ALEA Corporate Council meeting minutes

HAI – Houston Tuesday, 8am to 10 am -February 22, 2010

Meeting was called to order by Pat Crippen who introduced the ALEA staff members present including, Martin Jackson, Jim DiGiovanna Nicole Gentile and Jennifer Thornton. A total of 19 members were present. (sign in sheet attached)

All attendees were presented with a copy of the agenda and the minutes from the 2009 meeting.

Motion made, seconded and approved to waive the reading of the minutes of the 2009 meeting.

Pat reviewed the membership statistics and the schedule of regional seminars for 2010. He stated that all locations have been confirmed except the Canadian Regional which is in work.

Discussion concerning the SE Regional in Tampa was held with concerns about the pavilion setup specifically discussed. Martin explained what happened and why it happened and addressed the concerns from vendors about being so far removed from the classrooms. He also addressed the lack of communications once the class schedule was changed but vendors were not advised. He stated that the contracts are now going to be written to require the facilities for vendor displays to be attached to the meeting rooms in the future.

Pat discussed the Mid Year National meeting to be held in Tucson and the primary hotel being the Star Marriott Resort. The executive Council recently had a advance meeting at the resort and found the facilities to be excellent and encouraged everyone to get reservations in early to take advantage of the host hotel. They also stated that spouses should be encouraged to attend due to the activities available at the site. The overflow hotel is actually closer to the convention center but as many people as possible will be accommodated at the Marriott. Bus transportation between the hotel and convention center will be provided.

Martin addressed the procedures for annual awards and stated that the executive committee is considering changing the sponsorship methods. They are in discussions with the present sponsors to see if they would support changing the guidelines to have a flat $2500.00 sponsorship level. ALEA would then make all of the logistical arrangements to make sure that award recipients are notified and travel arrangements are made along with fees paid for attendance to the event. This will be addressed further with the current sponsors. They also discussed the possible addition of a Fixed wing award and a TFO award.

There were several questions concerning what happens if a sponsor drops out after a period of time. Leonard suggested possibly having sponsors sign a commitment agreement for a minimum of 2 years. Ed asked if there was any cost comparison between the way it works now and the $2500.00. It was decided that there really isn’t a “budget” because each sponsor takes care of things themselves and each year it varies depending on who receives and award, how far they travel or if they travel etc. Currently three awards are given out and they are looking at expanding it to five awards. Other concerns discussed included the “no show” of recipients, as well as the actual costs of the awards and other associated costs. Jennifer pointed out that if changes are to be made to methods or announcements, Airbeat Magazine will need to be notified by March for inclusion in the convention publication.

Martin addressed the changes to the hours for the Regional seminars. The seminars will now cover 2 full days. The vendor preview will still be held Wednesday evening. Thursdays schedule will have classes all day with a longer 20 or 30 minute break in the morning and afternoon and an extended lunch break to allow for more face time between attendees and vendors. The vendors will then be able to break down following the final break Thursday. Friday will continue with classes all day. The new schedule will be in effect in 2011 and possibly the late 2010 sessions.
Don Bachali (Enstrom) discussed the lack of face time for the vendors and he read a letter that he wrote to the executive committee concerning that issue. The letter addresses many concerns but centralizes on the fact that without the vendors, these seminars could not take place and all attendees need to be reminded and strongly encouraged to go visit the vendors during breaks. Don read his letter to the attendees’ making the story an official document of the meeting minutes (attached).

Further discussion ensued on what we as vendors can do to get more face time. Jennifer suggested coming up with some type of card game or “treasure hunt” game during seminars to encourage participants to stop and visit with vendors in order to win a prize at the end of the session. Martin stated that they are trying to make announcements prior to each break to encourage visitations and also, he has recommended and it was approved to have a member of the executive committee at every seminar. Pat and Martin are going to visit concerning the treasure hunt idea for future sessions. Pat encouraged vendors to speak up to the members of the executive committee about frustrations like this.

The hospitality event held Sunday evening during HAI was a great success and thanks were passed to Jennifer and Nicole for the hard work they did in putting arrangements together. The food was excellent and attendance was strong. Leonard voiced that vendors need to start stepping up and attending the meetings like they do the reception. He also asked about the cost to attend the safety seminars for non-members. He asked if anyone else thought it may a deterrent to new people that may want to attend events. Martin stated that the cost for non-members was higher because they didn’t feel it was fair to the members that have attended for years if all the sudden a new company came in and could pay the discounted price just to get the word out about some new product or service if we have members in good standing that have paid membership fees for years that may stand to lose business.

Pat mentioned that the website has information for the National Law Enforcement Museum and encouraged members to donate to the cause either as individuals or as a company. He also stated tat members need to visit the website routinely to make sure contact information is current; this can all be done on the website.

Further changes to the website were also discussed by Martin, he noted that ALEA had contracted with an outside company to make changes and write programs to allow website changes in house. Other changes include enhancements that allow in house control of credit card purchases via the website. He discussed the fact that due to a program error the membership directory got printed and shipped with addresses for individual and corporate members and it also omitted some members names. The board is asking members NOT to use the directory to glean home address information and they are discussing how best to recall and re-issue the membership data. A letter will be sent to members to advise them of the situation.

Jim changes being made to the technical briefings during the ALEA event in July. He stated that on Friday, all technical sessions will be held on the event floor instead of in classrooms. Thursday some sessions will be held in a classroom setting. Thursday afternoon will be a TFO general session and at least two other general sessions. On Saturday the awards luncheon will be held at 12:30 and classes will be held at the Hotel Saturday. Nothing will be at the convention center on Saturday.

In closing Martin voiced his appreciation for what the vendors do for the association and encouraged us to communicate with him and the other board members.

The meeting closed at 0945
“IS IT TIME FOR TOUGH LOVE AT THE ALEA SAFETY SEMINARS”?

As one of the many vendors over the years, the ALEA Safety Seminars have become a major topic of conversation. That topic among the vendors is the participation of the attendee’s in the exhibit area. It is almost a given that after the noon luncheon on the second day, that each vendor is visiting with the other vendors, because of the lack of attendee’s. You can walk out in the hall and see everyone in a small group talking to each other. Don’t these attendees get a chance to talk to each other at the hangar?

I know that the vast majority of members, during their patrol days, have walked up to a total stranger and written them a ticket or had discussions with the general public. Why is it so difficult for attendee’s to walk up to a booth and introduce himself or herself to the sales representative? Is he standing there with a pen and contract for you to sign? I don’t think so. These are people that just want to tell you about their product and learn from you how they can help. They would like to meet you, know about your unit and what your primary mission is in the department. The people come from all over the United States to attend these seminars and it cost their company a sizeable amount of money to do so. On the average, a company will spend between $1,000.00 to $2,000.00 and the event sponsors can add additional thousands of dollars to that total.

Have any of you attendee’s stopped to think that if these vendors did not show up, you wouldn’t be having these safety seminars. The accreditation program that the ALEA Board and Education Program Manager, James Di Giovanna has put together is a major plus for this organization. The seminars have grown immensely over the years to where it is a mini-convention event. You are provided with a happy hour event the first evening, a full course breakfast the next morning, followed by a sit down luncheon and topped off by a dinner at some major place of interest in the seminar city. I have attended major conventions and seminars over my 40+ years in this business and never have I experienced an agenda like the one at ALEA.

The vendors are finding it more difficult to justify these expenses for the amount of people that are stopping by their booth or table. At this last seminar in Galveston, I had about 8 people actually stop and pick up a brochure. The rest of them just casually walk by and most avoid eye contact. There were about 60+ registered for the event, so you figure out the percentage of personal contact. Some of the attendee’s feel that if they are flying or using Brand X, they shouldn’t stop by Brand Y or Z and see
what their product is capable of. Have you given it a thought that this is a seminar to further educate you not only on safety, but also on product. So if you fly Brand X and you get a call from a start up unit with budget constraints, are you compelled to tell them that you don't know anything other than Brand X. However, you think for a moment and because you made an effort at the last seminar, you remember talking to Brand Y & Z. Armed with that information you pass it on to the person on the other line and he is thankful for the help. Are you getting my point? We are all there to learn and meet new people. I can't put in words the great friendships I have made over the years in the law community.

Since the first meeting of the original ALEA members, the officers of this organization have strived to provide the best for you. I know because I have been around ALEA since the beginning and I have seen how this organization has grown over the years. So before you begin to think about the tar and feathers for the author, ask yourself one question, “did I really make an effort to meet the different sales representatives at the last seminar and thank those companies that sponsored the events”? If you said “no” then put the damn tar and feathers away and tell yourself that you will make a special effort at the next safety seminar you attend. If you said “yes” then we congratulate you on being the kind of ALEA member a vendor likes to meet and talk with. If you don’t get around to the booths you are not only letting yourself down but it is hurting the efforts of the ALEA personnel to convince existing and new vendors to attend. No vendors, no seminar.

We are all under this cloud of “Change” at the moment and believe me, there could be some change in these seminars. How does Bologna and Kool Aid sound? And perish the thought of trying to hover a Crown Vic. Let’s get back to the basics and make sure that friendship does not become an endangered species.

Don Bachali
Aviation Consultant