

Minutes of the 2014 BOD Annual Meeting

Submitted by Bonnie L. Beal

The ABFDE Board of Directors met for their Annual Meeting April 25 and 26, 2014 in Houston, TX. Present were: President Kirsten Singer, Vice President Lisa Hanson, Secretary Bonnie Beal, Treasurer Jim Green, Sean Espley (April 26th only), Marie Durina, Frank Hicks, Rick Horton, Jim Josey, Gary Licht, Janet Masson, Bill Riordan, and Rosalind Spencer.

The 2013 BOD Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved and distributed.

Treasurer's Report – Jim Green

In accordance with the SOP's, and external audit was requested on 1/26/13. The audit covered years ending June 30, 2010 and June 30, 2011. The years included entries by prior and current Treasurers Jeff Taylor and Jim Green, respectively.

The Hobbs Group randomly selected checks and related receipts, deposited checks and related deposit slips, transfers between accounts, policies, and other information. All were collected and submitted.

On October 17, 2013 the final report by the Hobbs Group was received. The report showed minor discrepancies. Examples included a lag time of payment of two bills exceeding 30 days. Another was a difference in the date a transfer of funds occurred between accounts and date it was recorded in QuickBooks. A few payments were made without a co-signer signature on the check. No discrepancies of any significance were identified.

Income and expense information was provided to the Hobbs Group to facilitate the preparation of the 2012 "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax" form. Allyson DeHart, an accountant with The Hobbs Group, filed the form on the Board's behalf in November, 2013. Payment in the amount of \$75 was made to The Hobbs Group for this filing action.

The Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) form BRA-25 was not completed last year. The submission is required every other year and will be filed again this year.

For the past several years, we have paid an annual premium of \$3,960.00 to RSUI Indemnity Company for the Board of Directors' liability insurance. Their premium for 2014 was raised \$400 to \$4,360.00. A few weeks ago, our insurance agent recommended we review a competitive quote from CAN Insurance; \$3,004.00. The same liability coverage is provided as our current carrier with deductions lower than provided under the CFM policy. An application was completed and submitted to CAN Insurance for their review. We expect to have the policy issued in the near future.

Interest in the amount of \$9.52 accrued in the CD during 2013. The interest was added to the prior balance of the Ames fund (\$4,529.75), to bring the current balance to \$4,539.27.

The 2013 – 2014 Diplomate dues payments totaled \$26,074.44.

Fortunately, no payments were made to ACT during the past year for their validation services. (The last payment made was in 2011 for \$17,162.67, causing a significant impact on our checking account balance.)

Six application payments were received for total deposits of \$1,568.45.

Payment in the amount of \$100.13 was made to the Corporate Service Company on January 5, 2014 to maintain statutory representation in D.C. (Our Corporation documents were initially filed in D.C.)

A dues payment was made to FSAB in the amount of \$842 on 10/18/13.

It is encouraging to note all balances are higher, albeit slightly, from a year ago: CD \$7,577.03 (Currently earning 0.08% interest. Expires 8/14/14.); Savings \$324.17 (Interest accumulates at 0.01 per month.); Regular checking \$27,170.88 (3/31/14 balance: \$25,149.83.) The two most recent Profit and Loss Statements are provided below. Routine income and expenses were consistent between the two recent reporting years. The expense for the audit kept our income from exceeding that of the prior year.

**ABFDE
Profit & Loss Statement**

Ordinary Income/Expense Income	4-1-13 through 3-31-14	4-1-12 through 3-31-13
Application Fee	1,568.45	1,250.00
Brochures	85.90	0.00
Coffee mug	0.00	115.00
Hilton 2nd Edition	336.74	712.87
Total Hilton 2nd Edition	336.74	712.87
Membership Dues	26,074.44	28,000.82
Total Income	28,065.53	30,078.69
Expense		
ABFDE BoD Mtg 2014		
Airfare	3,014.41	0.00
Total ABFDE BoD Mtg 2014	3,014.41	0.00
ABFDE BofD Meetings	0.00	11,237.91
Total ABFDE BoD 2013	3,941.42	1,415.30
Total ABFDE BoD Meetings	3,941.42	12,653.21
ABFDE BofD - Other	2,000.00	0.00
Total ABFDE BofD	5,941.42	12,653.21
ABFDE BofD Mtgs ABFDE	6,849.97	0.00
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ABFDE Workshop 2013	0.00	510.65
Administration	6,788.25	7,086.72
Audit - 2013	4,075.00	0.00
Bank Error	-15.00	0.00
Bank Fees	0.00	101.95
Check copies	0.00	6.00
FSAB		
FSAR Membershin Dues	842.00	857.00
Total FSAB	842.00	857.00
Insurance - nonemployee	0.00	3,960.00
Legal Fees	88.50	0.00
Northeast Trophies & Awards	37.75	0.00
Overpayment	250.00	0.00
Plaques	48.15	0.00
Postage and Delivery	83.86	107.99
Prep of 2011 Form 990	0.00	500.00
Reconciliation	0.00	-44.95
Refund - Hyatt	-2,263.54	0.00
Reimbursement	122.55	0.00
Statutory Rep.	100.13	96.41
Stop Payment on 2 checks	873.71	0.00
Supplies and Materials	570.37	0.00
Trademark renewal	519.45	0.00
Transferred from business	-1,500.00	0.00
Voided	-424.50	0.00
Total Expense	26,002.48	25,834.98
Net Ordinary Income	2,063.05	4,243.71

Credentials Report – Bonnie Beal

The Credentials Committee received five applications this year; four of the five applicants have passed onto the testing phase. The committee is awaiting documentation for the fifth applicant.

Continuing Education Committee Report – A. Frank Hicks

There were 8 workshops approved for a total of 42 recertification points. The workshops were held across the country at national, regional, and local meetings.

FSAB Committee Report – Bonnie Beal

The ABFDE was reaccredited under former Secretary Nicolaides in February 2012. This accreditation is for five years. A new application will need to be completed prior to the year 2017. FSAB requires an annual report from all accredited organizations by March 31 of each year. Our FSAB Annual Report was submitted on March 26, 2014, along with the Substantive Changes and updated RPG. We have not heard back from FSAB regarding the report at this time.

Public Relations Committee Report – Marie Durina

This report covers the period of May 2013 through March 2014.
NIST Symposium on Measurement Science and Standard in Forensic Handwriting Examination

This NIST-sponsored symposium was held in Gaithersburg, MD on June 4-5, 2013. This was the first symposium of this kind and ABFDE was listed as a collaborator. The purpose of this conference was to enhance the current state of forensic handwriting analysis through the use of advancements in measurement science and the latest research investments in quantitative analysis capabilities.

NIST organized this event in collaboration with the American Academy of Forensic Sciences – Questioned Document Section, American Board of Forensic Document Examiners (ABFDE), American Society of Questioned Document Examiners (ASQDE), National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and Scientific Working Group for Forensic Document Examination (SWGDOC). In addition to presentations by Dr. Kam, Dr. Srihari, and Dr. Merlino, several ABFDE Diplomates also presented at the symposium. These included:

Ted Burkes; John Paul Osborn; Peter Tytell; Rigo Vargas; Linton Mohammed; Kirsten Singer; Marie Durina; Lisa Hanson; Brent Ostrum; Jan Masson; Jane Lewis; Brian Lindblom; Tom Vastrick

The symposium was attended by a live audience as well as webcasted for "virtual" attendees. This led to the question as to how many recertification points would be available to Diplomates who attended in person vs. those who attended "virtually" via webcast. It was decided that physical attendees would receive 8 points toward recertification and webcast attendees would receive 4 points for attendance. Some

attendees were concerned about this discrepancy and were of the opinion an equal amount of points should have been awarded to all attendees. As webcast seminars and symposiums of this kind may become more prevalent in the future, a determination should be made about how and when the ABFDE will award recertification points to Diplomates.

Texas White Paper and ABFDE Position Letter

On January 18, 2013 President Kirsten Singer submitted a letter on behalf of the ABFDE to the Executive Office of the United States Attorneys setting forth the ABFDE's position regarding testimony in United States courts by qualified forensic document examiners. Due a change in management at the AUSA's Office, this comprehensive letter was not given an audience at the AUSA's office, but was retained for possible future use.

In November 2013, the State of Texas released a White Paper addressing issues in forensic science and appearing to be very much in favor of certification for all forensic practitioners. The original letter intended for the AUSA's office was slightly revised and updated, and found a new target audience with some of the stakeholders involved in the Texas White Paper, specifically the participants from the Texas Criminal Justice Integrity Unit. For more information on this group see:

<http://www.cca.courts.state.tx.us/tcjiu/members.asp> The updated letter was mailed to 15 individual participants of TCJIU on March 18, 2014 along with a copy of our brochure entitled "Profile of a Forensic Document Examiner". While we are not overly confident about the immediate impact of our letter upon this group, we are viewing as an attempt to go on the record about our profession and an opportunity to make small inroads for possible networking in the future with those who have a close relationship with the justice system.

Updating of the Recertification Application Form on ABFDE Website

In May, 2013 several attempts were made to revise the Recertification Application form currently on the ABFDE website. The current form is of extremely poor quality and several versions of a new, improved form were proposed. Three versions of the new form were discussed, and members of the BOD expressed various concerns via e-mail regarding content, especially with regard to what should be required of Diplomates (i.e., the requirement of proficiency testing, and what constitutes being "actively engaged" in the profession.) Treasurer Green discussed an inexpensive source to have the form become a "fillable pdf form" that would facilitate on-line submission by Diplomates. It was decided to revisit this issue at a later date, in the hope that a new form could be adopted or at the very least, the appearance of the current form on the website be upgraded.

Inquiry about ABFDE Code of Ethics

In January, 2014, the Public Relations Committee received an inquiry from an ethics teacher. She expressed concern about the removal by the ABFDE of the paragraph on liability that was previously in its ethics code. She stated "in order to mitigate an

association's liability when exercising ethics investigations and sanctions, that a statement of member liability concerning ethics was strongly recommended, maybe even required, to be included somewhere in the Bylaws." In the teaching of her courses on ethics throughout the State of California, she vigorously tracks ethics-related material for a multitude of forensic organizations, and often uses material on various websites as examples of what constitutes "acceptable" and "non-acceptable" examples of ethical models.

President Singer promptly responded to the teacher to assure her that the paragraph she cited is still present in the Rules and Procedures Guide, and advised her that the Guide was revised per FSAB in 2012 to separate sections and make them more readily available on the ABFDE website.

She was advised the liability paragraph is on page 15, under Section III Code of Ethics and Standard Practices, and was also provided with the following information:

2009

DIPLOMATE/CANDIDATE LIABILITY

Any Diplomate or candidate of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners, who has violated any of the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Competency, or portion thereof, may be liable to censure, suspension or expulsion by action of the Board of Directors, as provided in the Professional Review Procedures

2012

B. Diplomate/Candidate Liability

Any Diplomate or candidate of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners, who has violated any of the provisions of the Code of Ethics and Competency, or portion thereof, may be liable to censure, suspension or expulsion by action of the Board of Directors, as provided in the Professional Review Procedures.

She was advised that, in addition, ABFDE maintains annual Directors and Officers Liability insurance; and Diplomates must sign a "Statement of Affirmation and Agreement" when they submit their annual dues.

Finally, she was provided the following text recommended by our legal counsel as an amendment to our Bylaws in 2011:

Bylaws amended:

5. Denial and Revocation of Certificates

- f. In an effort to promote the purpose of the organization, all Diplomates are subject to review as outlined in the Professional Review Procedures. By agreeing to the terms and conditions placed upon the Diplomates as a condition of certification and membership, all Diplomates agree that any complaint made by one Diplomate against another Diplomate for Professional

Review is done in order to maintain the purpose, integrity and reliability of forensic examination.

New Textbook includes Forensic Document Examination and Reference to the ABFDE

In 2011, author Richard Walton began working on a textbook entitled "Practical Cold Case Homicide Investigations Procedural Manual" intended for use by law enforcement and private investigators of homicides and death investigations that have become "cold cases". Mr. Walton contacted the San Diego Sheriff's Crime Lab seeking input from a forensic document examiner on Chapter 27 of the book "Questioned Documents", which had been drafted several years earlier by a now-deceased detective. The chapter was extensively re-written to include information about what constitutes a qualified forensic document examiner, and referring readers to legitimate FDE organizational websites including the ABFDE, ASQDE, SAFDE, and SWAFDE. The textbook was ultimately published and was made available for purchase in February, 2014. It is hoped that its contents will aid investigators in their attempts to close unsolved cases that were previously thought to have no resolution.

Website

The ABFDE website has been updated to include a current Directory of Diplomates. Additional updates include current versions of the following RPG documents posted by Secretary Bonnie Beal: Code of Conduct, General Provisions, Background Purposes, Code of Ethics, Bylaws, Duties of Officers and Committees, Procedure for Application and Certification, and an Outline of Substantive Changes. Laureen Leaver has proven invaluable in helping the BOD keep the website current and her assistance and diligence in this regard is extremely appreciated.

Recertification Committee Report – Rick Horton

As of March 25 the ABFDE has 112 active Diplomates. Three (3) new Diplomates completed the testing process and were issued an ABFDE Certificate of Qualification and Membership Card. Sixteen (16) Diplomates met the recertification criteria for the next five (5) year period and have received, or are in the process of receiving, their Certificate of Recertification and new Diplomate Membership card. One (1) Diplomate failed to meet the recertification criteria during the past five (5) years and may not receive their Certificate of Recertification and Diplomate Membership card. Two (2) Diplomates retired/resigned. One (1) Diplomate passed away.

Rules and Procedures Committee Report – A. Frank Hicks

Shortly after the 2013 BOD meeting, proposals were made to change the Application for Recertification in Document Examination and ask for information such as how many cases an examiner had worked in the preceding five years and to make it a requirement to participate in proficiency testing. These topics were discussed at length and it was decided to make this a topic for discussion at the 2014 BOD meeting.

The ABFDE President received a letter from the Canadian Association of University Teachers to ask the ABFDE to join as an “intervener” in a criminal case in Canada. Other professional forensic document examination organizations have also been invited to intervene in this case. Much discussion has been had on this issue and it was decided to bring the topic up for discussion at the 2014 BOD meeting in Houston, TX.

Secretary Beal has proposed some changes to the wording of several areas of our Rules and procedures Guide. These were emailed on April 9, 2014, and will be discussed at the BOD meeting in Houston.

Test Preparation and Validation Committee Report – Rosalind Spencer

One new practical problem was received and distributed for validation this year. A number of other new practical tests are in the pipeline. It is important that the pool of tests be refreshed periodically, to keep it relevant. Practical tests may include some contextual bias. Probabilistic conclusions, if properly reasoned, will be acceptable.

Rosalind stated if we would like to submit a practical exam, she only needs one or two versions of it, not three or four.

The pool of multiple-choice written questions has been completely refreshed, thanks to the hard work of the Directors and Diplomates. The second review of the first written test was held at the ASQDE meeting in August 2013, with good results. Work on the second written test is in progress and a review will occur this August at the ASQDE meeting.

Workshop – Jim Josey

There was one ABFDE workshop held during this reporting period. The workshop was held on February 19, 2013 and was a full day workshop titled “ABFDE Demystifying Certification 101”. It was held at the USSS building in Washington. This is an ongoing workshop that was borne as a result of requests by FDE Trainees and newly trained FDE’s to provide more information regarding preparing for ABFDE certification. The workshop was organized and presented by Lisa Hanson and Kirsten Singer. Diplomates in attendance to lend support to the workshop included Jeffrey Payne, Kathleen Storer, Bonnie Beal, and Gregory Dalzell. Feedback after the workshop has been very positive.

We need to inject some new blood into our workshops and encourage our new Diplomates to help put on the workshops.

Historian – Bonnie Beal

The 2013 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes and Newsletters have been archived.

Testing Committee Report – Lisa Hanson

This report covers the period beginning May 5, 2013 and ending April 25, 2014

Three (3) candidates successfully completed the certification testing program and achieved Diplomate status.

There are eight (8) candidates are currently in the testing process. One candidate withdrew from the testing process.

In accordance with FSAB standards, the "Performance Characteristics" and "Current Status of Each Candidate" spreadsheets are maintained. These statistics are maintained to record and track the performance of testing candidates during the various phases of the certification examination process.

1. Oral Examination

Three (3) oral examinations have been conducted resulting in three (3) passing evaluations.

2. Future Testing

There is presently one Candidate eligible to take the Written Exam and two Candidates eligible to take the Practical Examination and two Candidates eligible to take the Oral Examinations.

There will be two (2) Candidates that, if they have completed their Mentorships, will be able to request their Practicals.

There may be one (1) Candidate that, if s/he begins and completes his/her Mentorship, will be able to request his/her Practicals.

A Testing Committee Oral Examination Panel is tentatively available during the upcoming Annual ASQDE Conference in anticipation of Candidates who may qualify during the next four months.

Written examinations and Oral examinations will be offered at all upcoming national and regional meetings in accordance with the needs of the candidates and the availability of ABFDE Directors.

The Certification 101 workshops have been well received. One was provided prior to the BOD meeting and another workshop will be provided a few weeks after. The support of the Diplomates who have helped has been crucial to the success and she could not do this without the Diplomates' help.

Secretary Report – Bonnie Beal

The BOD voted and awarded Diplomate status to three new Diplomates. The BOD also voted on a measure to determine when a document examiner is considered an "expert consultant" when accepting a case. The motion passes that a document examiner is considered an "expert consultant" when the Diplomate has accepted a retainer fee and has had follow up email correspondence with the client, even if no report has been issued.

The RPG was reviewed and recommendations were made for some editorial changes. In addition, the Confidentiality Agreement for the Credentials Committee has been updated. These changes were detailed in the Outline of Substantive Changes dated June 14, 2014. A copy of the Outline of Substantive Changes will be distributed to the Diplomates along with a copy of the 2014 BOD meeting minutes.

Nominations – Frank Hicks

No elections for Directors were held in the past twelve months.

Professional Review Committee – Lisa Hanson

There were no cases submitted to the professional Review Committee during this calendar year of 2014.

Old Business

ACT –Beal

The pilot testing of our new written test has been slow going. Only eleven of the needed 50 Diplomates have taken the test. Many regional associations have not been willing to provide the two hours needed to take the test during the normal meeting time. The Board is looking at different ways to get the Diplomates to help with this important project.

Training Syllabus Update – Riordan & Licht

The training syllabus is still in the process of being updated by removing obsolete articles and reviewing and adding newer articles.

SWGDOC Update – Singer

The guidelines developed by SWGDOC will be transitioned over to be guidelines or standards once the FSSB and OSACs are up and running. At this time, the SWGDOC is continuing to work on the QD guidelines. For a more detailed description of what the OSACs are and their development go to www.nist.gov/forensics/osac/index.cfm.

It is going to be a more cumbersome process with less document examiners (~14) doing the work of the current 40 examiners on SWGDOC. Standards are harder to pass; guidelines are best practices and are easier to pass.

Mentorship Program – Hanson

We have had a total of three Candidates choose the mentorship option, however, we need to have sharper guidelines and deadlines. The points were to determine, what practical the candidate failed in and to set them up with a mentor to provide additional training in that area. Changes were made to the RPG providing six months to complete the mentoring process with at least 80 hours dedicated by both the mentor and candidate.

ABFDE Position Letter for DOJ/TX – Durina & Masson

We sent an ABFDE position letter and to each Judge and attorney, fifteen in all, on the Texas Criminal Justice Integrity Unit (TCJIU). This committee was very pro accreditation and certification of all forensic science laboratories and scientists in the State of Texas. The letter started out with applauding their efforts in encouraging

certification and accreditation and then launched into what constitutes genuine forensic document examination. Our brochure “Profile of a Forensic Document Examiner” was also included. We have not had any feedback as of yet. It was decided to send the letter to each State’s Attorney General.

Modify Recertification Application – Points for distance learning – Durina

The Board discussed how to award points for distance learning and what will constitute distance learning. The webinars should be pre-approved and will be approved on a case-by-case basis. They have to be relevant to the field. The RPG, specifically “H. Recertification Requirements 3.1 area” was changed to include webinars and points allotted. Under 2.2 the addition of documentation requirements was added. If the webinar is not pre-approved, the examiner should not expect a guarantee that it would be approved.

Practical Evaluation Criteria – Hanson

The Testing Committee will be moving to a Pass/Fail criteria for the practical exercises in the future.

Frank Hicks and Marie Durina stepped down from the BOD. They provided great dedication and hard work to the BOD. They will be missed.

FSAB Issues

A couple of Diplomates brought concern regarding FSAB’s non-transparency and the lack to Directors and Officers insurance by FSAB. The BOD discussed these concerns and at this time are taking a wait and see approach. It appears FSAB is trying to be accredited to ISO 17011 which requires transparency and insurance.

Professional Review

A Professional Review Committee has been convened.

Status of Aus/NZ applications – Beal

We have had two applications; one is in the testing phase and one is in the credentials phase.

CAUT Request – Singer & Spencer

President Singer sent a letter to the group representing CAUT stating that we will not be participating with the intervener. Intervening on occasions when the court’s ruling is contrary to evidence tendered by Board certified document examiners does not fall within the Board’s mandate. Regretfully, the ABFDE cannot intervene in every case where the findings of an ABFDE certified examiner are challenged by examiners not certified by the ABFDE. It is important that the ABFDE maintain its impartiality. It was viewed that joining the coalition would give the impression of being an advocate for Mr. Diab. The ABFDE is concerned with forensic practice that operates on accepted methods and principles; however our mandate is certification of forensic document

examiners. Therefore, we recommended they contact the Scientific Working Group for Forensic Document Examination (SWGDOC), the organization which publishes standards and guidelines for the field of forensic document examiners and gave them the website www.swgdoc.org.

Examination protocols for digital images – Josey

There is a blog site for IT people who do not understand what we do; they only know what one graphologist does. They raked QD across the coals stating that we weren't qualified to be examining documents of this type (PDF/electronic) that have been prepared and transmitted over the Internet that so many things can go wrong. One Director was very concerned because they seemed to automatically assume that we were all like the graphologist. He started calling colleagues asking if we had any procedures on how to examine PDFs and electronic documents and the importance of caution. We were told some Diplomates are writing procedures for examining electronic and PDF documents.

RPG Changes

A copy of the recommended changes to the RPG was provided to the BOD prior to the meeting. After discussion each change was unanimously approved. Please see the "Outline of Changes to Standards" on the website for the "Outline of Substantive Changes". In addition, clean-up changes, such as, deleting extra spaces or adding spaces, changing the word "credit" to "points" and changing font/size for consistency, etc., were fixed.

Departure of Directors

Marie Durina and Frank Hicks tendered their resignations from the Board. It was accepted with sadness. Their dedication and thoughtful insights were invaluable to the Board. Thank you both for your service.

We are happy to report that Tom Riley and Farrell Shiver have accepted to be Directors. We welcome them aboard starting July 1, 2014.

Election of Directors

Tom Riley and Farrell Shiver were appointed to the BOD to fill the director slots vacated by Marie and Frank.

Miscellaneous Information

The BOD is moving to a digital format; along with this, a new computer and A/V equipment will be purchased for the ABFDE BOD and will be maintained by the secretary.

Next Meeting

The next ABFDE BOD meeting will be held May 1 – 3, 2015.

This ends the meeting minutes.