

RedStar Pilots Association – Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, July 19, 2007

In Attendance:

Darrell “Condor” Gary
Jim “Pappy” Goolsbey
Terry “Ski” Slawinski
Shane Golden
Dan Fortin
Gordon “Buzzard” Witter
David McGirt
David “Mildred” Mills
Terry Calloway
Heather J. Frantz- Notes

Absent:

Joe Griffith
Russ Duncan
Byron “Blitz” Fox

Darrell Gary opened the meeting with a brief introduction and thanking everyone for taking the time to participate. Darrell also elaborated on the key difference between his management style vs. his predecessor noting that he’ll delegate more responsibilities to the B.O.D. and committees to better utilize all resources. Darrell stressed the importance of having a strong sense of organization within RPA and acknowledged that while some members may be strongly opposed to his plan to apply a business model to the organization, he sees it as necessary in order to grow, raise money and provide a more solid structure for RPA to build on.

The first point on the agenda was membership. Darrell referred to an email from Byron Fox which stated that only 167 people had renewed their memberships. This number is rather low which begs the question, how do we encourage members to renew and how do we recruit new members? Darrell would like utilize Regional Directors to help with both renewals and recruiting and brought up the fact that nothing in RPA Guidelines prohibits membership to people who don’t fly the same planes or even have planes. He noted that he’d like to expand membership to include all aviation enthusiasts regardless of what type of plane they fly. Participants in the call were not resistant to this idea. The bylaws already allow for this.

Some suggestions regarding membership included coming up with new incentives for joining such as reduced event costs for members. Other benefits already in place are access to all the info on RPA website (training, etc). The biggest draw of RPA however, appears to be the various events we host and with many non-members having an interest in flying in those events, these act as a valuable recruiting opportunity. Many pilots attending these events already belong to other organizations so, while we do want to promote the RPA we don’t want to do it at the expense of other organizations. Rather, we need to focus on providing information and flying opportunities not otherwise available to them through their current memberships.

Additionally, Darrell would like Regional Directors to maintain ongoing contact with the members in their regions. For example, sending out regional e-coms or utilizing other group mailing lists (Terry mentioned a Google group that he uses to communicate with members in his region). Other suggestions from David McGirt included tapping in to the skills of Matt Drale (sp?) to help each region set up a private list without going through Google, meaning zero advertisements. David McGirt offered to help with the set up and Heather will work with him on that.

One additional point made by Darrell in regards to regional communication was that while regional communication is encouraged, it is essential that RPA maintain national cohesion and added that across the board communication needs to remain in place. He also noted that regional communications could focus on information applicable to each specific region (i.e. upcoming events in that area, volunteer needs, membership renewal reminders, etc).

Next Darrell touched on RPA's accounting procedures and explained the need for current, accurate information in terms of financial statements. Maintaining the 501 (C) 3 status is essential and in order to do this, we need exercise diligence when dealing with the financial aspects of RPA. This directly ties in with Darrell's previous comments regarding the application of a business model to RPA.

Darrell suggested involving a volunteer accountant from one of Windstar's Corporate Accounting firms to formalize and streamline RPA's financial procedures and to publish an informal annual report (for members) to show how their money is being spent. This is necessary to maintain credibility as well as keeping contributors informed. One request from participants was to keep it simple enough so that all pilots could understand in terms of any kind of published reports. Overall, this information should be a summary of what was raised, what was spent & where and what's left over.

Also relating to the financial procedures of RPA, event sponsorship was a hot topic of discussion. Some members raised concerns regarding how leftover funds are delegated. For instance, if a particular region receives sponsorship funding and there is money left over, does that money go directly back to that region or is it placed in the national account? Sponsors want to know where there money is going. Additionally, some sponsors may have a regional presence but not a national presence meaning they want their leftover contributions to filter back to the region vs. going into a national account. This raises other concerns in terms of the fact that some regions are wealthier over all and because of the extra money they have pouring into their region, they can produce better events which in turn would bring even more money to their respective regions.

Darrell noted that by putting left over funds back into the national treasury, RPA can then dole out that money to the regions that need it most adding that the idea is to further national goals not just regional goals. If RPA is being touted as a National organization, we must support the "mother ship." This volunteer organization provides the platform for all that we do as a group. Overall, credibility needs to be maintained in terms of sponsors. Suggestions included having a portion of regional sponsorship funds allocated to the national account since the event is RPA sanctioned and part of the participation and attendance is a direct result of the entire national organization. Invitational events which

are not available to all should not be sanctioned by the RPA and would therefore not have to abide by these guidelines. Moving forward, Darrell would like to package sponsorship into a bundle of benefits that could be presented to potential sponsors/advertisers; something to demonstrate the value they get out of sponsoring an event even if they are strictly regional. Some advantages to promote: tax write off based on the 501 (C) 3 status, national recognition, extra event publicity and mention of the event/sponsors on the national RPA website and possibly a mention in RedAlert.

Basically, we need to define what's being sold; what do they get out of being a sponsor and how does it benefit them to sponsor an event.

Next Darrell went over the RPA Sanctioned Event Org chart, outlining a breakdown of how RPA sanctioned events should be run and what responsibilities should fall on the regions and what role the national organization should play. He'd like to see the regional directors play a more active part in overseeing RPA sanctioned events and acting as ambassadors for the national organization.

The next topic of discussion was the Red Alert magazine published by RPA. In talking with Phil Cogan, Darrell learned that while we have a great publication, Phil could use some extra help in the following areas:

- Member participation in the form of more input (stories, pictures, memories, etc). It would be great to be able to expand the content which would in turn (ideally) get more people looking at the magazine which would then get more people interested and would hopefully, increase membership or at least maintain a higher percentage of renewals. In order to do this, it was suggested that we utilize regional e-coms/group lists to send out reminders/deadlines for articles, pics, etc.) May be a good idea for Phil to put together a production calendar with drop dead dates for stories, ads, pics, etc
- Advertising Assistance in terms of finding new advertisers and pitching RedAlert to them. Red Alert is an excellent source for resources & information and we need to sell that aspect to potential advertisers.
- Distribution List needs updating as does the website (members)

Following discussion of Red Alert, discussion was opened on Check Pilots & IP's noting that maintaining quality control and promoting safety are part of the foundation of RPA. There are a limited number of Check Pilots and IPs and because of this; they need to be at the top of their game. Some concerns raised re: check pilots were that some members may be reluctant to take the hard line with pilots because they may be friends and don't want to rock the boat in that aspect. The bottom line though is that some pilots' egos are bigger than their talent and by letting them slide on anything even if it seems minute creates a danger to both themselves and the people they fly with, both of which are not in tune with RPA's platform.

Additionally, check pilots need to demonstrate their continued education in terms of flying procedures and standards and need to remain active and current in their training and practice. The check pilot group should review the activities of its members annually.

The national F.A.S.T. manual deals with standards and principles of formation flying within the U.S. If a pilot receives a check ride in another organization, should they still be required to get an official check ride from an RPA check pilot? Overall, RPA does not want to get too independent of F.A.S.T. as they set the formation standards in the public arena. Are F.A.S.T guidelines adequate regarding the majority of aircraft used by RPA or do we need to implement additional aircraft specific guidelines on top of what's already in place? Per Terry Slawinski, the F.A.S.T. national manual is about 90% applicable to RPA planes and much of it was derived from RPA in terms of procedure. That being said, is it necessary or desirable to have an addendum to the manual that addresses the differences? The consensus amongst the check pilots appears to be that the national F.A.S.T. manual should set forth standards and principles. The signatory organizations should establish training and performance criteria specific to the aircraft they fly.

Darrell suggested VP David McGirt to participate as liaison with the check pilot organization to voice concerns and to maintain open communication between check pilots and the national board to insure that all tactical information is making it to the RPA membership and that all involved are at the top of their game in terms of procedures, safety and guidelines.

Wrapping up the meeting, Darrell posed a question for all board members to think about; what is the mission and role of RPA in the future? What direction should RPA go and how do we get there? How should it evolve...or should it?

Overall, people want their RPA/event experience to be fun. If the fun diminishes, why participate? Obviously, RPA provides many benefits to members but it all boils down to personal satisfaction. These pilots want to have fun and fly safely with other pilots, build camaraderie and trust. The events should be an opportunity to bond with fellow pilots and create lasting memories (all of which should be highlighted in RedAlert ☺).

Event participation needs to be simple. Pilots have some basic needs that we need to provide solutions for (how to get there, where to stay, where do we store our planes) and those are the aspects we need to simplify. They should just sign up and the rest should be handled by RPA.

The upcoming year promises to be pivotal for both RPA and aviation in general with the anniversary of the CJ as well as anniversaries for other aircrafts. This is significant for RPA and could be a turning point for the organization. With that being said, we need to make an impact that continues to lead RPA down the right path.

Respectfully Yours,

Heather J. Frantz