

# American Knife & Tool Institute

## Executive Committee Meeting (BOR & Advisory)

June 2, 2005

Renaissance Waverly Hotel, Atlanta, GA

The Executive Committee meeting of the American Knife and Tool Institute on Thursday, June 2, 2005 was called to order at 1:00 p.m. EDT by AKTI president Jim Furgal (Camillus). Regents present: Les de Asis (Benchmade), Mike Jones (for Jason Landmark – Gerber), Jeff Goddard and Jack Igarashi (Kershaw), A. G. Russell and Goldie Russell (A.G. Russell Knives), CJ Buck (Buck Knives), Eugene Shadley (Knifemakers Guild). Advisory members present: R. C. Crisp (United), Les Edelstein (Moteng). Others present: Jan Billeb, Executive Director; David Kowalski, Communications Coordinator; Dan Lawson, Attorney; John Andre (Gerber). Regents absent: Tom Arrowsmith (W.R. Case)

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

### **Administrative – Jan Billeb, Executive Director**

**Minutes:** Les de Asis moved, CJ Buck seconded to approve the minutes of the January 31, 2005 Executive Committee meeting. Passed unanimously.

**Future Meetings:** Jan Billeb reported the NSSF had agreed to arrange a room for the AKTI meeting on the last day of the SHOT Show, Sunday, February 12, 2006, at the Las Vegas Convention Center, but had not determined what the cost, if any, would be. The meeting will be scheduled for 2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Conference call meetings will be announced as needed.

**Anti-trust Compliance:** Signatures were obtained on the standard AKTI anti-trust acknowledgement.

**Internal Board Rules:** Jan Billeb reviewed the internal board rules and suggested some needed to be revised to reflect current Executive Committee practices. It was agreed that any guests invited to attend Executive Committee meetings should be cleared with the AKTI president in advance. CJ Buck offered to work with Jan Billeb on any necessary redrafting. It was agreed the rules should reflect that all Executive Committee members, Board of Regent or Advisory Committee, would have one vote per company represented on any vote called during an Executive Committee meeting.

**Website:** Jan Billeb presented copies of the revised AKTI website which she was designing using Yahoo services. She explained that the redesigning had the additional benefits of rewording and streamlining the site. The expected Yahoo hosting fees will be \$20-40 per month. She noted that the section most lacking for information was Education and encouraged everyone to forward materials or resources they felt would be helpful. In the Legislation section she revised the site to direct users to resources for information. David Kowalski noted that the template format of Yahoo would allow him and Jan to more readily and easily post AKTI news and make other changes. Les Edelstein of Moteng was thanked for his company's assistance with the website the last couple of years. Everyone will receive a notice when the revised site is functioning. Companies were encouraged to list AKTI membership and place a link to the AKTI website from their websites.

**Financials:** Comparative year-end profit and loss and balance sheets through May 18, 2005 were distributed with the agenda. Mike Jones reported that income fluctuations from the previous comparative period reflected timing differences due to payment schedules. There were no significant expense differences. The balance of \$141,305 continues to grow because no major lobbying effort has been required. Les de Asis moved to accept the financial reports as presented, CJ Buck seconded. Passed unanimously.

**Committee Review:** The composition of each committee was reviewed and revised. Finance: Jan Billeb and current Vice President; Membership: David Kowalski (chair), Les de Asis, Les Edelstein; Education: Les de Asis (chair), Jan Billeb, Mike Jones, Deb Garvick; Legislative: CJ Buck (chair), David Kowalski, Dan Lawson, Jeff Goddard.

**Election:** Jan Billeb explained AKTI's policy of the Vice President automatically becoming the next AKTI President for a two-year term. Jim Furgal's two-year term as AKTI president is expired and Mike Jones will become AKTI president effective after the annual meeting. A. G. Russell nominated Tom Arrowsmith to the open position of AKTI Vice President, subject to his acceptance, seconded by CJ Buck. Motion carried unanimously.

**Annual Meeting:** Everyone was reminded that the AKTI annual meeting of members would be at 5 p.m. in the same meeting room. The agenda was reviewed.

#### **Membership - David Kowalski, Communications Coordinator**

**Corporate Memberships:** David Kowalski reported Meyerco had followed through and became a premier member. He noted there have been no notable losses in premier membership, growth continues to be the story but he needs to constantly follow up on invoices for payment. The main focus of his efforts continues to be corporate memberships.

**Dealer Program:** The dealer's program developed by Les Edelstein and Bob Miller will go forward once a few more details are finalized. Kowalski will collect earlier materials created and forwarded to Bob Miller. He will also contact AKTI members for potential additional participants prior to the mailing.

**Consumers:** No new membership campaign has been developed directed at individuals. We will continue to send 2-3 invoices to expired members since our 2004 test of that shows it increases membership renewals. He also noted that his recent survey of members shows the average knife consumer has very little understanding of the costs involved in pursuing legislative change such as attempting to overturn the federal switchblade act. He will submit an article to the knife publications on the results of that survey.

#### **Publicity - David Kowalski, Communications Coordinator**

**Newsletter:** David Kowalski reported that the Spring newsletter was mailed a couple weeks prior to the meeting and passed out additional copies to those present. The major article focused on the results of the AKTI poll on knife definitions, plus an update article on the New York knife busts and a press release of support by AKTI of bills S397 and H800 introduced to protect firearms manufacturers from junk lawsuits designed to shut them down by forcing them into expensive legal defenses.

**NSSF:** A letter was mailed over Jan Billeb's signature at NSSF's request in support of S397 and H800. Quotes were included in the NSSF's weekly email update. Letter will also be posted on their website along with those of other supporters which include the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, many trade associations and major labor unions.

**NRA.com:** On May 25<sup>th</sup> David Kowalski did a radio interview with Cam Edwards of Cam & Co. for nra.com reiterating AKTI's support for firearms industry protection and the proposed legislation.

**Publications:** Kowalski and Billeb are working on a new ad for AKTI to include in those publications that support AKTI with complimentary ads. A preliminary draft was distributed. Kowalski will step up efforts to encourage publications to do a story on AKTI.

**Contacts:** AKTI continues to field inquiries from defendants and attorneys who need input, clarification or resources for knife information.

#### **Legislative – David Kowalski, Communications Coordinator and CJ Buck, Chair**

**Statenet:** David Kowalski provided copies of the current pending bills flagged by StateNet. He summarized that on the federal level efforts are geared to making more items fit into the definition of “dangerous weapons.” On the state level definitions and mechanism descriptions raise questions and issues. School laws reflect more deviation from zero tolerance. He emphasized that questions raised in these bills point to the importance of AKTI being a resource in law formulation.

**Knife Definitions:** A revised edition of “Suggested Standard Definitions-Knives” prepared by Daniel C. Lawson, Attorney was distributed. The minutes of the January 2005 discussion on knife definitions was read by Jan Billeb. Dan Lawson reviewed that AKTI’s intention was to take an advisory stand on definitions. He emphasized again that if accepted (and posted on the website) that as a trade organization AKTI represents implied authority on knife issues to resolve questions for judges and law enforcement. The accepted definitions could be used as the basis for expert witnesses and should be distributed to the 50 state attorneys general. He believes the additional comments and historical perspectives add additional credibility and should be always included directly below the definitions. Lawson emphasized that acceptance would take time, but that AKTI as a trade organization would continue to gain credibility. CJ Buck concurred that the comments were an important aspect of the definitions. Les de Asis encouraged the Executive Committee to step up and make the decision that AKTI move forward with the definitions and efforts to become the recognized authority on knife issues. A. G. Russell commented that he believed Dan Lawson did a very fine job on the definitions and felt it worthwhile to distribute them.

Discussion followed on how knife terms can stigmatize the industry and knives in general. Specific discussion followed on the terms gravity knife and inertia, noting that inertia language has now been wrongly used to classify many one-hand openers as gravity knives, particularly evidenced by police actions in New York City in the past year.

CJ Buck emphasized that legislators do not want to legislate anything legitimate away from law-abiding citizens. He suggested AKTI point toward California as an example of what is working with their accepted definition of a one-hand opener having a détente and a “bias toward closure.” Further, in most cases it may be easier to add exemptions to laws rather than to introduce rewrites.

Suggestions were made to: (1) use a phrase in any suggested definition other than mechanism which implies machinery, possibly use “other means” or “system.” (2) to review the appendix to make sure it’s clear on any terms used in it.

Jim Furgal thanked Dan Lawson for doing a terrific job for AKTI on the definitions and accompanying materials. It was agreed that the modifications discussed would be distributed by email accompanied by a mail ballot to approve. Once finalized, the definitions will be (1) posted on the AKTI website; (2) included in an AKTI newsletter; and (3) mailed to state attorneys general. It was noted that due to regular staff changes, the measuring protocol and definitions should be distributed periodically.

Goldie Russell raised the issue of the importance of the industry complying with AKTI’s suggested definitions and finding ways to encourage this compliance.

**AKTI Advisories:** Dan Lawson noted that since the case Terry v. Ohio more searches could be conducted when law- enforcement stops individuals for any valid reason. He agreed to start working on an “advisory” of what to do if stopped with a knife in possession.

#### **Education – Les de Asis, Chair**

Jan Billeb reiterated that AKTI needed to expand the education section on the website and that AKTI’s fourth goal is: **To educate young people about proper safety and the responsible use of knives.**

AKTI education projects so far have included the “My First Knife” pamphlet and the “Understanding Knife Laws.” Dan Lawson said he felt it was time to update the information in the “Understanding

Knife Laws” which he wrote. It was agreed that once he made revisions a new pdf file could be posted on the website and the print version revised after the current supply is depleted.

Discussion followed on AKTI’s goal to educate youth and ways to accomplish this. Ideas included: contacting Dave Thomas at United who gives talks and knives to kids; researching how to reach scout leaders to let them know about resources to educate about knives since schools do not want to touch the subject; working with Gerber on a video session they plan on taping; and CJ Buck offered to contact the International Hunters Association for possible resources from safety trainers.

After additional discussion, it was the consensus agreement that retail stores would be excellent places to distribute information or programs. Perhaps a joint program with NICA members could be developed since AKTI has important knife messages to relay to individuals and retailers have a need to serve and educate their clients if they are to position themselves as the local experts on knives. Billeb and Kowalski will work on a proposal to develop such a program.

Mike Jones moved, CJ Buck seconded to adjourn at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jan Billeb, AKTI Executive Director