Minutes of 2013 EASI Annual Meeting – Las Vegas, NV

Day 1 – April 16, 2013

*Steering Committee Meeting* – 10:45 am (following meeting of Technical Committee):

Present:

Executive Chairperson Rob Smith, Secretary/Treasurer Nick Freitag, Technical Advisor Michael Roberts, At-Large Members Jon Clarke, Rich Weisbrod and Michael Leibrand

Nick presented the proposed slate of Officers and At-Large Members which will be on the ballot later today. Nick noted that during the nomination process, the committee failed to recognize that Jon Clarke’s term would be expiring this year. Therefore, Nick asked Jon if he would be willing to be nominated for possible election as a write-in candidate on today’s ballot for At-Large membership. Jon said yes he would.

Nick reviewed the historical attendance numbers and cost by location of our Annual Meetings over the past 5 years. Expected attendance at this year’s meeting is down 33% compared to the peak number of 46 in Orlando in 2008. Jon said he thinks the key to better attendance is improved communications about the work of EASI on a year-round basis. Discussion was centered upon ‘new’ locations (other than our traditional Orlando or Vegas locations – particularly Dallas, Chicago, Louisville?), and then the importance of facility tours related to our businesses? Mike Leibrand said he thought we should have more publicity and awareness of the work of this organization through trade publications such as Multi-Channel Merchant). Mike also said this particular publication (MCM) sponsors an annual trade show or ‘summit’ in Columbus, OH that he personally attends and finds to be informative. He thinks we could reach other potential member businesses at such an event. Jon stated that he believes we needed more ‘outreach initiatives’ and thought we ought to consider some form of advertising. Mike said he would contact Multi-Channel Merchant about the possibility of them writing an article that would feature the work of the EASI group.

‘What is the future of EASI?’ was the last topic of discussion. It was generally agreed that we should be a resource to our membership that supports them conducting business amongst one another and with their trading partners/customers.

Following this meeting, two members of the Executive Steering Committee (Rob Smith and Rich Weisbrod) remained to review the Treasurer’s Report for fiscal year 2013 activity, and all supporting checking account records and statements. Upon examination of these items, they signed the report stating that to the best of their knowledge, all records appeared to be accurate.

**General Session – Day 1**

At 1:00 pm, the meeting commenced by a welcome from the Executive Chairperson, Rob Smith. He then asked for individual introductions and offered a special welcome to our first-time participants. Rob expressed special appreciation to Rich Weisbrod (for his work in planning the logistics for the entire meeting), Nick Freitag (for his role as Secretary/Treasurer) and to Michael Roberts (for his role as Technical Advisor).

At 1:15 pm, Nick Freitag showed a PowerPoint presentation addressing the Anti-Trust Guidelines, the Treasurer’s Report for fiscal year 2013, the audited bank statements and subsequent Report of the Audit Committee verifying these statements as being correct, and then the current slate of officers and At-Large Members of the Steering Committee showing expiration of terms. It is important to understand which positions are expiring and which ones needed candidates for election via the ballots to be distributed during the afternoon session of Day 2.

At 1:45 pm, Michael Roberts began the Technical Committee’s presentation. Michael began by re-stating the 2013 Objectives as established at the 2012 Annual Meeting:

* XML migration – next steps?
* EASI website redesign
* Master Case Label updates
* Social Media applications?

Jon Clarke reviewed the past year’s statistics of the EASI website traffic/usage (all details of this presentation are available online by viewing the PowerPoint presentation). Usage of our website was up in all categories compared to 2012, and first-time visits were up 7%.

Next Jon discussed our current email database of over 160 addresses. He said all have been loaded into Mail Chimp for enhanced capability to broadcast communications to our membership and interested parties. Jon challenged us to ‘grow this list’ and asked for feedback on the template’s design. None was offered at this time.

With respect to social network communications, Jon mentioned we had the framework in place to run a Facebook page, but lacked the content. Several members commented that they thought LinkedIn would be the most appropriate, professional social media venue to use for our organization.

Mike Leibrand asked about the existence of marketing materials such as flyers or brochures? Jon answered ‘no, we are light on these things’.

Jon again reminded all members to take advantage of the opportunity to provide your company’s website link to our EASI page (not all members have done this).

Joelle Hotte was next to present work that had been done aimed at redesigning and updating the current easistandards.com website. Her marketing team at FDM4 provided artistic and professional concepts to present to the membership for their reactions. It was noted that the organizations’ official name is Embellished Activewear Standards Initiative and we need to drop the “S” at the end of “Initiatives” wherever it appears today on our own website! In addition to the numerous slides of proposed layout and artistic changes Joelle presented, Mike Cutsey suggested we reorganize and update the “Current Standards” section of the site. It was also suggested by someone that member’s corporate logos should be displayed alongside their company names to add ‘visual pop’. Joelle mentioned several times that the use of human figures on the site’s pages would help make the pages more attractive and ‘alive’. All seemed to agree (many liked the lady with the shopping bags!). Links to our social media pages could be added, as well as testimonials from current members as to the real advantages of being an EASI member and the benefits of employing the standards. Rob asked the members for continued feedback and solicited any input from other member’s company marketing resources to suggest other ideas for a fresher appearance to the redesigned website. The Steering Committee would be considering all options and in the near future, will proceed with today’s input in redesigning the existing easistandards.com website.

Debby Krissinger presented next the update to the Master Case Label specification. Over the years, we discovered several errors as we updated files but overlooked some references to that original file made in Word or PowerPoint explanatory documents (see slides in the PowerPoint presentation for details of the adjustments made). Jon made a motion that we adopt the ‘corrected’ file as “Revision 2”. Michael seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

The next topic was the use or non-usage of the 997 file, the ‘Functional Acknowledgment’ file. Michael asked ‘how many use this file?’ and not many hands went up. Jon stated that this is ‘probably *the most critical standard to comply with’* when doing EDI with retailers! He said is also ‘the easiest one to use’ as it is nothing but a ‘simple electronic handshake’. Al Baker, a first-time attendee, said he thought we should have a ‘Comments’ field, and said that you ‘must have this in the world of XML’. Al further stated that many ‘end-users insist on receiving this file when shipping to/for them’. Joelle asked if we needed to develop guidelines on when/how to use the 997? Debby suggested we better educate all members on the benefits and use of the 997, perhaps by scheduling a Webex session in the near future.

Next on the Technical Committee’s agenda was the 870 ‘Order Status’ file. Jon Clarke stated that the 870 is more than just a means to communicate ‘expected ship dates’. It should also be used to proactively identify order discrepancies and prompt partners to correct mistakes before they become shipping errors or returns! Jon suggested the creation of a PO Discrepancy report be generated by either trading partner for quick reaction and correction. He suggests this discrepancy report be run multiple times per day at the trading partners’ discretion.

 The possibility of updating the 940 file and giving it a retiring ‘sunset date’ was raised, along with updating the 850 file to include small parcel tracking numbers was discussed. There was limited discussion amongst the members as some felt strongly about maintaining both files. The committee will review further and advise their recommendations.

As the day began to wind down, a few general questions for the Technical Committee surfaced:

* “Why do we incorporate pack quantities within the makeup of our standard GTIN’s?” It was noted by some member companies, that when less-than-standard case quantities are shipped, new GTIN’s are not being created to reflect the case quantities. Instead, we all use the ‘standard pack quantity’ within the ‘standard GTIN’ number. This is not compliant with GS1/UCC original standards!
* “Should our 810 invoice be at the ASN level rather than the PO level as it currently is?” Lots of discussion about the pros and cons was had but it was resolved by reminding us that the PO remains the legal instrument of sale between trading partners and the PO level is was what most if not all financial management required!

At this point, Nick reported that we had overlooked the formal acceptance into the Minutes of the 2012 Annual Meeting’s Minutes! Mike Leibrand made a motion that they be accepted as submitted, Rich seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

**End of Day 1**

Day 2 of the General Assembly – April 17, 2013

Terry Birch led the discussion on the conversion to XML as discussed and approved in prior Annual Meetings. Terry wanted to tell the general membership about the progress made by the Technical Committee on the redevelopment of the first standard to go from FTP to XML schemas several years ago. He said the committee was recommending the first file to be converted is the 846 Inventory Status, and the next ones to be the PO files 850 and 940. It was recommended we continue to use the same ‘versioning nomenclature’ that we currently employ when naming the updated files. Terry emphasized that the committee felt strongly that we should contract with ‘experts’ in the XML schema field rather than undertaking the conversion ourselves and later finding errors or oversights (as happened in our first generation of file writing). Terry said the WC3 (World Wide Web Consortium) was the international organization that serves as the controller of open platform application development and standards.

Mike Leibrand commented that his company’s I/T Manager thought the current FTP files were ‘very effective’, and thought that our desire to move to XML might be ‘a solution looking for a problem’. Terry said that the intention of the committee is to use XML in the development of new standards more so than to re-write all the existing standards. Mike then said he thought that rewriting the 846 file to XML did make sense to him for the real-time ability to update or ping on specific GTIN’s. He was just questioning the value-added proposition for files such as the 850? Mike Cutsey then commented that if we do not move forward with XML, that we ‘will be behind the curve’! Someone else commented that they thought that the 832 PDD file would be an excellent file if accessible ‘on demand’ in real-time (a benefit of XML schema). Security considerations were discussed, and it was stated that SSL (Security Sockets Layer) encryption protocol had been updated to the TLS (Transport Level Security) protocol.

Terry asked if we were all convinced that XML was ‘the way to go’? Al Baker spoke of the historical example of standardization of nuts and bolts fueling development of the industrial revolution a hundred years ago! Then he offered another example of how remarkable Bluetooth technology has supported the boom in electronic communications between cell phones and automobiles among other devices. He asked the question ‘shouldn’t EASI stay ahead of the wave instead of playing catch up?’ Some discussion ensued about the use of JSON schema in place of XML? JSON (Java Script Object Notation) is a text-based open standard designed for human readable data interchange. Jon said it was the language of social media applications, but thought it would only serve ‘early adopters’ only.

To act upon Terry’s request to contract with some expert help to convert to XML, Nick Freitag made the motion that we authorize up to $1000 for the use by the Technical Committee to accomplish this objective. Jon seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Rob Smith then discussed the establishment of “EASI Implementation Teams” consisting of one member of the Executive Steering Committee, 2 members from the Technical Committee and 2 “newbie” Members. The purpose of this is to match up ‘newbies’ with experienced Members who can serve as ‘mentors’ and resources for advice in implementing the EASI standards. Rob will serve on the Team with Jon as the Alternate representing the Executive Committee. We need volunteers from the Technical Committee to serve, and we need ‘Newbies’ to sign-up! A survey will be forthcoming on Survey Monkey asking about your participation!

New Business

Michael Roberts reviewed the Committee’s recommended objectives for the coming year:

1 – 870 Order Status – develop a reconciliation report for this information

2 – Redesign of our EASI logo and website

3 – Creation of marketing materials

4 – User Testimonials to be gathered and published

5 – ‘Overhaul’ of our Compliance Tool test file

6 – XML schema development with the help of contracted resource(s)

It was said that in 2011, we adopted the 180 “Return Authorization” file for usage. At the 2012 Annual Meeting, the Tech Committee proposed a 181 “Return Authorization Response” file but after much discussion, the Tech Committee said it would ‘clean it up’ and re-propose this year. This revision was presented featuring ‘Special Instructions’ for freight routing, packing requirements and payment terms. A motion was made by Pete Tuff to adopt the 181 as presented, and seconded by Michael Roberts. The vote was unanimous to accept it.

Some discussion was had regarding the imposition of ‘sunset dates’ being applied to outdated versions of the Standards. As we have stated numerous times before, our organization is not a policing one and trading partners must ‘self-police’ themselves! We cannot legislate or enforce or punish any members. Trading partners must establish their own requirements between themselves.

Next, there was discussion around the 810 Invoice – should the invoice be at both the ASN and the PO line level? Much discussion ensued but no conclusions were reached.

Report of the Nominating Committee and the Election of Officers:

Nick Freitag then reported the results of the nominations being presented for election to coming year’s openings for Officers and At-Large Members to the Executive Steering Committee. With the lone exception of adding Jon Clarke (as reported in the Steering Committee Minutes), the slate of nominated candidates for election would be as presented on the ballot (a copy within these records). Nick asked for any more nominations from the floor but there were none. He then distributed ballots as per the By-Laws, that being, one to every Voting Member Company. Nick said he would report the results of the voting at the conclusion of the meeting.

Wrap-up Discussion:

Rob Smith asked the group about the location of the next meeting in 2014 – should we continue to meet at a ‘destination’ location such as Orlando & Las Vegas, or should we locate near a tour opportunity like Louisville, KY with UPS? Jon said he thought we should pursue ‘more learning opportunities’. Joelle agreed with Jon. Mike Cutsey asked ‘why more people didn’t come to Las Vegas?’ John Cutsey spoke in favor of meeting in a ‘tropical paradise’ location. All seemed to agree that we needed to decide sooner than we did this year, and to improve our communications to the membership and interested parties in order to maximize potential participation.

Rob asked about timing and the recently adopted two-day format of the agenda? Consensus was that the timing was still good – mid-April avoiding Spring Breaks and religious holidays but before end of school; and all liked the two-day format. Rob asked about the use of ‘outside speakers’ on a related subject in place of tours? Discussion consensus was that would be ok but all preferred tours. We want to make sure we don’t appear to be promoting one particular service or product when soliciting ‘expert speakers’. Someone suggested we offer an Associate Member class with a reduced cost structure to embellishers, retailers and dealers that may be trading partners of current members. No one seemed to object to this idea, although no formal action was taken upon the suggestion.

Echoing Mike Cutsey’s earlier remarks, Rob said we needed to gather feedback on why many of our members did not attend this year? We will be developing a survey and send it out to the membership to critique this year’s meeting and hope to learn how effective was this year’s session as well as learn why many did not come? We will also ask about next year’s site and format preferences.

Regarding marketing opportunities and needs, John Cutsey said we desperately needed to change/update our logo! Several members including FDM4 said they will pursue new concepts for presentation to the Steering Committee for their review. John said he thought all current Members should absolutely be displaying the EASI logo on their own corporate websites to promote and demonstrate support/use of the organization’s work! He also said he thought we ought to look into direct marketing campaigns via mail. Mike Leibrand said we needed to solicit trade journal and magazines to write articles on our work. He also suggested we develop promotional flyers that could go into related trade show ‘goody bags’. Mike said he would work to develop a press release to go to these publications.

Debby Krissinger questioned the current By-Law (Article 3) that states “one vote per contributing member company restricted to Wholesalers and Manufacturers only”, as it would apply to those companies that formerly were separate members but have since merged with other member companies? [Examples: S&S/Americana, Gildan/Anvil, Heritage/VaT’s]. Nick stated that he thought that since each of those companies had paid lifetime membership fees, and since each had registered for attendance and paid separate attendee fees under the individual Member companies, he felt they each ought to still carry a vote. That was the assumption made today when distributing the ballots. With more mergers occurring amongst the group, this was certainly a valid question to be raised but one that did not generate any rancor within the group (all of our votes have been historically unanimous). Nonetheless, it is a good question to raise, and one that the Secretary will investigate for professional advice with respect to possible modification to the By-Laws.

Rob asked for new members to volunteer to serve on the Technical Committee, as this is not an elected body. Al Baker, Marty Leroche and Mecca Bryant all volunteered to serve on this vital works committee.

Report of the Elections:

Nick Freitag then reported the results of the elections today (all were elected unanimously, each receiving 17 votes):

Vice-Chair – Terry Birch

Secretary/Treasurer – Nick Freitag

Technical Advisor – Michael Roberts

At-Large Members – Nick Blanchard, Pete Tuff, Jon Clarke

Mecca Bryant made the motion that the Annual Meeting be adjourned with a second by Pete Tuff. Vote was unanimous. There being no further business, the 2013 Annual Meeting was officially adjourned.