

## **AIAVT – BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES – APPROVED**

June 13, 2012 / Seton Ranch / Groton, VT

**Attending:** Tom Bachman (Vice-President), Joseph Cincotta, Gary Corey, Lauren Davis, Richard Deane, Diane Elliott Gayer, Katie Hill, Michael Hoffman, Diantha Korzun (President), Carol Miklos (Executive Director), Kevin Racek, Lisa Rovner, Maura Wygmans (Secretary/Treasurer)

**Called to Order:** 9:10 am

**Minutes:** The May 2012 minutes were approved.

**Committee Reports:** Committee reports were minimal, as the focus of this meeting is the annual board retreat.

### New Englands:

- Maura needs a co-chair to assist with communications.
- Tom to check if Cam needs additional support with the people's choice award.

### Programs:

- Vermont Statehouse is being considered as location for the annual meeting. Survey results indicated that members preferred a sit-down dinner (buffet ok), \$35 to \$45 maximum.

### Communications:

- Some members have raised concerns about the volume of emails received by AIAVT. Board agreed it would be preferable to group these into a single email to be sent every Friday or every other Friday.
- Board agreed email announcements of relevant events sponsored by other organizations should be forwarded to the membership, but this conflicts with benefits granted to affiliate members (including a certain number of "blast" emails to the membership).
- Size of email attachments should be limited; better to include a link for more information.
- Communications committee to make proposal for streamlining emails to the membership.

**Annual Retreat / Board Member Comments:** Each board member was asked to comment on their goals for AIAVT, and any concerns they wished to share with the group. In no particular order:

- Should AIAVT aim for a zero balance each year, or continue to rely on New Englands as a big money maker every seventh year?
- Need to increase membership, especially younger members, those about to become licensed. Providing study materials and mentoring would help to attract younger members.
- How can AIAVT be more relevant to VT architects?
- Small state is a challenge to business, AIAVT could help share business development info.
- Technology is a challenge for small firms, and industry is moving towards a two-tier system (big firms with REVIT, and those without). Can AIAVT help firms with technology?
- AIAVT has made a lot of progress over past few years in becoming a more structured and professional organization. Focus has been internal; now need to refocus externally on serving the membership.
- AIAVT needs to better communicate the value it brings to firms.
- AIAVT should promote value of architects and good design to the public.
- Why join AIAVT? It should be about programs, and building a professional network for help.
- AIAVT needs more public outreach, more programs, and more involvement in public policy matters – these are all of direct benefit to the members.
- Important to promote AIAVT membership to residential architects, as many do not belong.
- The affiliate structures needs to be reconsidered - maybe two tiers for affiliate firms?
- AIAVT should consider offering webinars – less driving for far-flung members.
- Show relevance of AIAVT to build membership, increased membership will help with the budget.

- One board member joined AIAVT because of individual people, not because of AIA as an organization.
- Use website to create an internal network of resources for members – identify members’ interests and areas of expertise.
- Profession is doing itself a disservice with poor business practices. We should be leveraging our architectural experience, and also offering less expensive but more limited “consultation” services to homeowners and builders who can’t afford or don’t need full design drawings.
- AIAVT was valuable to one board member for networking when new to the area. AIAVT should increase opportunities for face time between members.
- AIAVT’s strengths are its vitality, ability to attract new members, and desire to improve; AIAVT’s weakness is the dramatic budget growth over the past 5 years. What happens if there is another recession? AIAVT needs to retain and grow the membership for long-term stability.
- AIAVT should aim to generate some additional revenue for a rainy day fund, so that the organization can act when a new opportunity presents itself.
- Having a clear vision and clear goals makes it easier to raise the money needed to AIAVT.
- Architects should offer design services TO design-build contractors, not just compete against them.
- AIAVT should create a Committee on Environment (COE), similar to other chapters.
- Strength of AIAVT: progress made on organizational structure. Weakness of AIAVT: follow through on great ideas. Need to get more non-board members involved on the follow through.
- Focus on what members want – continuing education.
- We need to remember that time is a budgeted resource too.
- Advocacy is important to the membership – it shields us all from “space junk”

**Breakout Group #1 – Member Services:** Highlights presented back to the whole group:

- “Internal Services” provide direct benefit to members:
  - Aim to provide 12 CEU’s per year to meet continuing education requirements
  - One needed track is technology: CAD/REVIT/Sketchup/cloud, tough for small firms to develop
  - Another needed track is developing business practice skills - like Marketing 101
  - Maybe a weekend pilgrimage/tour to an awesome architectural site?
  - Tie in to lectures provided by others, to help members get their CEU’s
- “External Services” such as outreach to the public also benefit members, though indirectly
  - Sponsor table at home show to promote residential award winners?
  - AIAVT sponsored space at farmers market or local library – for outreach to public
  - Home & Garden show (more upscale), participate in Marvin design charrette next year
  - Continue house tours – but need a better operational model
    - Charge a fee and donate to charity, offer homeowners free cleaning before & after, maybe 5 houses close together, even bikeable?

**Breakout Group #2 – Internal Organization:** Highlights presented back to the whole group:

- AIAVT now set up as an employer with one ¾ to full-time employee; next step in growth is to use interns. What should it mean to be an AIAVT intern?
- Board structure: Officers should be just committee members, rather than committee chairs; multi-year chairs provide better continuity. But still important for officers to cycle through committees for experience.
- Secretary/Treasurer job has a steep learning curve, perhaps this position should not be on the leadership track?
- Create an advisory council of past presidents to provide historical continuity/institutional memory.
- Must get sponsorships to fund executive director position, but most important to keep AIAVT's focus on member relations.

**Theme for Next Year:** Tom Bachman introduced “The Relevance of Architects” as the theme for the upcoming year. Discussion topics included:

- Profession is being marginalized, most people don’t understand the value of good design. AIAVT should educate public about what architects add to a project, so that public will demand better design.
- Show public that “ordinary” design projects can benefit from an architect’s involvement.
- Market both architects’ knowledge of building technology, and the artistic/inspirational side of architectural design.
- AIAVT to organize/promote outreach to the public:
  - informal meetings in “non-threatening” settings around the state such as library/town hall; venue for firms to present their work or lecture; goal is to make architects more accessible to ordinary folks
  - Use house tours to show that good design is possible even with a limited budget
  - Offer monthly newspaper column on the value of good design to local newspapers
- Encourage members to participate on their local planning commissions/DRB’s
- Goal for next year's programs: offer 12 learning units, most on theme of "relevance"

**Structure of Executive Committee:**

- The following suggestions were made:
  - separate Secretary/Treasurer into two positions
  - remove Treasurer from the leadership track, which would then be Sec/VP/Pres/Past Pres
- Bylaw change should be done at December meeting. Michael to prepare a recommendation for the next board meeting.
- Board agreed that Executive Committee members should no longer be required to chair the committees, though are still expected to be active committee participants.

**Annual Budget**

- Executive Committee recommended that we switch to a zero-based budget for each year (i.e., no longer relying on New England's every 7th year to fund the other years). There was general consensus among the board that this is a good idea. Executive Committee suggested aiming to build a reserve fund equal to 50% of the \$130,000 annual operating budget, but will review this further.

**Development**

- The existing "affiliate" membership levels need clarification and coordination with actual practice. Referred back to the Development Committee.

**Formation of a Committee on the Environment (COE):**

- Board generally agreed this would be a good thing. Process would be to make a proposal to the board about the committee's mission, how the committee would support AIAVT's mission, staffing and resource requirements, and funding mechanism. Diane to pursue this further.

**Next Meeting:** August 14, 6pm, at Gossens Bachman Architecture in Montpelier

**Adjourned:** 4:00pm

Respectfully submitted by Katie Hill, Assistant to the Secretary  
7/31/12