

American Knife & Tool Institute

Joint Board of Regents and Advisory Members Meeting

Thursday, June 3, 2010 - 1 p.m.
Rondelet Room, Renaissance Waverly, Atlanta, GA

The meeting of the Board of Regents (BOR) and Advisory members of the American Knife & Tool Institute on Thursday, June 3, 2010 was called to order at 1:05 p.m. by AKTI President Goldie Russell (A.G. Russell Knives). Regents present: CJ Buck (Buck Knives), Les de Asis (Benchmade), AKTI Vice President Bill Raczkowski (Gerber), Doug Flagg with proxy for Rod Bremer (CRKT), Mike Manrose (Meyerco), Craig Green (Kershaw), and Clint Kadel (United). Regents absent: Gil Hibben (Knifemakers Guild)-proxy to Goldie Russell. Advisory members present: Nick Trbovich (Ontario). Others: Dan Lawson, Legal Contributing Counsel, and AKTI Executive Director Jan Billeb.

These minutes are formatted on a per-subject basis, not the chronological discussion.

Administrative – Jan Billeb, Executive Director

Meeting Minutes: CJ Buck moved and Bill Raczkowski seconded to approve the joint Board of Regents and Advisory Members meeting minutes of January 18, 2010. Motion carried unanimously.

Bill Raczkowski moved, and Clint Kadel seconded to approve the Board of Regents meeting minutes of January 18, 2010 and April 4 and 5, 2010 with the correction that Mike Manrose was present at the April 4 and 5 meetings. Motion carried unanimously.

Future Meetings: It was confirmed the SHOT Show joint meeting of the Board of Regents and Advisory members will be held Monday, January 18, 2010 at 6 p.m. The location will be announced later. The Board of Regents will have a working meeting September 28-29, 2010 in Denver, beginning at 3 p.m. on Tuesday and ending by 5 p.m. on Wednesday.

Website Update: Jan Billeb provided an overview of the website redesign and new features including an expanded members' only section with PDFs of all past AKTI newsletters, access to the Statenet files AKTI is tracking, and a Board of Regent's only section with AKTI documents and minutes of board meetings. She asked if board members would provide photographs and biographical information for the About section. Jan Billeb distributed revised website FAQs (Attachment 2) and asked that everyone review them for clarity and agreement.

Financial - Bill Raczkowski

The tentative five month financial statements were emailed previously (Attachment 1). Bill Raczkowski moved to approve the financial report, seconded by CJ Buck. Motion carried unanimously. Bill Raczkowski clarified that the tentative budget for 2010 was based on 2008 figures with approximately 10% across the board added to determine budget numbers.

Jan Billeb reported that the 2009 preliminary accountant's review statement has been approved and Board of Regents will be receiving a copy by mail when finalized. The tax return will be completed by August 15th, and a PDF file will be forwarded to the Board for review prior to filing.

AKTI Update – Goldie Russell

Goldie Russell reviewed that the Board Denver meeting had been held as a working meeting to discuss AKTI's written mission and goals and beyond that what members want from the organization and what AKTI should focus resources on. It was agreed that AKTI's main goal is to protect the individual's knife rights which protects the knife industry's ability to remain in business. It was felt that it was more important to focus on educating law enforcement than specifically on the public.

Goldie Russell noted that the Board of Regents decided at the April Board meeting in Denver that information pertaining to membership level, payment of membership dues and contribution amounts would be available to all BOR members. At that same meeting, the BOR agreed that industry information collected from which to compile

industry statistics will not be available to anyone other than the entity who compiles the data. The BOR agreed to hire a third party to collect and compile the data. Jan Billeb reported that she has been contacted by the NSSF with an interest in gathering data to update the “AKTI State of the Industry Report” with expanded information including production numbers. The NSSF raised the possibility of funding the information gathering.

After discussion about industry data information, Les de Asis made a motion that all old data related to the State of Industry Report be destroyed and that such data not be retained after reports are finalized. Mike Manrose seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously. Jan Billeb was instructed to destroy the data and to send to the BOR a “letter of certification” that the data has been destroyed with the date destroyed and her signature attesting to the destruction.

Jan Billeb will talk to AKTI’s accounting firm McGladrey about who might be able to do data collection confidentially and will continue discussion with NSSF about an updated industry report.

Other Denver discussion topics included building membership with the goal of 100% industry involvement; the difference between membership as a source of money and membership as a source of action; and the need to accumulate lists of potential members as the first stage to recruitment efforts. Bill Raczkowski, Membership Chair, was assigned to start building a list.

AKTI mission and goals: Rod Bremer and CJ Buck worked on the rewording of the AKTI mission and goals based on the Denver meeting discussions. A copy of the reworked Mission Statement and Goals was made available to all those in the Blade Show meeting. CJ Buck noted that the first paragraph really is a vision of what we want AKTI to be.

Doug Flagg moved to approve the revised vision, mission and goals, Craig Green seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously. (Revised copy Attachment 3)

Goldie Russell reviewed the organizational issues discussed in the Denver meeting, noting there is a lot more work to be done. It is hoped that potential revisions to the AKTI Bylaws will be available by the SHOT Show meeting.

Executive Committee Report - Goldie Russell

The concept of building a list of expert witnesses and defense attorneys was reviewed by Goldie Russell, noting that the AKTI website will be used to offer these contacts.

Expert Witnesses – Bill Raczkowski explained a questionnaire he is working on to collect database information of available people to act as expert witnesses in court cases or as needed. Dan Lawson explained that expert witnesses as a legal standard offer opinion testimony based on their expertise and are normally paid a fee for their services. AKTI will provide lists of expert witnesses, and make it clear that AKTI is not “recommending” the Expert Witness for any particular situation, but simply providing contact information of a list of people who believe they have expertise to be an Expert Witness in specific areas related to knives. The defendant’s attorney has the responsibility to select the appropriate witness. Jim Furgal has been used in Manhattan and is registered in the court as an expert witness. It was agreed that an introduction paragraph should be added as to what being an expert witness involves. Bill Raczkowski explained that AKTI will be looking for Board members, other members, and people within their organizations as the first source of experts. He will update the questionnaire for review.

Defense Attorneys – Information will be gathered from attorneys who express interest in being referred to for defending knife cases: including years of experience, state licensed to practice in, and areas of expertise.

AKTI Blade Show Booth: Goldie reported that the Executive Committee had worked on the look of the AKTI booth to give it more visual appeal. Other attempts to draw more attention to AKTI include; a full page ad in the Blade Show Program, emails to all AKTI members announcing the annual meeting, meeting announcement flyers and membership signage. A.G. Russell staff will distribute flyers to all exhibitors about the Sunday AKTI meeting. Gerber made corporate membership signs and table tents for knifemaker members and Bill Raczkowski and Jan Billeb will distribute them early on Friday.

Membership Committee - Bill Raczkowski, chair

Bill Raczkowski noted the importance of the entire Board taking ownership of getting members instead of designating one person to recruit members. The Membership Committee has started developing a prospect list and Goldie Russell has helped in compiling it more clearly with categories. The plan is that this will be a shared list available in the Board section of the AKTI website. It will be a tool to assign who is contacting which prospect and to track progress. The next discussion topic for the Membership Committee is working on the sales pitch so that everyone knows the key points to tell different categories of potential members. Bill Raczkowski stated that the idea of encouraging people to join first as a free grassroots supporter to see what AKTI is doing is a good starting point.

Education Committee - Mike Manrose, chair

Mike Manrose reported that in trying to figure out how to educate law enforcement the first step is learning how law enforcement gets information, how their continuing education is done, who is educated and how to get to them. He has a contact in the Dallas Police Department who has volunteered to search out this information. Mike believes this is a good starting point and from there the Education Committee can learn more on a state level and then perhaps national level of how to reach law enforcement, and beyond that will be figuring out how to get knife law information to legislators.

Jan Billeb mentioned that listed under Education in the new website design there will be a section titled "For Law Enforcement" and "For Legislators," where the knife measuring protocol and other materials can reside to make it easy for these groups to find relevant information. She indicated that we need to develop more materials that help them understand what the knife community is talking about and how to write reasonable knife laws.

Dan Lawson detailed a recent meeting with a U.S. Customs four-person team in Newark that was holding up knife shipments. The agents had no idea of what is meant by "bias toward closure." Dan Lawson believes the AKTI needs to give some attention to educating customs and law enforcement about the term "bias toward closure." He has written a proposed article for an AKTI newsletter and Buck Knives has agreed to do some drawings, but the article needs additional work. Dan Lawson questioned if it was possible to develop a Plexiglas knife that would show the mechanism. He suggested a written explanation with drawings directed at law enforcement be developed. Craig Green suggested being proactive and AKTI present the information to Customs.

Mike Manrose agreed to check with Troney Troler regarding AKTI having use of a presentation he developed and was used in AKTI's Texas effort.

Les de Asis agreed to check out how to get access to U.S. Customs agents to show them what bias toward closure is all about.

Mike Manrose noted that education as part of membership needs to discuss how to better educate our own industry, that we need everyone to explain why AKTI is important, why AKTI is here and what we are trying to accomplish, and this needs to get out to all members so that other members can help get the word out. He wants to work on an additional handout of a brief history of what AKTI has accomplished, why formed, how, what has been accomplished, why we need their help. He feels it's important to say, "AKTI is not the same group, it's evolving. We are getting things done."

Annual Meeting and AKTI Blade Booth

Jan Billeb distributed the schedule of Regents volunteering to help at AKTI's booth #162 during show hours and a copy of the new AKTI brochure she developed that includes a membership application form. She will be checking with board members for any possible revisions and quantities they might want for use before placing a commercial printing order. A handout of talking points to use in the booth was provided with highlights about the Texas law revision and Federal Switchblade Act amendment.

The agenda for the annual meeting was discussed and an updated copy will be distributed. It was agreed that each Regent and Advisory member would introduce themselves, tell how long they have been an AKTI member, why they joined and why AKTI is important to them and their company. Jan Billeb will develop a PowerPoint slide show about the website redesign and a graphic for on the screen during the rest of the meeting.

Legislative - Dan Lawson

TSA: Jan Billeb reported an update from Rick Taggart, Swiss Army, that a few weeks ago they had made another D.C. trip to discuss their proposal to TSA. The hold up to trying to introduce knives back on airlines as a carry item continues to be the lack of a TSA director since President Obama has been in office. On May 17th President Obama nominated FBI Deputy Director John Pistole, the third candidate offered. Jan Billeb assured Rick Taggart that AKTI will stay in a wait mode and take the lead from Swiss Army and Leatherman for any action needed.

South Carolina: Jan Billeb reviewed some of the inquiries AKTI has fielded in the past few months, noting that a grassroots member in South Carolina, a former border patrolman, had checked the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) website, and found that it was not current with the 2008 SC change AKTI had introduced and was passed. He has written to the SLED to make the change, and asked his congressman to request it. This grassroots member also asked Senator Paul Campbell to introduce a preemptive knife law. South Carolina's session ended June 2nd without the bill it was included in being passed. This grassroots member will ask for it to be reintroduced in the fall session and is asking for AKTI to support the bill with letters and to contact those congressmen who supported S968 to support the bill. Jan Billeb will stay in contact with the grassroots member.

Preemption: Dan Lawson explained that a lot of states don't want cities to make more restrictive criminal laws and already have preemption included in their criminal codes. For example, Pennsylvania already has preemptive law.

New York: Dan Lawson continued with additional research about AKTI selecting New York as the next state to change restrictive knife laws. Jan Billeb reported that the New York Legal Aid Society contacted AKTI last fall and has been eager to work with AKTI to change the definition of gravity knife as they have had to deal with a lot of individual cases of workers with knives getting arrested, for example getting off the subway on the way home from work with their knife. Dan Lawson, Jan Billeb, Goldie Russell and CJ Buck held a conference call with attorneys from the NY Legal Aid Society who stated they can line up entities such as criminal defense people to support the change. The Legal Aid Society attorneys believe that switchblades are too stigmatized, but that if we could amend the gravity knife definition to include bias toward closure it would solve the majority of issues.

Dan Lawson noted that New York would be a tougher playing field than anything AKTI has done so far, but it would make a huge impact. He asked Chris Conte at NRA for a New York lobbyist contact. When Dan Lawson initially talked to the lobbyist, he told Dan that what we want to do is impossible, but offered to do some further checking. When Dan called him back the next week, the lobbyist had completely changed his attitude and stated he believes there's a good chance to make the change. He had sounded out a few people, apparently checked out AKTI and Dan Lawson, and offered to assist.

The New York lobbyist explained to Dan that New York State works on a two-year legislative calendar and it would be impossible to introduce anything in 2010. He told Dan to call him in September and "we'll make it happen."

CJ Buck moved and Craig Green seconded that Dan connect with the lobbyist in September and then develop a plan of attack. Motion carried unanimously.

Nick Trbovich volunteered to serve on the Legislative Committee. Composition of the committee now includes: Dan Lawson, CJ Buck, Nick Trbovich and Jan Billeb.

Knife Law Summary: Dan Lawson distributed a summary of knife laws as a resource for determining which states to review for possible knife law revisions. It was written by law professor Dave Kopel of the Sturm School of Law at Denver University. He gave Dan permission for AKTI to use it internally; it is not for public or internet distribution.

Cooperative Relationship with Knife Rights

Attached is a memo of background information written by Dan Lawson and Jan Billeb. (Attachment 4)

Les de Asis reported on the results of work done by the Committee on Cooperation Between AKTI and Knife Rights which was created at the Denver BOR meeting. Members of that committee are Les de Asis, chairman, Bill Raczkowski and Rod Bremer. Les had reached out to Doug Ritter asking him to "tell me what's important to you, what is it going to take to have a "mutual cooperation treaty." After receiving a proposal from Doug Ritter, Dan

Lawson reviewed it. After a conference call and additional communication between the committee and Goldie Russell, Jan Billeb and Dan Lawson, it became clear that the committee needed to assess the direction of their efforts. Committee members then decided to table further discussion until the Blade Show board meeting. Les de Asis stated that the board needs to determine what cooperating with Knife Rights/Doug Ritter means to AKTI.

Les reported that he had sent an email to Doug Ritter last week, telling him that there's too much water under the bridge between the groups, it's difficult as a group to come together, and that Knife Rights' negative comments about AKTI on their website were offensive to AKTI members. He asked Doug to remove it on the basis of being a good neighbor and taking that step first. Doug told Les that he would change the website. Goldie Russell noted that she had checked the Knife Rights' website this morning and the language in question had been changed.

Les de Asis threw out the question of what the next steps in cooperating with Knife Rights might be. Goldie Russell commented that a primary thing to guard against is that whatever AKTI does in terms of a relationship with Knife Rights needs to be a board decision. She believes that as an organization AKTI has not communicated with him. All communication has been by either individual BOR members or AKTI staff members without consensus or direction from the BOR. In order to build some common ground, she believes AKTI needs to have a conversation with Doug Ritter and that it needs to include 3 or 4 AKTI board members who represent the BOR as a whole.

CJ Buck noted that his impression of the difference between the two organizations has to do with the issue of credit and that Doug Ritter is very motivated about getting credit for his organization. He also stated that to solve this there needs to be a clear understanding of what it means for one of the organizations to take point on a project and what it means for the other organization to support it.

It was unanimously agreed that Goldie Russell, Les de Asis, Dan Lawson and CJ Buck would meet with Doug Ritter during the Blade Show and report back to the board. Goldie Russell emphasized that the conversation needed to be very professional, about building common ground, recognizing that both organizations want the same end result and that AKTI needed to figure out how to work with Knife Rights to avoid the fear/concern that AKTI's leadership, staff and lobbyists felt during the Customs effort, concern that Knife Rights was putting information out that shouldn't be released or was releasing information too early. There was a real fear that we would offend the very legislators who were carrying the effort for us and that we would lose their support just when it was needed most. Goldie will set up a meeting with Doug to be held before the end of the 2010 Blade Show.

CJ Buck made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Craig Green. Meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Billeb
AKTI Executive Director