

# Minutes of the 2013 BOD Annual Meeting

*Submitted by Kathleen Annunziata Nicolaides*

The ABFDE Board of Directors met for their Annual Meeting May 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 in Phoenix, Arizona. Present were: President Kirsten Singer, Vice President Lisa Hanson (for May 3<sup>rd</sup> only), Secretary Kathy Annunziata Nicolaides, Treasurer Jim Green, Frank Hicks, Jim Josey, Bonnie Beal, Marie Durina, Rick Horton, Rosalind Spencer, and Bill Riordan.

**Treasurer's Report (Green):** As of 3/31/13, ABFDE had \$25,149.83 in its Regular Checking account, \$323.85 in its Savings account, and a CD valued at \$7,569.95. The CD expires 11/14/13. 2012 – 2013 dues payments totaled \$28,000.82. Five application payments were received for total deposits of \$1,250.00. The two most recent Profit and Loss Statements are included below. It is encouraging to note a significant gain has been made in the restoration of funds. Our annual net income balance on 3/31/12 was \$7,704.64. On the same date this year, our annual net balance for the preceding year was \$4,275.87, a difference of + \$11,980.51.

In accordance with the SOP's, an external audit was requested on 1/26/13. All requested copies of cancelled checks and their related receipts, deposit documents, policies and other information, was provided to The Hobbs Group. As of the date of this report (4/4/13), the audit process has not been completed.

Income and expense information was provided to the Hobbs Group to facilitate the preparation of the 2011 "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 October, 2012. Total revenue for the fiscal year was \$28,988. Payment in the amount of \$500 was made to the Hobbs Group on November 25, 2012 for the filing action.

A payment in the amount of \$3,960.00 was made to CFM Insurance Company on March 6, 2013 for Board of Directors liability insurance. (The cost remained the same as billed over the past four years.)

During the past year, interest in the amount of \$19.68 was added to the prior balance in the Ames fund of \$4,510.07. The current balance is \$4,599.85. As a reminder, the Ames account is not a separate fund; it is simply a dedicated balance that currently exists in the regular checking account.

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

Payment in the amount of \$96.41 was made to the Corporate Service Company on January 5, 2013 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 \$857 on 11/5/12.

PayPal was established to provide the convenience of payment for dues, workshops, etc. Approximately 30 Diplomates took advantage of making their dues payments via PayPal. As mentioned in the last report, PayPal receives \$7.55 for a \$250.00 payment. The cost is reasonable because of the assured payment, the ease of making a payment in US dollars from a foreign country as well as providing an expedient manner of payment common to other organizations.

ABFDE Profit & Loss April 2011 through March 2012 Apr '11 - Mar 12	
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
ABFDE/ASQDE Workshop 2011	3,324.00
Application Fee	250.00
B of A error (Fee reversal)	29.95
Hilton 2nd Edition Royalty	1,026.97
Membership Dues	31,230.45
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>35,861.37</b>
Expenses	
\$275 Dues & \$15 Bank fee	290.00
ABFDE Board of Directors Meeting - 2011	8,439.38
ACT, Inc., Test Validation	17,162.67
ABFDE/ASQDE Workshop - 2011	2,304.04
Accounting Fees	525.00
Administration	6,564.30
Bank Statement error.	0.30
Bank Fees	97.90
FSAB Membership Dues	1,872.00
Insurance – Board of Directors	3,960.00
Legal Fees	407.69
Non-profit Corporate filing	80.00
Other Miscellaneous Expenses	86.88
Overpayment	260.00
Postage and Delivery	218.05
Reconciliation Discrepancies	-0.30
Replacement check	-162.00
Supplies and Materials	1,460.10
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>43,566.01</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>-7,704.64</b>

ABFDE Profit & Loss April 2012 through March 2013 Apr '12 - Mar 13	
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
Application Fees	1,250.00
Coffee mug sales	115.00
Hilton 2nd Edition Royalty	712.87
Membership Dues	28,000.82
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>30,078.69</b>
Expense	
ABFDE B of D Mtg - 2013	1,415.30
ABFDE B of D Mtg - 2012	11,237.91
ABFDE Workshop 2013	510.65
Administration	7,086.72
Bank Error (Fee reversal)	-30.00
Bank Fees	104.95
Check copies	6.00
FSAB Membership Dues	857.00
Insurance – Board of Directors	3,960.00
Postage and Delivery	107.99
Prep of 2011 Form 990	500.00
Reconciliation Discrepancies	-44.95
Statutory Rep.	96.41
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>25,807.98</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>4,270.71</b>
Other Income/Expense	
Other Income	
Donation	5.00
Interest Earned	0.16
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<b>5.16</b>
<b>Net Other Income</b>	<b>5.16</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>4,275.87</b>

**Credentials Committee Report (Nicolaides):** The Credentials Committee received 7 applications this year. Three of the applicants have passed into the testing phase; all of the remaining 4 applicants' documentation has yet to be received. One of these is our first Australian application! I have been in contact with one candidate who has exceeded the 2½ year time limit for testing and is interested in reapplying. In reviewing one applicant's credentials, a committee member recused him/herself due to a possible conflict of interest. Rick Horton graciously assisted the Committee by reviewing and voting on the credentials of this applicant. There were no new Diplomates for this report period.

**Continuing Education Committee Report (Hicks):** There were 7 workshops approved for a total of 42 recertification points. The workshops were held across the country and in Canada, at national, regional, and local meetings.

**FSAB (Nicolaides):** FSAB requires an Annual Report from all accredited organizations. ABFDE's 2012 Annual Report was submitted on March 26, 2013.

**Public Relations / Website (Durina):** The ABFDE has provided letters of support for the following people recommending their appointment to positions on the newly formed National Commission on Forensic Science: Dr. Mara Merlino, Dr. Linton Mohammed, ABFDE-D, Jane Lewis, ABFDE-D, and Patricia Manzollillo, ABFDE-D.

The NIST Symposium on Measurement Science and Standard in Forensic Handwriting Examination will be held in Gaithersburg, MD on June 4-5, 2013. This is the first symposium of this kind and ABFDE will be listed as a collaborator. The purpose of this conference is 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 is organizing 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). Several ABFDE Diplomates will be presenting at the symposium. These include: John Paul Osborn, Peter Tytell, Rigo Vargas, Linton Mohammed, Kirsten Singer, Marie Durina, Kathy Storer, Lisa Hanson, and Brent Ostrum. Dr. Kam, Dr. Srihari, and Dr. Merlino will also be presenting. The symposium will be live as well as webcasted. The webcast will be archived for approximately 6 months after the event. Conference registration is now open. For additional details, please refer to the NIST OLES Website: <http://www.nist.gov/oles/handwriting.cfm>

The Speakers' Bureau PowerPoint presentation has been used during the past year by: Jim Hayes in both the state of Illinois and in Wisconsin, and Ellen Schuetzner. Rigo Vargas is also planning to use it. All presentations were or will be given to groups of attorneys.

We have updated new brochures relating to Forensic Document Examination. The first brochure entitled ABFDE Brochure is available in both fold over and full sheet version, as well as in French, on the ABFDE website as a download under the "Diplomates Only" Section.

Another brochure directed at clients and entitled "Profile of a Forensic Document Examiner" was updated and printed with the help of Jim Josey. Jim will be maintaining a supply of the brochures that are available to Diplomates wishing to use them. At the present time, these are free of charge. In the event we require that more be printed, we will revisit cost issues. It was decided that stocking this brochure in printed format only (rather than digital versions) would assist us in maintaining quality control. Josey suggested that ABFDE charge a nominal fee for quantities greater than 25. Brochures are available to the general public as well as Diplomates.

The ABFDE was originally approached about the Forensic Science Simplified Project for NFSTC in February 2012. At that time, we were given a 2-week deadline for putting together a primer on the subject of Forensic Document Examination as part of a larger project the NFSTC is working on putting together primers for each of the forensic science disciplines. The goal of the project is to create a series of concise forensic guidebooks for the Bureau of Justice Assistance that will be easy-to-read useful resources for non-scientists (such as policy-makers, law enforcement officers, potential jurors, attorneys, students, and the public.) Despite the tight timeline, the website did not go live until March 2013. The contents of the QD Section (as well as other forensic disciplines) can be viewed at the website: <http://forensicsciencesimplified.org/docs/how.html>. ABFDE Diplomates Kirsten Singer, Kathy Nicolaides, and Marie Durina are credited as contributors and it should be noted that NFSTC used the QD Section as the "model primer" for the other forensic science disciplines.

On April 2, 2013 Kirsten Singer filed the Declaration of Use of Mark for the ABFDE logo with the US Patent and Trademark office, as required between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years after first filing for the mark (between August 14, 2012 and August 14, 2013). An Application for Renewal must be filed by August 14, 2017. The Board had previously given some thought about retaining an attorney to handle this.

**ABFDE Position Letter for DOJ:** On January 18, 2013 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.

Singer has not received a response from the DOJ and the letter has not been distributed to AUSAs nationwide as requested. Suggestion was made that letter be made available to Diplomates for distribution to attorneys in cities, states, counties, bar associations and continuing education venues. The letter would still be signed by Singer. Diplomates would have to contact PR committee to generate letter. Singer will contact the ABA for national distribution. Publishing the letter in the newsletter will be postponed until a response is received from attempts for national distribution.

**Recertification (Horton):** As of March 25 the ABFDE has 112 active Diplomates (down from 118 reported in 2012). No new Diplomates completed the testing process. Twenty-six (26) 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. Six (6) Diplomates retired/resigned: Marty Blake, Bill Bodziak, Jack Calvert, Greg Floyd, Fred Panhorst, and John Sardone.

Two (2) files are being maintained for each Diplomate. The appropriate Manager keeps a file containing items pertaining to Diplomate activity, including annual updates with supporting documentation and all significant correspondence relating to recertification; and the Administrative Office keeps a file containing annual Notice of Points Awarded (NOPA) forms, letters, Recertification Applications, and copies of Member cards and Recertification Certificates.

Riordan asked whether recertification manager can deny activities. Horton has worked on SOPs so that activities are clearly defined. Nicolaides commended the Committee for their efficiency.

**Rules and Procedures Committee Annual Report (Hicks):** There are two proposed changes to the Rules and Procedures Guide that will be voted on at the 2013 Board of Directors meeting. The first proposed change addresses renumbering some subsections in the description of the duties of the Treasurer (Section IV.A.4). The second change addresses the cost of the Application Fee for candidates from Australia and New Zealand (Section IV.f.2).

**Test Preparation and Validation Committee Report (Spencer):** Recommendations on the requirements for new questions and tests have been received by the Chair. No old practical test submissions have been received for review.

The Chair of the Test Preparation and Validation Committee worked with the Committee and some Diplomates who volunteered to help validate new practical tests, and their prompt and diligent help was greatly appreciated. One new multi-faceted practical test was extensively validated and is now available for use as necessary. Other tests are in the pipeline. Creation and validation of new tests of acceptable quality (i.e. relevant and challenging) is a time-consuming exercise. The Chair will be very grateful for Diplomates volunteering to create or validate new practical tests.

A large number of multiple choice written tests have also been created and reviewed in the light of new requirements, with the result that the pool will soon be completely refreshed. The hard work of the Directors involved is to be commended on this achievement.

The first written test has been completed and went through its first review at the last SWAFDE meeting. We are awaiting the results of this review. The next review will be at the ASQDE meeting this coming August. Thank you to all who participated in writing up these questions. They are not easy to write.

Starting in June we will begin our work to complete the second test; depending on the responses from the reviews of the first test. Anyone willing to help please let Bonnie Beal know. The wide range of experience we have on the Board will greatly enhance the new test. Please help; we can use all of you.

It is important that the tests reflect reality, and therefore practical tests may include some contextual bias. Probabilistic conclusions, if properly reasoned, will be acceptable. The aim of the Committee is to create sufficient new practical tests for the pool to be completely refreshed, as a matter of some urgency.

**Workshop Committee Report (Josey):** There were two ABFDE workshops held during this reporting period. The first workshop was held on August 18, 2012 at the ASQDE Meeting in Charleston, SC, and was a full day workshop titled “ABFDE Demystifying Certification 101.” 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. Diplomates in attendance to lend support to the workshop included Peter Tytell, Todd Welch, Grant Sperry, Jeff Taylor, Kathleen Nicolaides and Maria Durina. Feedback after the workshop has been very positive.

Another “ABFDE Demystifying Certification 101” workshop was held at the AAFS meeting in Washington, DC on February 19, 2013. The workshop was organized and presented by Lisa Hanson and Kirsten Singer. Diplomates in attendance to lend support to the workshop included Jeffrey Payne, Bonnie Beal, Gregory Dalzell and Kathleen Storer. Feedback after the workshop was very positive. We hope to be able to put on additional workshops of this nature in the near future.

Josey updated information with Grants.Gov to allow ABFDE to remain registered and qualified to apply for federal grants. In order to remain qualified, we have to change our password every sixty days. Josey remains on the automatic notification list for government grants and has been monitoring the grant listing regularly.

**Testing Committee Report (Hanson):** There are seven (7) candidates currently in the testing process. No candidates have withdrawn from the testing program this year or have progressed to Diplomat status. Two (2) candidates failed testing at the Practicals phase and enrolled in the Mentorship program, but were unable to complete the mentorship program within the 2 ½ years allowed for the certification process. Both candidates are considering re-application in the future.

In accordance with FSAB standards, statistics are maintained to record and track the performance of testing candidates during the various phases of the certification examination process. Three (3) written tests were administered to three (3) candidates who all passed; the average score was

80.6%. Of five (5) practical tests administered, 2 were passed, 2 were failed, and 1 was reworked. No oral examinations were conducted. There is presently one (1) Candidate eligible to take the Written Examination. There are presently three (3) Candidates eligible to take their Practical Examinations. There will be one (1) Candidate, if s/he successfully completes Mentorship and the re-application process, who will be eligible to take the Practical Examinations. There are no Candidates eligible to participate in the Oral Examination Phase. However, a Testing Committee Oral Examination Panel will be 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.

**Professional Review Committee Annual Report (Hanson):** There were no cases submitted to the Professional Review Committee during the 2012 – 2013 calendar year.

**Secretary Annual Report (Nicolaides):** On May 21, 2012 and on September 25, 2012, the BOD was asked to vote on proposed changes to the RPG. These changes to the RPG, as well as those made during the 2012 BOD Meeting, were detailed in the Outline of Substantive Changes dated October 22, 2012. The Outline of Substantive Changes was distributed to the Diplomates and posted on the ABFDE Website. A Confidentiality Agreement for Board Members and Officials was completed by each Director at the 2012 BOD meeting. Board Members are asked to complete another one at this meeting. The BOD Meeting minutes for 2011 were posted to the BOD-only Area on the Website. The Committee Reports for 2012 were also posted as was the 2007 Survey of ABFDE Diplomates.

**Nominating Committee Report (Hicks):** In order to fill vacant positions on the ABFDE Board of Directors and to add to the total number of Directors, an election was held in 2013. From a list of six Diplomates who had agreed to put their names into the nomination process, the Diplomate body was asked to vote for four candidates. Votes could be submitted electronically or by paper ballot. The four nominees who garnered the most votes were **Lisa Hanson, Gary Licht, Janet Mason and Sean Espley**. These four candidates all agreed to serve and will begin their terms of service on July 1, 2013.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**ACT Project Update (Beal):** One new written pilot test (with a 123 questions) was taken at a regional meeting by volunteer Diplomates. The test took about 1 – 1½ hours to complete. The questions are being evaluated based on the number of testers who got the question right or wrong. Diplomates who take the pilot test in the future are encouraged to provide constructive criticisms rather than comments such as “Bad question.” New questions are still needed. These questions must be derived from sources covered in the ABFDE syllabus.

**ABFDE Training Syllabus Update (Riordan):** Committee is working with the ACT Project committee to ensure that questions on the written tests and practical problems reference material included in the syllabus. The syllabus is being reviewed correlated with the ACT testing blueprint; outdated sources are being culled, and cited sources checked for availability. The new written test cannot be implemented until the syllabus is updated. The new syllabus should be out 6 months prior to administration of the new test. It is expected that the syllabus will be slimmed down. This project is labor intensive and volunteers are welcome.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Election Results:** Lisa Hanson, Gary Licht, Janet Masson, and Sean Espley were voted onto the BOD by the diplomatic body. They will start their 4-year terms on July 1, 2013.

**RPG Changes:** Changes to the Rules and Procedures Guide were proposed and approved by majority vote of the BOD. These changes will be detailed in the forthcoming Outline of Substantive Changes.

**Demystifying Certification Workshop (Hanson):** Hanson outlined the workshop and showed the BOD the presentation used. She explained that the workshop can be arranged for organizational meetings with a sufficient number of attendees. Workshop attendees are charged \$175/person to cover lunch and cost of renting the room. Five weeks prior to workshop, Hanson sends 2 practical tests to attendees with instructions. Prior to the workshop, these are collected and sent to the Diplomates who are helping with the workshop. Attendees take a 25 question test at the end of the morning session.

Kathy Nicolaidis is scheduled to present a shortened version of the workshop at the May ASFDE conference. SWAFDE has requested the workshop at their 2014 meeting.

**BOD Member Preparation of New Practicals (Nicolaidis):** Directors agreed to commit to each preparing one new practical. Singer suggested tests be created in accordance with the ACT test blueprint. Hanson will look at current pool and let Spencer know what is needed. Spencer will distribute instructions for creating tests. Spencer noted that she will also need people to validate tests.

**Discussion of Masters Degree in Forensics as Partial Substitute for Lab Training:** An inquiry was received regarding the ABFDE's "Qualifications and Requirements for Certification" from a graduate awarded a MSc in Document Analysis from the University of Central Lancashire's School of Forensic and Investigative Services. The graduate suggested that the "extensive practical training...received during the 1 year period...supervised and delegated by 3 well-known Forensic Document Examiners" should satisfy 12 months of the 24 month training period under the supervision of a principal trainer listed as a requirement for certification. Discussion ensued. It was noted that the OSU certificate was considered supplemental to training. Although school can be part of a training program, the BOD held firm on a 24 month supervised training period.

**Recertification Application:** Review of the application for recertification was conducted and updates suggested. Durina will revise the form and distribute to the BOD for comment and approval.

**Election of Officers:** – Jim Green was re-elected Treasurer. Bonnie Beal was elected Secretary. Lisa Hanson was re-elected Vice President. Kirsten Singer was re-elected President. The term of office for each position is 2 years.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15pm on May 4<sup>th</sup>. The BOD spent the remainder of the day writing and editing new test questions. Everyone agreed it was the most challenging part of the meeting! Although significant progress was made, the process of compiling new questions is labor intensive. Diplomates interested in helping, should contact Bonnie Beal.