**Minutes**

NCA Board Meeting

New Orleans, LA

**Attendees:** Marion Bradley, Linda Foat, Lori Hammes, Pam Markel, Tyler Volz, Ed Avis, Louella Torrence (remotely) and Dwayne Ibsen (remotely)

January 20, 2020

**Call to Order** – Marion Bradley called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. Linda moved to adjust the agenda as necessary; Pam seconded. Approved. Marion asked for a moment of silence to remember Lyn Flaharty, wife of board member Gene Flaharty, and to gather our thoughts for the meeting.

**Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting** – Pam moved and Tyler seconded; Approved.

**Discussion of HPE** - Ed reported that there were 11 buyer renewals; 2 new buyers (Hocus Pocus and The Costumer Scene); and 1 vendor renewal (Trick or Treat Studios) at the HPE. He also said it was important for him to be there to meet buyer and vendor members and discuss future ideas for NCA, and that he had several fruitful conversations with vendors and that he and Kathy got a lot of good story ideas talking to buyer members. Other board members also noted how important it is for us to have a presence there, and Linda said people appreciated the opportunity to chat with NCA folks at the booth. Louella noted that each $350 renewal cost $233.

Ed suggested that next year we should create a membership brochure and bring in more vendor and buyer items to show attendees what the NCA is all about. Ed suggested we invite members to send in photos of their shops, which we could make into a collage. Tyler suggested we use a digital photo frame to display them.

Marion noted that next year we should make sure everyone has an NCA badge.

Regarding the business meeting, several people noted that our attendance was hurt by the other events going on, and the fact that the trade show was open late. Nevertheless, people were pleased with the overall turnout. Vendors – Halco, Beistle, Kalan, Mehron and Kryolan – all attended and seemed interested in learning about members’ needs.

**Action Items:** For next year, consider ideas for improving the NCA booth. Ed will order NCA badges for those who need one.

**Executive Report**

Before delivering his report, Ed asked all the board members to tell him what they feel the purpose of the NCA is.

-Dwayne noted that in its heyday, the NCA was viewed as a leader in the industry. Now it’s more of a professional society, and before we seek new members, we need to improve the benefit offerings. He said the organization once had an FTD-like service to help customers find mascots and costumes. The plot service is still valuable if you do shows. We can’t count on convention as a draw anymore, and the Buyers Group is less valuable than in the past.

-Louella confirmed was Dwayne said, and added that our member make-up is becoming more retail and less rental.

-Lori noted that there seem to be two types of members – those who join for the Buyers Group and those who like the social aspects of belonging.

-Pam emphasized the networking aspects of NCA, and suggested that we find more ways to foster networking, especially within specialty areas. Pam said that when she first went to convention in 1998, she had a mentor who helped her learn. Dwayne explained that that was a program back then. Louella confirmed what Dwayne said.

-Linda said the guys from Costumes on Haight came to the booth and hugged her and thanked her for her advice last year at the show, which emphasizes the value of the networking aspects.

-Tyler said he also learned a great deal at the NCA convention in the summer, and put that knowledge to work immediately in his business. He suggested doing some videos on the site that ask “What does NCA mean to me?”

-Marion concluded this discussion by adding that she would rather learn about costuming business issues from other members than try to learn by herself, and that she uses the Buyers Group to stock up. She said we need to figure out how we can learn about and reach out to new owners and show them what NCA offers.

**Take-aways:** We should build on the Buyers Group offerings, but really emphasize the social and networking side of things. For example, we can focus the new Virtual Roundtables on specific business areas – for those who focus on theater, rentals, mascots, etc. We can also resurrect the idea of a mentor program to link new shop owners with veteran shop owners. We should identify new owners/shops and show them what NCA can do for them.

**- Report on transition from Civica** – Ed reported that nearly everything has been transitioned from Civica. He will be in Denver in February and hopes to close the Key Bank account then and go through the remaining boxes of stuff and decide what to keep.

**- Strategy/Big Picture Ideas (focus on engagement)** – The big picture goal of NCA should be to raise the organization’s profile in the industry. This will help membership, and allow the NCA to help the industry as a whole more effectively.

**- Ideas/details for expanding vendor engagement** – In addition to expanding exposure for vendor members through their ads and editorial in Costumer, the e-newsletter and the redesigned website, Ed suggested we offer discounted advertising so vendors can reprint pages of their catalogs. He raised the idea of starting a Costumers Advisory Council, which guides vendors about new products. He also suggested we consider some ideas to help members unite to get better prices from vendors and/or meet minimums. He said maybe that effort should start with members – figure out what they’re buying – and then see if we can get better vendor deals for those items. He suggested that if we could develop some relationships like that, he could set up group appointments at next year’s HPE to really emphasize the value/strength of NCA. The board said he can pursue those ideas without formal board approval.

**Action items:** Consider a member survey to gauge interest in group buys; pursue options with vendors; consider group appointments at next HPE. Sell catalog page idea to vendors for upcoming issues of Costumer. Start Costumers Advisory Council. Identify newly opened/sold stores and contact their owners for membership.

**- Ideas/details for expanding member engagement** – The ideas for member engagement were discussed. Ed asked for ideas for webinars, and noted that Linda has volunteered to do one about mask design and the Mehron people volunteered Gene to do one on make-up. Pam suggested one on business insurance, especially because a member’s shop recently burned down. Tyler suggested a webinar on how to write costume rental agreements. He also suggested a webinar on how to work with the cosplay industry. Tyler also suggested a “tip of the month” feature, and Ed said maybe we can find a vendor sponsor for that.

Ed explained the FotoZoomer relationship idea that united the two associations he works with. FotoZoomer makes consumer software/kiosks for design of posters and banners. This system can be installed in a costume shop, and the actual printing can be done by a member of Ed’s other association, APDSP.

Ed explained UNA Purchasing, which helps association members get good deals on FedEx, hotels, Hertz.

**Action items:** Schedule the webinars and find panelists; plan the “tip of the month” idea. Pursue the FotoZoomer idea and UNA Purchasing relationship. Consider mentoring idea.

**- Ideas/details for expanding costume industry engagement** – Ed suggested that we should try to position the NCA leaders as costume experts, so they are available to talk about Halloween costume trends, etc.

**Membership Report –** Ed asked “how do we turn engagement into new members/improved retention?” Ideas included making sure the database is cleaned up and new members are pursued and shown the benefits of membership.

**Committee Reports**

Buyers Group - Ed asked that a committee be formed to help him when a vendor is hesitating to participate.

Grievance – No grievances

Plot Service – No new ones lately; Ed will put plot service on the website

Policies and Procedures – We need a job description for treasurer; Louella said she emailed it to Ed. Also Linda asked if we need a policy about how long someone needs to be a member before he/she can become a board member. Other members asked why is this important?

Publications – Confirmed that we’ll have four issues of Costumer going forward.

Social Media – We need to start new Instagram and Twitter accounts. Tyler would like to be on the social media committee. When Ed sets up the Instagram and Twitter accounts, he’ll share the login info with Marion, Tyler and Janine Caufield.

Web site – Louella noted that the back end info is still out of date. Ed said he’ll clean it up when he switches to the new database.

Lori moved to accept the committee reports; Pam seconded; approved.

**Action items:** Put notice about plot service availability on website; send description of Treasurer position to Linda; start new Instagram and Twitter accounts.

**Budget Discussion** – Louella went through several budget items and asked questions. She noted that we need to spend the money for the member decals; we need to consider the taxes on ads (why is it $1,200 budgeted for 2020 when it was $1,970 for 2019 actual?); and we need to delete the $1500 in 68100, Scholarships. She questioned the president’s travel expenses in 2019, and said it was because her hotel cost more than it should have at convention.

**Action items:** Order member decals; remove $1500 from 68100.

**Upcoming Meetings** – It was decided that we’ll have quarterly conference calls lasting no more than one hour. They are scheduled for 9 am Central time on April 14, July 15 and November 10.

**Old Business** – Social media access was discussed again and the number of Costumer issues was confirmed at four.

**New Business** – Marion suggested some changes to committees, and Ed said he would identify some potential committee members by remembering who came to the booth and who reads the newsletter. Some committee chairs were changed:

Publication committee – Pam

Time and Place – Pam and Dwayne

Social media – Tyler (and Janine)

Louella was sworn in to a new term as treasurer.

**Action items:** Fix Louella’s term as treasurer; change the committee chairs in Costumer.

Louella asked about next convention. Dwayne said he doesn’t think they make sense anymore; others disagreed and said they change people’s perspective on the NCA and provide solid education to some people. Linda said the last convention was really good – we had good outside trainers. It was decided to form a committee to discuss.

**Adjournment –** Tyler moved to adjourn; Linda seconded; all in favor.