

**BRANCH ADVISORY COUNCIL**  
**SUMMARY OF 4/11/2025 MEETING**

Gentlemen:

The following is provided for records and reference. Please feel free to share it with your respective branches.

**1. Joint Branch Activities:** Rich began the meeting with a brief discussion of joint activities.

He encouraged joint activities between branches for sports like chess, bowling and others if a branch either has low participation in the activity or lacks that activity. The use of identifying materials like t-shirts was discussed, with some branches already doing so for community service events like volunteering at food banks. Encouraging inter-mural sports and collaboration between smaller branches was highlighted as important for publicity and utilizing branch publicity allocations.

**2. Benefits/disadvantages of 501(c)(3):** The first agenda item discussed addressed the perceived benefits/disadvantages from a conversion to a 501(c)(3) and whether SIR should explore the possibility of a future conversion. Potential benefits include special mailing rates and the ability to include marketing material in companies with federal contracts. Another advantage is the availability of receiving grants and tax-deductible donations. However, there are legal uncertainties regarding the legality/feasibility of the conversion, which needs to be reviewed by counsel. Given the potential cost in terms of money, resources, time, and effort a careful cost-benefit analysis would be required before any decision on conversion could be made. The possibility of reactivating the existing SIR Foundation as a 501(c)(3) alternative was raised. The question of whether conversion would necessitate becoming gender-neutral was also a point of discussion, with no clear answer but the observation that women-only 501(c)(3) organizations exist. If conversion is an option and the cost-benefit study shows it to be beneficial, then the consensus was that each branch should have discretion to decide whether or not it wanted to make the conversion.

**3. Long-Term/Business Planning:** The second agenda item were thoughts and suggestions relative to the discussion shifted to the need for a business plan or revolving goals. Rich expressed the concern that we don't want to develop a plan only to have it sit on a shelf without implementation. Hence, the unique demographics of the organization, with a median age of 80, and the challenges of membership growth and leadership were acknowledged and must be considered in the development of any plan. The importance of social interaction provided by SIR was highlighted as a significant benefit to members.

Opinions varied on the appropriate timeframe for a plan, with suggestions ranging from one to three years. The need for a state-level plan/goal that might include a requirement for branches to develop their own plans/goals was discussed. The consistent turnover in membership, around 25-30% annually, was noted as a factor that must be considered in long-term planning.

**4. Membership Growth and Retention:** The discussion on a business plan morphed into a discussion about membership growth and retention. Several branches shared their strategies for attracting, engaging, and retaining members. Effective website presence, personal engagement with prospective members, active participation in activities, and personal follow-up for retention were highlighted. The challenges of attracting younger members and competing with other social activities were noted, especially in areas with high housing costs. The diverse levels of member engagement (leadership, participating, minimally active, inactive) were also discussed.

**5. Awards and Recognition:** The Presidential Award for significant service to SIR was discussed, and members were encouraged to nominate deserving individuals from their branches. The Honorable Life Member (HLM) award was also mentioned as an existing avenue for branch-level recognition.

The meeting was thereafter adjourned.

Please note that the next BAC Meeting will be held on May 9, 2025, commencing at 1 pm.

Zoom Information: Use this link to join the Meeting

**<https://zoom.us/j/94269180206?pwd=f3ZE4b4nr0eW1xoBRoOwpmOgfVURJw.1>**

**If required: the Meeting ID is: 942 6918 0206. and the Passcode: 488269**

**You can also dial in on 1 669 900 6833**

The Agenda will be distributed in advance of the meeting. Please advise Rich of any topics you would like to bring before the BAC.

