

American Knife & Tool Institute
Board of Regents and Advisory Board Meeting

Monday, January 17, 2011 - 6 p.m.
Palace 1, Bally's Hotel, Las Vegas, NV

The Board of Regents and Advisory Board meeting of the American Knife & Tool Institute on Monday, January 17, 2011 was called to order at 6:00 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), Rod Bremer (CRKT), Mike Manrose (Meyerco), Clint Kadel (United) and Craig Green (Kershaw). Regent absent: Gil Hibben (KMG) proxy to Goldie Russell. Advisory members present: Jon Belniak (SOG), Nick Trbovich (Ontario), Linda Fischer-Desbiens (Taylor). Others: Peggy Bremer (CRKT), Thomas Welk (Kershaw) and AKTI Executive Director Jan Billeb.

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

Administrative – Jan Billeb, Executive Director

After a welcome from AKTI President Goldie Russell and introductions, Bill Raczkowski moved, Les de Asis seconded, to approve the minutes of the Board of Regents meeting September 28-29, 2011. Motion carried unanimously.

It was agreed the next Board of Regents meeting will be held April 25 beginning at 3 p.m. and continuing until April 26th at approximately 4 p.m. in Denver.

Discussion confirmed that the Sunday morning timing for the annual meeting at Blade was preferred, but not during the same time as the church service. Goldie Russell noted that the extra effort letting people know had helped improve attendance, but that we needed to find some way to get more members to participate. It was suggested that members include something in each of their ads with Blade.

AKTI Definitions: Jan Billeb noted that although there had been an email vote to approve the Revised AKTI Approved Knife Definitions, it would simplify minutes to call for a vote. Also after discussion with Morgan Taylor, Dan Lawson had removed the following paragraph from the comments under switchblade:

The AKTI suggested rule of thumb is that if the blade is exposed or moved into the cutting position simply by pushing a button or switch on the handle, and with no other input or movement of the hand, wrist or any thumb or finger, it is a switchblade. If you have to push the blade with your thumb, or if you have to jerk or pronate your wrist to open the blade, it is not a switchblade.

CJ Buck moved, Clint Kadel seconded, to approve Revised AKTI Approved Knife Definitions. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial – Bill Raczkowski, Vice President

After the 12-31-2010 profit and loss and balance sheet (Attachment 1) were reviewed for any questions, Rod Bremer moved to approve the financial report, Bill Raczkowski seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Publicity – Jan Billeb

Jan Billeb provided a report on publicity and communications since she took over those responsibilities officially in April 2010. Of the \$5,000 budget she requested, so far \$3,031.23 has been spent, including the printing of a new AKTI brochure. She provided a notebook of documentation and summarized:

Visibility – AKTI's visibility was increased with a new website design, FAQ's were concisely rewritten, and a brief history of AKTI developed. She designed a new AKTI brochure with a membership form, had 5,000 printed and the distribution response was good with only 400 left. The AKTI booth was redesigned with new graphics thanks to A.G. Russell Knives; AKTI received better exposure with the booth inside of Blade Show and with Regent help in the booth. She provided a special flyer for the former New York Knife Show and AKTI had volunteer presence there, at the Knifemakers' Guild Show, A.G. Russell Knife Event, Badger Knife Show and a regional Colorado knife show.

For 2011 she plans to develop instructions for volunteers at shows, a kit of what to send each time and to order more brochures.

Press Releases – Jan reported AKTI now has a list of publications and writers with input from board members marketing departments, she wrote or had written 7 different press releases, some were posted on PR Web and all press releases are now forwarded to board members to distribute as well.

For 2011 Jan would like to increase the number of press releases, depending on legislative activity.

Communications – Efforts to increase communications included being more active with the Facebook page she created during the U.S. Customs issue, doing 8 broadcast emails to the members, grassroots and press list, subscribing to Blade Magazine online web page, and limited forum posts.

During 2011 Jan will finalize a social media plan with the web designer, plan to send broadcast emails at least 8 times, and publish two newsletters (minimum of 8 pages).

Articles – During 2010 Jan started providing columns for *The Big Show Journal* (3) and the Knifemakers' Guild's newsletters (2) and plans to continue this in 2011 and perhaps expand to additional publications.

Ads – She created an ad for the Knifemakers' Guild's show program and redesigned AKTI's complimentary ads and distributed them to: Knife World, Blade, Knives Illustrated and Harris Publications (Tactical Knives) and has started tracking when they are placed.

Jan plans to redesign the ads in 2011 and continue tracking placement.

SHOT Show – Jan will be meeting with additional publications during the SHOT Show to ask for complimentary ads. She has created a package for press people, is distributing it (including a release about the revised definitions) and luggage tags in the press room, and has arranged for Blade Magazine to photograph the drawing for the AKTI membership knife in the SOG booth.

Goldie Russell thanked Jan for putting together the documentation in the notebook, and commented to the board members that this is the first time this kind of information has been available to them.

State of the Industry Report and Questions – Goldie Russell

Nick Trbovich suggested he put the American Edged Product Manufacturers Association (AEPMA) in contact with Jan Billeb to discuss doing the State of the Industry survey cooperatively.

Revisions to the emailed draft included removing switchblade from number 5 and adding a number 6 asking, "If you are an importer, in which state(s) are you located?"

It was agreed that it could be decided later whether the information is separated by east and west of the Mississippi, and that the accounting firm should be asked about the factors used to determine ancillary job support and total economic impact and that the source for such benchmark should be footnoted.

Les de Asis moved to approve the questions for the state of the industry report based on the changes discussed, Clint Kadel seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

Jan Billeb will revise the questions and contact McGladrey for a quote on conducting the survey.

Membership Committee - Bill Raczowski, chair, Clint Kadel, CJ Buck

Recruiting of rep groups during the SHOT Show was discussed further. Clint Kadel stated that he had included a "join now" link on his company's website, and he believes to be effective members needed to do more than just put a link to AKTI's website. Rod Bremer noted that CRKT will pay an additional 5% commission to their rep groups who join AKTI. Everyone agreed to discuss AKTI membership and legislative fund contributions during rep meetings.

Goldie Russell announced that \$25 from each table fee at the A.G. Russell Knife Event will go to AKTI.

Bill Raczowski stated he would send out the prospective membership Excel list after SHOT for members to review and indicate who they are willing to approach about AKTI membership. Then the list will be posted in the Board section of the Members' only section of the website.

Education Committee - Mike Manrose, chair, Rod Bremer, Morgan Taylor

Goldie Russell asked how AKTI could meet the need to inform law enforcement needing when knife laws change. Linda Fischer-Desbiens suggested AKTI should meet with the National Tactical Officers Association which has chapters in each state and offered to arrange a meeting during SHOT. Goldie and Bill Raczowski volunteered to participate.

Legislative Committee Report – CJ Buck, chair, Dan Lawson, Nick Trbovich, Les de Asis, Goldie Russell, Jan Billeb

NY - CJ Buck summarized the current plan to tackle changing New York State law as a two year plan to allow things to settle down after major changes in the state's legislature. The plan will be to introduce a bill in 2012 after laying sufficient groundwork to get supporters.

WA – House Bill 1006 would remove the words dirk and dagger and replace them with "knife having a blade longer than three and one-half inches," making it a gross misdemeanor for anyone to carry any type of knife concealed with that length of blade or longer was discussed. Jon Belniak agreed to get back to Jan Billeb within 10 days with a contact person for assistance and Dan Lawson would draft an inquiry letter.

AK – H 55 introduced by Mark Neuman would add AKTI's bias toward closure language to the definition of gravity and switchblade knives. It was suggested AKTI send a letter of support and attempt to find out what prompted the bill.

PA – Dan Lawson is pursuing making changes to Pennsylvania's knife law and it was agreed if needed that a letter of support from AKTI should be drafted.

MI – Dan Lawson has researched Michigan knife laws due to an inquiry from an attorney in Michigan. It may be a state to consider introducing changes.

NH – Jan Billeb reported that Representative Jenn Coffey will be introducing a pre-emptive law in New Hampshire and she has offered AKTI's support as needed.

NASC Council Membership

CJ Buck moved that AKTI become a member of the NASC Council and the Governor's Sportsmen's Caucus for 2011 at the cost of \$6,000. Rod Bremer seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Advocacy Proposal

John Larkin was invited into the meeting and introduced by CJ Buck. John explained that his role is to work to get legislator advocates in advance of need and that he has worked with the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation for 20 some years. He reviewed his proposal (Attachment 2) noting that he is based in Connecticut and would average about 5 hours per week for AKTI. John views his role in New York would be to guide, help determine if there is a need for a lobbyist or not, help identify and select the right person, and follow the progress.

After John left the meeting, CJ Buck moved to accept John Larkin's proposal for services at \$1250 per month, plus pre-approved travel expenses, on a 6-month basis. Les de Asis seconded the motion and it carried unanimously. Discussion followed on what expectation were, who John should report to, and how to evaluate progress. It was agreed that CJ was the logical person to coordinate with John.

Bill Raczkowski moved, Craig Green seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Billeb
AKTI Executive Director



J C Larkin Company LLC
Government Relations

American Knife and Tool Institute

Public Affairs Strategy Proposal

The American Knife and Tool Institute's (ATKI) members and the products they make are a daily part of many parts of our society. Whether it is afield, or a part of public safety or in the pocket of one of our many tradesmen and women, these products are very important in American life. ATKI and its member have a great story to tell the American people and our leading policy makers at all levels of government. However, like many things today, people do not realize or they lose sight of the importance of something unless they are educated and reminded frequently. The JC Larkin Company proposes a nationwide comprehensive public affairs strategy in order to promote and focus policy leaders on the importance of ATKI and its members.

Goal #1: Budget. Develop a budget and a reasonable expectation in which the association can expect to see change.

Goal #2: States. Identify legislative and regulatory changes that the organization would like to make over both the long and short term.

- Identify states that changes can be made with little cost and without a large investment of time. These states may include New Jersey, Kentucky, Missouri, New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut and Alaska.
- Plan for states where changes will take considerable money and time. A good example is New York because of the complicated political environment that currently exists. In order to manage costs we want to do some prep work before jumping into the legislative process of Albany. We want to identify partner organizations, supporting legislators and opposing legislators in order to build a coalition of support and to understand the complexity of the political problem. We also will want to explore the need for an "on the ground" lobbyist.

Goal #3: Events. Develop a list of annual events that ATKI wants to participate in and determine what level of participation that should be. This will allow members and the association to plan long term and make sure the organization is getting the maximum benefit toward its effort to increase awareness.

Goal #4: Partners. Identify organizations that will support ATKI's efforts at the legislative and regulatory level across the country at all levels of government. These partners should include, but not limited to, other trade associations, individual retailers, organized labor and professional associations. For example the National Shooting Sports Foundation (trade association for the firearms and ammunition industry), both the

National and State Building Trades organizations, the national and local retail stores of Cabelas and Bass Pro Shop, and finally the Chiefs of Police organizations. Some of these organizations ATKI may already have an informal relationship and others it may not. However, the goal is identify these partners and select a point person within that organization that can be contacted in a time of need as you move to the next level of advocacy.

Goal #5: Visibility/Branding. Increase participation with the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation and the organizations that are under its umbrella, the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, the Governor's Sportsmen's Caucus, and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses. In addition in targeted states that have individual state sportsmen's caucuses work with on the issues that are of interest to ATKI. This will require ATKI members to participate at specific events from time to time. Policymakers who are members of these organizations are more likely to be supportive of ATKI's issues and it is a great opportunity at a captive audience.

Compensation Terms

\$1,250.00 per month with necessary travel not included.

J C Larkin Company

J C Larkin Company is a full service government relations firm specializing in both legislative and administrative lobbying at the state and municipal levels. Established by killed strategist and political advisor **John Larkin** in 2007, the firm has represented a wide range of for-profit and nonprofit clients, including power providers, environmental and sportsmen's organizations, and the state's most successful Native American Tribe.

John Larkin has experience on both sides of the political aisle, and at the local, state and federal levels. He served as a Special Assistant to the Director of Field Operations for former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani's 1997 re-election bid, and after that as a key assistant to the Hartford City Councilman John Kennelly. At the federal level, he has been involved with many campaigns including several of Congressman John Larson's reelection efforts.

Prior to starting his own firm, John was part of the lobbying firm of *Rome, Smith & Associates (now known as Rome Smith & Lutz)*, and before that he was an in-house lobbyist for the Connecticut Credit Union Association, representing 130 state and federal credit unions.

In 2010, he was recognized by the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses with their Heritage Award for his work with the organization. In 2009, John was selected as one of Hartford's "*Forty Under 40*," an award given by the Hartford Business Journal to business leaders who will shape the future of the greater Hartford region. John Larkin is involved in a wide range of community organizations, including service as a board member of Operation Fuel; chairman of the state Department of Environmental Protection Conservation Advisory Council; and a past president of the Farmington River Anglers Association.

Practice Areas

- **Strategic Planning** - *setting goals and strategies*
- **Lobbying State Legislatures and State Government Agencies & Municipalities** -- *working with elected officials and staff at the highest levels of state and municipal agencies, boards and commissions to enable, defeat or modify pending policies and legislation. States where he has worked include Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, and California.*
- **Coalition Building** – *creating strategic alliances among diverse entities with common interests.*
- **Grassroots Campaigns** – *uniting constituency groups and implementing mass communications to inform and influence elected representatives.*
- **Press Relations** – *development and implementation of media relations strategies*

Clients include

Mohegan Tribe (the tribal government that owns and operates the Mohegan Sun Casino)

Milford Power Company

Trout Unlimited

Connecticut Forest and Park Association

American Council of Life Insurers

Viridian Energy

Blank Rome

Capitol Workforce Partners

CT Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators Association

*** Professional references available upon request.**