Strong, Cook | Strong | Sellwood.

Call to order: 1:15 p.m. by Brandl**.**

Approval of meeting minutes: Unanimous on a **MOTION** by Boldan, **SECOND** by Almen.

MNA Legislative report: Sarah Strong reviewed MNA's 2027 legislative priorities.

- **Public notice draft language:** The board reviewed proposed public notice modernization language intended to reduce the need for annual legislative changes. Proposed additions would allow newspapers with less-frequent publication schedules to publish notices online. Board members discussed the draft. Hills will send board members the draft legislation via email with a link to the statute for review. Email comments are preferred, due by Oct. 23.
- **Loan Guarantee:** The proposed program would help community lenders and philanthropic organizations provide loans to local news organizations, with the state guaranteeing up to 80% of the loan risk. Rebuild Local News has models from other states.
- **Workforce Development:** The proposed internship program modeled on MNI's existing program would use state resources to fund additional internships at higher levels. The proposal will be brought back during the next legislative session. Funding would be from the workforce development fund, which is outside the state's general budget. That is seen as improving its odds of passing.
- **Advertising Set-Aside:** MNA now has data on state agency advertising spending. A Rebuild Local News analysis of similar data was used successfully in Vermont to establish standards for state spending there. MNA hopes to use a similar model to pursue an executive order. The proposal would be revenue neutral to the state budget.
- **Journalist Employment Credit:** The proposal is modeled on legislation in California, Illinois and New York and is being led by True North Media Alliance, not MNA. Hills will share a draft bill from Rebuild Local News with board members.
- **News Media Alliance Fly-In:** Hills and Brandl reported on their recent visit to Washington, D.C., where they met with Sen. Amy Klobuchar and staff representing lawmakers from Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. The primary talking point was curbing stealth bots.

MNA Finance Committee report:

- The finance committee reviewed June, July, August and September financial activity, including disbursements, staff expenses and MNA credit card statements. The report was unanimously approved on a **MOTION** by Almen, **SECOND** by Boldan.

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- The September financial statement and balance sheet were reviewed, followed by general financial discussion. The reports were unanimously approved on a **MOTION** by C. Miller, **SECOND** by R. Miller.
- **MNA ad network rebates:** The board discussed the 2025 network kitty rebates, approved in December 2025 and subsequently held pending improved cash flow. Hills recommended transferring $43,000 from investments to the MNA checking account to fund the payments before the 2026 kitty payments are considered and before 2027 dues billings go out to members. The transfer was unanimously approved on a **MOTION** by C. Miller, **SECOND** by Boldan.
- **2027 dues increase:** The board directed Hills to prepare scenarios showing the impact of 3%, 4% and 5% dues increases on member dues tiers, including the effect of closed publications on MNA's budget. A dues increase will be considered for approval by email before the December in-person meeting.
- **Past-due accounts:** The board discussed approaches to collecting past-due accounts, which are in excess of $100,000. MNA staffers Schwarz and Chapin worked to identify the top 12 past-due accounts and plan for collection. Hills requested assistance from board members with outreach to other accounts. Brandl, C. Miller, Almen, Boldan and R. Miller volunteered to make calls.

Committee Reports

- **Member Services Committee Report:** Niemi presented the committee report in the absence of Chair Tim Douglass. The report was unanimously approved on a **MOTION** by R. Miller, **SECOND** by Boldan.
- **Journalism Education Committee Report:** Almen presented the report, which was unanimously approved on a **MOTION** by Boldan, **SECOND** by C. Miller.
- **Advertising/Digital Committee Report:** C. Miller presented the report, which was unanimously approved on a **MOTION** by Almen, **SECOND** by Boldan.
    - The committee recommended allocating $350 in prizes for the Idea Exchange at the 2027 MNA convention. The expenditure was unanimously approved on a **MOTION** by Boldan, **SECOND** by Almen.

Convention Planning: Schwarz, Hills and Niemi led discussion of convention preparations.

- **Wednesday reception:** The reception will proceed as planned. Board members were encouraged to register and attend.
- **Silent auction:** Board members were asked to bring donations to the December meeting.
- **Awards presentation:** Hills reviewed an awards presentation process used by another state association, which recognizes award winners by newspaper. The board consensus was to retain MNA's current process.
- **CFINR Award 2027:** Hills requested permission to add the Center for Integrity in News Reporting award to the 2027 BNC awards. The proposal was unanimously approved on a **MOTION** by Boldan, **SECOND** by R. Miller.

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- **Session speakers:** The board discussed the list of potential keynote speakers and recommended pursuing a speaker from Pheasants Forever.
- **Convention attendance, outreach and sponsorships:** The board discussed purchasing brightly colored lanyards for board members and convention newcomers. Brandl will pursue lanyards for the board, MNA staff and newcomers.
- **Distinguished Service to Journalism and Friend of Minnesota Newspapers awards:** Award criteria were reviewed. The Minnesota Star Tribune was identified for the Friend of Minnesota Newspapers award. One member nomination has been received by Schwarz, who shared it with Hills, for the DSTJ award.
- **2028 Convention:** Staff presented results of the request for proposals, including the current Northland Inn, Crowne Plaza in Plymouth and Earl Brown Center in Brooklyn Center. Staff will review the options.

Other Business

- **Policy for signing letters and other statements:** A task force consisting of Justin Lessman, C. Miller and Boldan presented a recommended policy. The policy was unanimously approved on a **MOTION** by Almen, **SECOND** by Boldan.
- **SDK audit engagement letter:** The engagement letter was unanimously approved on a **MOTION** by C. Miller, **SECOND** by Boldan.
- **Online Media Campus:** The board discussed an additional $1,500 option to bundle the Earn Your Press Pass program with the traditional Online Media Campus contract. The consensus was not to pursue the additional option. The board unanimously approved spending $1,500 for the traditional Online Media Campus contract on a **MOTION** by Boldan, **SECOND** by Almen.
- **Name change to Minnesota News Media Association:** Discussion was tabled until the December meeting to allow the board to develop a strategy. An email vote was recommended. A **MOTION** to table the discussion was made by Boldan, **SECOND** by C. Miller. Unanimous.
- **MNA office space task force:** MNA's current office lease extends through March 2028. The board discussed options, including remaining downtown, moving outside downtown or renting space from a member organization. A task force consisting of Bill Albrecht, Brandl, Boldan and C. Miller was nominated to explore options.
- **Nominating Committee:** The board discussed the nomination process and establishing a committee normally consisting of the president, first vice president, second vice president and past president. Names should be sent to Brandl by Nov. 5.
- **MNA Transition:** The board met in closed session to discuss the MNA transition and personnel.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m. on a **MOTION** by Almen, **SECOND** by Boldan. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Schwarz
Director, Development & Communications

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