



**Sons In Retirement Inc.  
 Minutes of State Special Meeting  
 La Quinta Inn & Suites,  
 1524 Colony Road  
 Ripon, California 95388**



**Saturday, 11 February, 2017 at 9:00am**

**State Board Members** (\* absent)

President: Jerry Strain	Director, Region 2: Jerry Morrow
Vice President: Derek Southern	Director, Region 3: Vic Mershon
Secretary: Ron Flagel	Director, Region 4: Ed Suden
Assistant Secretary: Dick DeVoe	Director, Region 5: Vacant
Treasurer: Karl Ryden *	Director, Region 6: Ed Benson
Assistant Treasurer: Jimmie Johnson*	Director, Region 7: Patrick Misener
Chief Admin Officer: Dean Steichen	Director, Region 8: B. Alan Baxter
Director, Region 1: James Braziel *	Director, Region 9: Mark Stuart
	Director, Region 10: James Filippo*

**Invited Participants**

Organization Task Force members: Ed Benson, Dick DeVoe, Mark Stuart, Jerry Morrow  
Past Presidents: Dwight Sale & Bobbie Hairston  
State Advisor: Parliamentarian: Dwight Sale  
Other guests: Frank Perez

**Call to Order, Welcome**

President Jerry Strain called the meeting to order at 9:00 am and welcomed the Board Members and guests including Past Presidents Dwight Sale & Bobbie Hairston.

Secretary Ron Flagel verified there was a quorum.

Dick DeVoe led the Pledge of Allegiance and gave the Invocation.

**President’s remarks**

President Jerry Strain explained how the time constraints of the January State board meeting did not allow sufficient time to hear the presentation by the Organizational Task Force. This purpose then of this meeting is to preview the recommendations of the Task Force.

The presentation is to offer solutions to the identified issues in terms of the what, when, where, & how. The presentation should include who would revise the rules and where will the funding come from for implementation. Jerry expressed his frustration of not knowing where the Task Force came from and not having approved it.

We should listen to each recommendation one at a time & consider each on its own merit. We should keep one thing in mind during our consideration and that is asking ourselves; “how would these changes result in membership gain, especially in our own branch”.

**The recommendations of the Organization Task Force presentation:  
 (Reference Appendix A):**

Mark Stuart: Mark began by explaining that some items on the task presentation were items that he had brought to the agenda in the November meeting & were not addressed

fully because of time constraints. Mark stated that at the November meeting he was asked to prepare a written report with the issues that he had at that time. In the process of doing that, and while seeking help from others, the committee or task force formed. That and subsequent meeting resulted in the report at hand.

Ed Benson: Ed provided background of the formation of the Task Force as well. He noted that after meeting together several times, they developed their findings and recommendations. They then called all the board members and went through the recommendations and followed up by emailing the recommendation list report (Appendix A). The phone contact provided little feedback. After sending out the full report they didn't receive any comments. Ed commented that he was confused by not getting comments & now everyone seems to have comments. That is why we are here today. When asked about the task expanding considerably, Ed pointed out that any one problem area touches on another problem area. With many issues connected, the team wanted to offer a whole solution.

Dick DeVoe: Dick pointed out that we have had significant loss in membership and that it is a grave problem, that should be addressed. He covered many statistics from the last three years. Membership in that time went from ~16,000 to our current ~14,000.

General Discussion: Much discussion followed clarifying and arguing the statistics as well as trying to understand the proposed recommendations offer solutions. Downsizing the organization (R/D's & A/G's) as a result of the continuing loss of membership was discussed. The failure of training was highlighted considerably and for the most part found to be due to the apathy and non attendance branch personnel. The task force wants to bring all these issues out into the open and discuss them. It was pointed out however, that maybe all we need to do is focus on getting RAMP in place in all the branches and we may not need to do much else. It was suggested that officer term length could contribute to the inability of an officer to make any headway. A major problem is the absence of A/G's in several Regions. It was offered that maybe an A/G from one area could serve in another area. So finally, it was made clear, by many, that it is time to stop discussing whether or not to address the task force recommendations and to just do it. That is why we are here !

Ed Benson: Ed began again and explained in one study the team conducted, 27% of branches gained membership in last three years. The study also attempted to determine the cause of the gain. After evaluating many factors, the conclusion of the team was that the main factor was leadership. So, how do we improve SIR and stop member loss? Their conclusion is that we must improve leadership and get the right person in the right job at the right time. After some clarification by the team, it was generally understood that the purpose of the 19 items is to get concurrence from the board that these items are valid problems/solutions. And if approved, implementation plans would be developed including Rule & By-law changes as required.

Ed Benson: Ed began the presentation with overhead slides. The finding of the team is that the number one problem facing SIR is unresponsive and/or apathetic leadership. Related problems are getting the right people in the right job, lack of uniform training, and the current organization impedes success. The proposals and Board vote follows:

1. Make leadership selection and volunteerism to be among the top priorities of branches, Area Governors, Regional Directors, and the State Board.  
Board vote: **Approved**
2. Develop a new policy for selecting successor Area Governors by expanding the role of the State Nominating Committee. Discussion of pros and cons. Revised to include the intent of item 3. Board vote: **Approved**

3. Expand the role of the State Nominating Committee to include succession planning by developing succession candidate lists for State Board, Regional Director, and Area Governor positions. **This item as made part of item 2.**
4. Approve a State Board Member position description for use by the *State* Nominating Committee in recruitment of candidates. Board vote: **Approved**
5. Have the State Board meet more frequently (as required) to focus on implementing our strategic plan and overcoming the issues facing the organization. **Discussion** took place relative to the number of meetings. Also, it was pointed out that the President already has the ability to call meetings when needed. Use of “Go to Meeting” video conferencing recommended as well. Board vote: Approved with a change to “(as required)”: **Approved**
6. Create 19 new areas clustered geographically, each headed by an Area Governor.  
Board vote: **Approved**
7. Revise the Area Governor position and adopt a new A/G job description.  
Board vote: **Approved**
8. Cluster the 19 new Areas into 5 Regions with three or four AGs reporting to each RD, and approve a new R/D job description. Board vote: **Approved**
9. Revise the makeup and number of State Board Members from 16 to 13. **Discussion** and concern followed regarding the proposal to eliminate the Assistant State Secretary & Assistant State Treasurer. Also, pros & cons were discussed on the proposal to add committee chairmen of Golf, Bowling, G&M, and T&D to the board of directors reporting to the President.  
Board vote: **Not approved.**
10. Revise the reporting relationships of State Committee Chairmen and State Officers. Board vote: **Not approved and withdrawn.**
11. Eliminate the routine review of Form 15 Expense Claim Vouchers for AGs and RDs from the Vice President. **Discussion** relating to the important role the current process plays in providing insight in how SIR is operating for the Vice President. A task force member expressed his concern that; the Treasurer feels by the time he receives the expense claim it is to late.  
Board vote: **Not approved.**
12. Transfer the presentation of Honorary Life Member (HLM) awards from the President or his designee to Branch Big Sirs. **Discussion** along the lines that the Big Sir already can request someone else to do the Presentation if he would like. Also, it was pointed out that the President already can have someone else do the presentation if he would like. It was noted that the presence of a State officer at branch meetings helps with communication and rapport.  
Board vote: **Not approved.**
13. Transfer presentation of Super Senior Sir and Century Sir awards from Area Governors and Regional Directors to Branch Big Sirs. **Discussion** of pros & cons and included the suggestion that we consider a new award along the line on length of service.  
Board vote: **Approved.**
14. Adopt a new branch closure/merger policy.  
Board vote: **Approved.**
15. Identify high-survival-risk branches and request their BEC’s to annually select one of three options. 1). Operate and commit. 2) Operate, but commitment is impractical. 3). Survival is futile – close the branch sooner than later.

Board vote: **Approved.**

16. Establish a G&M new branch start-up team that will work with A/G's and R/D's.  
Board vote: **Approved.**
17. Change the date of State Officers taking office from January 1 to September 1.  
Board vote: **Not approved.**
18. Develop a phased implementation plan for approval of above approved recommendations. Board vote: **Approved.**

A motion was made for the Task Force team to develop an implementation plan for each of the approved recommendation for board approval. **M/S/P.**

- The Task Force team committed to having implementation proposals by the June State meeting.

### **Other Business:**

President Jerry asked all those present to provide him with ideas of how to streamline & improve the SIRINC Annual meeting. It was also pointed out that a special Big Sir state meeting has been agreed on for next February and we should be getting on with that as well.

Dick DeVoe expressed his concern with the overlap of 2016 & 2017 training. Who will be responsible for those not trained in 2016, now that it is 2017. There was some discussion and President Jerry emphasized that we sure need to get the 2017 training going. Completion of the 2016 training remains unclear.

Ed Benson reported that the G&M committee intends to publish three newsletters covering RAMP etc. But who do we send it to. Ed is looking for a list of all branch RAMP personnel. It is very difficult getting that type of information from the branches. All R/D's should be tasked with the mission of getting the information to Ed.

Dick DeVoe expressed his concern that we do not have a list of who has been trained from 2016. Bobbie Hairston expressed that he will be training 2017 personnel only. It is unclear just who has or has not been trained. Jerry Strain will send a email to R/D's to asking for this information by the end of the month. Then, who will train those who have not been trained remains a question. Excellent material is on the website for anyone to use for training.

Dean Steichen spoke about recruiting. Why is it so difficult? He offered these reasons; 1). Older members have brought in everyone they know already. 2). Many branches have little or no activities to offer. 3). Some branches are just plain dead. 4). The meetings are lacking in many different ways. A couple things that can be done are to recruit younger members and have younger members bring in younger members. Also, Dean pointed out that much of this is up to this body of officers to get that message to the branches.

Ed Benson commented that we can do whatever we want, but in the end it is up to the membership bringing in potential members. He reviewed the behaviors that are needed to bring in members. New member orientation is so very important as well.

Dean Steichen asked for direction of the board regarding "go to meeting" implementation and usage. Jerry Strain indicated that Dean should be the lead in the purchased and implementation of this video conferencing system.

Ed Benson stated that the new revised license plate order for 500 will be placed.

Derek Southern asked the group if this kind of meeting place is acceptable to the board. The response was positive.

Implementation of the change from 10 to 5 R/D's is very important and care must be taken with communication of this kind of change. The R/D's not in attendance should be informed and Ed Benson will take care of this.

President Jerry Strain adjourned the meeting at 2:35 pm.

Respectfully Submitted February 23, 2017.

Ron Flagel – Secretary

Minor revisions March 16, 2017

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Preliminary Recommendations from the Organization Task Force**

January 6, 2017

#### **Project Team**

Ed Benson, Team Leader

Dick DeVoe

Mark Stuart

Jerry Morrow

#### **I. Findings – The #1 and #2 Problems**

The Organization Task Force believes that there are a number of serious problems facing SIR. We suspect that if we asked the question, "What is the #1 problem facing Sir?" we would be told it is our four to five percent year after year membership decline.

However, we believe that the #1 problem is unresponsive leadership, and that the membership decline is the **result** of the #1 problem. We have offered training, support and coaching to the branches; however, the leaders of branches that are high candidate for failure can't or won't do what they have been trained and encouraged to do.

A second and related problem is getting the "right" guys to volunteer for leadership roles. We have a number of members who were leaders in many types of careers. However, many branches do not have a culture of "volunteerism" where these members will readily step up.

The volunteerism problem is now so great that many branches can't even fill the basic Officer and RAMP positions needed to survive long term. That deficiency near the end of 2016 impacted deleteriously the training of new Officers and RAMP leaders, because many of those seats for training either went unfilled or the training itself had to be canceled. The problem with volunteerism has now become critical at the State Officer level as well. As of today, ten Area Governor positions (35%) and one Regional Director position are unfilled. 2017!

So- we are now faced with a group of leaders who have not been uniformly trained and prepared for leadership roles, many of whom were selected as the “last man standing” and who have taken the jobs on because they are good guys who want to help out because they appreciate what SIR has done for them and others. And, we wonder why many of our branches have a culture of lethargy and apathy when it comes to volunteering, implementing RAMP and bringing in guests who can then become members.

## **Other Significant Problems**

The Organization Task Force has thoroughly examined the design of SIR's current organization, and it has come to the consensus that *it is seriously impeding organizational success*. Our conclusions are based on the following observations.

- *Current areas and regions are wildly unbalanced regarding the number of branches served.* Areas are responsible for a low of two and a high of seven branches with a median number of branches served at 5. Regions have a low of nine branches and a high of 19 branches. The differences between these counts cannot be easily explained by the geography covered.
- *The current organization has not stemmed SIR organization losses.* We continue to lose members at the annual rate of four to five percent. Neither does it adequately focus SIR on the approved strategic directions of recruiting, retention, improved leadership, publicity and training and development while meeting our administrative and financial requirements. For your reference, the approved implementation plan is included in Appendix 1.
- *The process of Branches nominating candidates for Area Governors is both unworkable and broken.* For years, we have experienced significant difficulty attracting good leaders to fill Area Governor positions. In recent years there have been at least four Area Governor positions unfilled each year. There have been and currently are some incumbent RD's and AG's in their positions only because there is no one else to fill the job. Currently, there are ten Area Governor positions and one Region Director position that are unfilled – an untenable situation that has become even more difficult to remedy than in past years.
- *The number of Regional Director (10) and Area Governor (26) positions for currently only 126 branches is unwieldy and inefficient,* with poor communications to/from branches often being a significant drawback. This factor, coupled with missing State Officer positions and ineffectual leadership, could be considered a “perfect storm.”
- *It is almost impossible to get a consistent program introduced and supported using the current organization.* 2016 was no exception – branch officer, AG, and RAMP training was very disappointing due to unfilled spots, cancellation of training sessions, inadequate number and skills of leaders and the inability to schedule the sessions.

**Bottom line** – The only benefit we see with the current organization design is that it is familiar. However, familiarity is far outweighed by the many identified problems that will remain and/or increase if organizational change is not implemented.

## **II. Proposal**

For these reasons, we are recommending the following actions:

*1. Make leadership selection and culture change regarding volunteerism be among the top priorities of branches, Area Governors, Regional Directors, and the State Board.*

This emphasis began in 2016 State Training. The Nominating Committee Training Guide focuses on proper recruitment/selection of Branch Officers and Committee Chairmen, as well as for succession planning. Volunteerism is covered in the Member Relations Training Guide under New Member Orientation. All the Training Guides have a section on “SIR Leader Valued Behaviors & Self-Assessment” that are expected by members from their leaders. In addition, there are a set of SIR Member Valued Behaviors. They stress friendliness, participation, volunteerism and bringing guests.

*2. Develop a new policy for identifying, recruiting, and selecting successor Area Governors.* The policy of Branches nominating candidates for Area Governors has proven to be ineffective in so many circumstances that a new, more effective policy must be adopted which increases State SIR responsibility. Full reliance on BEC’s and Big Sirs/Little Sirs in the nomination and election process is a principal reason for so many unfilled positions for 2017.

*3. Expand the role of the State Nominating Committee to include succession planning by developing succession candidate lists for State Board, Regional Director, and Area Governor positions.*

Currently there is no focus on succession planning for State Board positions except that of President, and that position is only for the next year with the Vice President as heir-apparent. The lack of focus on succession planning for RDs and AGs is of critical concern. By assigning the State Nominating Committee an important monitoring role, succession planning for AGs and RDs will become an integral part of AG/RD responsibilities.

*4. Approve a State Board Member position description for use by the State Nominating Committee in recruitment of candidates. (See Appendix 2- State Board Member Position Description)*

*5. Have the State Board meet more frequently (at least every other month – either in person or electronically) to focus on implementing our strategic plan and overcoming the issues facing the organization.*

*6. Create 19 geographically clustered Areas, each headed by an Area Governor.*

The median number of branches an Area Governor would serve would initially be seven, but with projected branch losses/mergers over the next three years this median could drop to six or even five. Appendix 3 provides a tabular listing of the 19 new areas (numbered 50 through 68 to avoid confusion). It also includes the branch's previous Region, Area as well as our projection of estimate branch losses by January 2020.

7. *Revise the Area Governor position in order to make the recommended organization work effectively and efficiently.* Appendix 4 contains the new Area Governor Position Description. Additions are in bold font and deletions are struck through.

- *Discontinue spending inordinate time now devoted to visiting each branch several times a year to present service awards and/or meet with branch BEC's on a routine basis.* An AG in the future should not spend hours on the road, in BEC meetings, and at branch luncheons as a routine and to present age-related awards (Senior SIR, Super Senior Sir, or Century Sir). A visit to a branch BEC should have a definitive plan to support and/or assist the branch in making improvements, with time noted on the BEC agenda. Communications otherwise can be done electronically, by phone, and/or in periodic Area meetings. (See also Recommendation 13 regarding service award presentations)
- *Recruit an Area Support Team comprised of members who have knowledge in each of the officer, RAMP and Nominating Committee roles, and are willing to assist other branches in the area.* They will assist the AG with training, problem-solving, and RAMP implementation and follow-up. These area support members are expected to be significantly easier to identify and recruit than candidates for the AG position, and they likely could become AG candidates in the future.
- *Establish that all Area Governors be invited to attend State Board meetings.* This change recognizes the positions for what they are, State Officers, thereby elevating their stature significantly in the eyes of State Board members, State Committee Chairmen, Branch leaders, and the AG's themselves. It will also significantly improve leader communications.
- *Receive additional training to effectively perform their new focus and expanded span of control.*
- *Focus efforts on branches that are thoroughly committed to succeeding and are taking efforts to do so.* Those branches not committing to success will continue to be monitored and given the opportunity to attend training, but there will be no extraordinary efforts to save them from merger or closure. (See also Recommendations 14 and 15)
- *Immediately meet with branches that are identified as merger/closure candidates in the next three years, and have them elect which alternative they prefer.* (See also Recommendation 14 and 15)



8. *Cluster the 19 new Areas into five Regions with three or four AGs reporting to each RD, and with each RD being a State Board member. Eliminate the ten Regional Director positions as now constituted. Appendix 5 contains the new Region Director Position Description. Additions are in bold font and deletions are struck through.*

We considered several organizational alternatives prior to settling on this recommendation:

- Eliminating the Regional Director level, because Area Governors should be competent to oversee their Area without an additional supervisory level. However, we concluded that having 19 areas report to the President was impractical.
- Clustering the new Areas into two, three, or four Regions with varying numbers of AG's reporting to the RD's depending on the number of Regions. Each of those alternatives- with changes to the RD and AG positions' duties is considered workable but not optimal given our unfilled AG positions and lack of current candidates to fill them.
- Clustering the new Areas into four groups and having the Area Governors elect a "Senior Area Governor" to represent each group at the State Board. This alternative has the advantage of eliminating a supervisory level; however it may be too great a departure from the current organization to be workable.

It was concluded that the five-Region concept is preferred at this time. With the changes being recommended in the RD and AG positions and in other parts of this report, the span of control for each RD (three or four) is a reasonable compromise over the other alternatives.

The RD will no longer be the "watchdog" over his AG direct reports, nor will he be expected to visit branches to present service, HLM, or other awards. He will have active participation on the State Board and will have a key role in recruiting, training, and mentoring his Area Governors. His AGs will be fully responsible for supporting, assisting, and monitoring their assigned branches, with little need for supervisory involvement of the RDs.

9. *Revise the makeup and number of State Board Members from 16 to 13.*

- *Retain the State Board positions of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Chief Administrative Officer.*
- *Reduce the Regional Directors from 10 to 5, in line with Recommendation 8.*
- *Add the Chairmen of the State Golf Committee, Growth & Membership Committee, and Training & Development Committee, due to the significance of these positions to SIR's strategic direction and future.*
- *Remove the Assistant Secretary and Assistant Treasurer positions.*

10. *Revise the reporting relationships of State Committee Chairmen and State Officers as follows:*

- *Have the Standing Committee Chairmen with the exclusion of Golf, Growth and Membership, Training and Development, Nominating and INFOSYS- report to the Vice*

*President. Continue to have the Vice President named as Ex Officio to each of the committees reporting to him.*

- *Have Committees appointed by the President report to the Vice President, unless the President decides otherwise.*
- *Have the Golf, Growth & Membership, Training & Development and INFOSYS Committees report to the President, due to their strategic importance.*

*11. Eliminate the routine review of Form 15 Expense Claim Vouchers for AGs and RDs from the Vice President.*

The Vice President position is too important to continue this practice. With last year's requirement that RDs approve AG's expenses, and the approval of Recommendation 9 that has Standing Committee and other State Chairmen reporting to the Vice President, this change significantly increases his workload and the need to transfer that time-consuming duty from the position.

*12. Transfer the presentation of Honorary Life Member (HLM) awards from the President or his designee to Branch Big Sirs.*

The President now presents forty to fifty HLM awards throughout SIRinc annually, which is a significant work load that takes away from his other very important responsibilities. The Branch HLM award is specifically designed for branch members who have given "exceptional and extraordinary service" and...should only concern SIR Branch service".

The award starts with Branch leaders initially deciding the candidate was the most worthy at the time; it must be recommended by 2/3 vote of the BEC before it even begins its approval process, ending finally with the President. By making this change, the award is presented at the Branch level where it was solely earned in the first place.

This change loses none of the award's high recognition value. If a President, for whatever reason, wishes to present a particular HLM award, he would continue to retain that option. This is not to say that the President should refrain from visiting branches. We believe that such visitations should deal with branch performance as opposed to making an award.

*13. Transfer presentation of Super Senior Sir and Century Sir service awards for attaining ages 95 and 100 from Area Governors and Regional Directors to Branch Big Sirs.*

Currently, the Senior Sir award is presented to a member attaining age 90 by the Big Sir. All age-related service awards should be the responsibility of the Big Sir, not of an Area Governor or Regional Director. This simple change frees up time of AG's and RD's who would otherwise have to make multiple trips annually meeting this requirement.

*14. Adopt a new branch merger policy or practice as follows:*

*Encourage any branch projected to close within three years to merge with another branch in the same locale sooner rather than later.* Traditionally, SIR has tried to keep branches open until literally "the last dog has died." Experience now has shown that such branches hanging on year after year are merely letting their members grow older and less active, which can result in weakening the healthy branch in a merger.

*15. Identify high-survival-risk branches and request their BEC's to annually select one of three options below, to be voted on by their BECs and presented to their members:*

*Option 1. Continue to operate and commit to accomplish the following:*

- Elect a Big Sir with strong leadership capability
- Fill all RAMP positions and train all RAMP Chairmen
- Insure the luncheon venue is attractive, the food meets a reasonable price/value judgment and the speaker is consistently of interest to the membership
- Reorient the branch Nominating Committee to a Succession Committee
- Increase activities and spouse/partner participation
- Readily request and accept assistance
- Submit forms and reports on time

Option 2. Continue to operate, but committing to Option 1 conditions is impossible or impractical for whatever reasons. In this option, the branch and the AG agree that:

- The branch cannot survive long term;
- The branch wishes to continue in SIR as long as it is able;
- The AG and other State Officers/Committees will no longer devote time or resources to “save” the branch, but will continue to invite branch leaders to annual training and the annual meeting;
- The branch will submit forms and reports on time, including paying its quarterly assessment,

*Option 3. Recognize the futility of survival and decide to close or merge with another branch as soon as reasonably possible.*

16. *Establish a permanent team under the Growth & Membership Chairman responsible for new Branch start-ups, working with Area Governors and Regional Directors of the locales selected.*

SIRinc. currently has no part of its organization devoted to Branch start-ups, yet State leaders recognize that there are locales within SIR’s geography that are strong candidates.

17. Change the date of State Officers taking office from January 1 to September 1.

Currently, all State Officers including the President, Area Governors and Regional Directors are elected by the end of August. However, there is a three month “lame duck” period to January 1. With this change, these positions can take office three months beforehand and prior to the Branch Officer-Elects who begin their terms on January 1.

18. *Develop an approved phased implementation plan with approval of this proposal, including immediate implementation wherever and whenever possible to do so. Said implementation plan to focus at a minimum on:*

- Timing
- Staffing
- Projected revenue and expenses
- Bylaws and Rule changes

This concludes our proposal. We await further discussion of our Task Force recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,

The Organization Task Force

Ed Benson, Team Leader  
Dick DeVoe  
Mark Stuart  
Jerry Morrow