

## **Response to Public Accusations About the AAW Board of Directors**

This letter comes to you in response to recent and decidedly disparaging social media posts regarding the conduct of the AAW Board of Directors. These posts originated from one individual. Half-truths, biased opinions, and quotes taken badly out of context were used to skew in a most negative way a matter that began as a request for an accommodation to the contractual safety requirements for Demonstrators at the AAW Symposia. Now the AAW Board of Directors is thrust into the unfortunate position of attempting to halt the further spread of false information. The sway of social media in influencing opinions can be a powerful, but often-abused tool. We, the Board, choose to respond in a manner keeping with the spirit of civil discourse with our members.

Several points expressed in these social media postings demand clarity. The individual in question did in fact request an accommodation to the longstanding AAW contractual requirement that demonstrators wear a full-face shield when appearing at the AAW International Symposium. That request for accommodation was thoughtfully considered and it was approved by the full AAW during the January Board Meeting. In what was a simple, candid, and unintended mistake, details about the accommodation were thereafter, and most unfortunately, miscommunicated to the affected individual. Efforts were made to explain the mistake and to resolve this matter earlier than what ultimately transpired. And the affected individual was subsequently provided a written, yet very personal and heartfelt apology explaining the reasons why the Board's January intentions were unintentionally miscommunicated. All of this was occurring amid the unprecedented need to divert attention dually on canceling the AAW Symposium and developing alternative plans to assemble our first-ever virtual Symposium experience for members.

Consideration for the needs of those with impairments is integral to the AAW culture and has always been assigned priority. The AAW Board stands on its record of serving the needs of those with impairments, both through the online educational resources and its ongoing specialty programming during the live Symposium. This matter in question was never a matter of refusing an ADA-related accommodation.

Moreover, in mid-June the AAW Board arrived at a mutually agreeable settlement with this individual, in good faith to put an end to this matter. In a gesture of compromise, this agreement, which was drafted by the individual, was accepted in full by the Board. Moreover, the Board formally acknowledged that it did not give the matter the priority it deserved. That mutual settlement can be viewed in full via <http://tiny.cc/BoardMeetings> on the AAW website (AAW Members must be signed in to view this page).

The AAW Board of Directors is made up of volunteers that have committed themselves to spend much of their time dedicated to serving the membership. Our sole function serving on the board is to improve the association. The board stands behind its president Greg Schramek, Vice President Janet Collins, and Safety Chair Rick Baker.