

**Joint Committee (JC)
Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP)
Planning Meeting Minutes
August 25, 2020
Day 1**

Designated Federal Official (DFO)

- Terrie English TAP Director

Members Present

- Laurie Brock Chair, Internal Communications Committee (ICC)
- Tracy Bunner Chair, Notices and Correspondence
- James “Jim” Buttonow Vice-Chair, Taxpayer Communications Committee
- Phillip “Phil” Kleiber National TAP Chair
- Robert “Bob” Moretti National TAP Vice-Chair
- Andrea Price Chair, Toll-Free Phone Lines Committee
- Stephen Selden Chair, Tax Forms and Publications Committee
- Nina Tross Chair, Taxpayer Assistant Centers Committee (TAC)
- Cheryl Williams Chair, Special Projects Committee
- Lindsey Funair Chair, Taxpayer Communications (Absent)

Visiting Members

- Hercules Analitis Member, Taxpayer Communications Committee
- Michael Avery Member, Special Projects Committee
- Patricia Anthony Member, Taxpayer Communications Committee
- Donna Burris Member, Toll Free Phone Lines Committee
- Edward Donovan Member, Taxpayer Assistance Centers Committee
- Joseph “Joe” Edelen Member, Toll-Free Phone Lines Committee
- Matthew “Ryan” Groff Member, Taxpayer Communications Committee
- John Hughes Member, Special Projects Committee
- Patrick “Pat” Kusiak Tax Forms and Publications Committee
- Martha Lewis Member, Tax Forms and Publications Committee
- Joseph “Joe” Magyar Member, Tax Forms and Publications Committee
- T. Renee Parker Tax Forms and Publications Committee
- Alexas Pickron Tax Forms and Publications Committee
- Thurston Smith Vice Chair, Taxpayer Assistance Centers
- Bruce Stratton Member, Tax Forms and Publications Committee
- Sandy Villella Tax Forms and Publications Committee

Staff

- Lisa Billups Program Analyst
- Kevin Brown Management Assistant
- Conchata Holloway Program Analyst
- Cedric Jeans TAP East Chief
- Susan Jimerson TAP West Chief
- Antonia Keeling Program Analyst
- Gilbert Martinez Program Analyst

- Rosalind Matherne Program Analyst
- Matthew O’Sullivan Program Analyst
- Robert Rosalia Program Analyst
- Antoinette “Toni” Ross Program Analyst
- Fred Smith Program Analyst
- Sheila Andrews Deputy Executive Director, Communications, Stakeholder Liaison and Online Services (CSO)
- Maryclaire Ramsey Executive Director, Communications, Stakeholder Liaison and Online Services (CSO)

Members of The Public

None

Welcome, Review Agenda

English welcomed everyone and opened the call. Kleiber thanked all who joined the call and explained this meeting is planning for the TAP 2021 year.

Roll Call

Quorum was met for the meeting.

DFO/National Office Update

Maryclaire Ramsey:

- Thanked members for their effort on the tax forums.
- National Taxpayer Advocate (NTA) put out a blog about Economic Impact Payment (EIP).
- The non-tool will be available from August 15-30, 2020.
- The non-filer tool will be open until October 15, 2020 for those who did not have to file.
- The IRS is reaching out to taxpayers to make sure they received their stimulus payments.
- The IRS is putting out information about Unemployment Insurance is being taxed.
- Local Taxpayer Advocates (LTAs) are hopefully working with TAP members.
- The contract has been extended with the TAP website conversion to complete this project as efficiently as possible.

Sheila Andrews:

- Appreciate the committee’s flexibility for the virtual meetings.
- The state of the IRS- some areas are open while other are still closed.
- Commissioner is asked those who have portable work to remain home for health safety reasons.

English reported:

Thank you for working with us during these troubling times.

TAP Chair Report

Kleiber reviewed the five discussion topics for today’s meeting which are:

- What has worked well and not so well this year in your committees?
- In general, has meeting attendance been satisfactory?

- Has the workload been evenly distributed or have a few members done most of the work?
- What will your committee focus be for 2021?
- Provide any ideas you might have to improve the panel's performance and productivity for 2021.

Kleiber thanked the entire panel for sticking with the TAP throughout this ordeal. Some members have jobs and family and they have still worked hard to stay with TAP. The Joint Committee has worked very well together this year. Kleiber thought that learning more about each committee member will allow for cross-pollination and full use of member's abilities and talents. Face to face gathering allows this process to work better.

Kleiber's Feedback for Improvement Opportunities:

- Discussion committee assignments - how are new TAP members assigned to a Project Committees? Jimerson explained new and returning members give the staff their top three preferences. Balance of new and returning with these preferences and needs of the six committees are how the assignments are made.
- Suggestion- looking at the current six Project Committee and consider making changes based on current issues taxpayers are faced with.
- Suggestion- we look at how issues affect the different taxpayer segments e.g. low-income, elderly etc.
- Suggestion we formalize a process in connecting TAP members with LTAs.
- Suggestion we assume going forward we will remain in a virtual environment and be better prepared to retrofit training for a virtual delivery versus face-to-face.

TAP Vice Chair Report

Moretti reported the attendance for the Outreach committee meetings has been tremendous all year. The Outreach Toolkit project was updated and is now available on www.tapspace.org. Moretti spoke about how important activity reports are for our Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) requirements. We are starting a TAP member checklist which is being worked currently to be added to the Outreach Toolkit eventually.

Public Comments

None

2020 Project Committee Report Out

Feedback for Improvement Opportunities:

- W&I Staff- What is the protocol as it relates to IRS staff being on calls? Is it for all meetings or only for specific meetings? It is important to know so committee members can better prepare to interact with them. There is no advance notice of IRS staff attending and we want members to engage in dialogue and feel free to express themselves. Give an example.
- Utilize the video portion of WebEx- It will help keep members engaged by visually seeing other members since there are no face to face meetings.
- Revisit the interview process and questions asked to potential TAP members. (Dive deeper into the details about the time commitment)
- Restructure orientation and allow more time for reviewing the TAP charter; TAP Bylaws; FACA; and Ethics & Records with examples to illustrate the point.

- Documents on www.TAPSpace.org should be periodically reviewed to ensure that the latest version of critical documents is available to TAP members.
- Current TAP members should have access to retired TAP member's outreach contacts and activities from the same state.
- Mentoring needs to be a concentrated focus when matching mentors with mentees. There should be follow-up to ascertain if the relationship is working and if not, reassign a mentee to a new mentor and vice versa.
 - Also, tied to the onboarding of new members is the need to provide more structure and seek recommendations to improve these processes.
 - Need to create a checklist or a template on the onboarding process.
- Is it possible for business cards to include a Quick Response code (QR) scan? This is done at professional association conferences.
- Remind TAP members of their roles, periodically, throughout the year during quarterly virtual meetings or some other method.
- Provide a list of previous referrals sent to the IRS for consideration for each Project Committee.
- In order to help members with providing timely Activity Reports we need to add more automation to this process.
- Suggestion- We identify the life cycles for each project committee to get a better understanding on how long it takes to send recommendations to the IRS for their consideration.
- Suggestion- We make improvements to our communication tools – currently WebEx has limitations and there may be better options. Also, consider these options for delivering virtual training and face-to-face meetings.
- We enjoy having guest speakers at meetings – suggest we invite more.
- Suggestion- Add an International Committee and/or add more international representatives to address international issues taxpayers are faced with.
- Suggestion- We have a targeted approach to IRS strategic plans to identify and/or improve taxpayer service.

Questions:

How are Subject Matter Experts (SME)s invited to committee meetings?

- Response- Members should make requests through their project committee analyst and DFO.

How do we address the imbalance of work? What does this process look like? Need to identify best practices because few do all the work. How can we improve attendance for all meetings? Identify best practices.

Outreach Strategy

Virtual Outreach Campaign

Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Zoom, Blogs and articles print media and media websites. Activity Reports total 600 hours with 340,000 audience.

Articles to highlight:

- Buttonow- "10 Things to Know About IRS Operations During the Coronavirus Epidemic" in *Accounting Today*.
- Price- Guess Column that included the Taxpayer First Act in *The Sojourner's Truth*.
- Groff- Numerous Post on Twitter and LinkedIn.

- Williams- Article in *National Association of Enrolled Agents*.

Newsletter

Important information for all TAP members available on www.tap.space.org. IRS Congressional Update newsletter to get our message out to Congress. Moretti wrote an article introducing TAP for this newsletter.

Member Successes and Best Practices

Toolkit updated; Virtual tax forums; www.tap.space.org and www.improveirs.org being merged and updated; New member checklist is pending. Will be online soon to be reviewed.

Moretti and Buttonow are working on a national media press release for new TAP members for which includes member name and email information for Associate Press; Reuters; and Bloomberg allowing people to contact us. Kleiber suggested moving the Day 1 Recap and Action items moved to the beginning of tomorrow's meeting.

Public Input/Closing

English thanked everyone for their efforts on the call and closed the meeting.

Next Joint Committee Meeting is August 26, 2020 at 1:30 p.m. ET

**Joint Committee (JC)
Taxpayer Advocacy Panel (TAP)
Planning Meeting Minutes
August 26, 2020
Day 2**

Designated Federal Official (DFO)

- Terrie English TAP Director

Members Present

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- Tracy Bunner Chair, Notices and Correspondence
- Jim Buttonow Vice-Chair, Taxpayer Communications Committee
- Phillip “Phil” Kleiber National TAP Chair
- Robert “Bob” Moretti National TAP Vice-Chair
- Andrea Price Chair, Toll-Free Phone Lines Committee
- Stephen Selden Chair, Tax Forms and Publications Committee
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- Robert Rosalia Program Analyst
- Antoinette “Toni” Ross Program Analyst
- Fred Smith Program Analyst

Members of The Public

None

Welcome/Opening

English opened the call and noted a change in the agenda. Martinez will do a recap from yesterday's meeting after the Chair report.

Roll Call/Attendance

Quorum was met for the meeting.

Welcome/Announcements/Comments

Kleiber welcomed everyone to the call and thanked everyone for their participation.

Day 1 Recap

Martinez reviewed the discussion which included:

- Challenges
- Improvement Opportunities
- Activities and Accomplishments
- Working with your committee
- Mentoring
- Attendance
- Project Workflow Guidance
- Referral Concurrence Assessment

Price suggested that new members should automatically be given previous member outreach information. Price also indicated that committee members should have prior notice of any SME from W&I or any other area of the IRS before they join the meeting, so we are prepared. Martinez indicated that certain SMEs have standing invites to join our meetings so the staff will do a better job of defining these roles of these employees so that all members are aware of their roles in TAP duties. Williams suggested have SMEs who are better vetted to be able to answer specific questions the TAP committees will need. Martinez mentioned that having questions sent to the SMEs before our meetings might be a way to ensure that the SMEs are best prepared for our meetings.

Acknowledgement of Citizens

None

Chair and Vice Chair Responsibilities

- Working with your Committee
 1. Actively bring others into the discussion.
 2. Find out why members are disengaging or missing meetings and offer to provide them with the information they missed from the meeting.
 3. Ask members to give prior notice if they expect to miss a meeting.
 4. Consider a restarting meeting to allow the group to refocus.
 5. Switch out subcommittee leads to get more members engaged in participating roles.
 6. Use emails and phone calls for the subcommittee process.
 7. Don't let experienced members take over or hog the call.
 8. Don't go too fast on technical discussions.
- Mentoring
 1. Ad Hoc committee to train mentors.

2. Use the checklist that Moretti is preparing.
 3. Pair mentors and mentees up during the face to face meeting.
 4. Encourage returning members to be involved in the mentoring program to have more options to pair new member with similar time zones and interests.
 5. Make guidelines for mentors to follow with a phased timetable and a clearer understanding to that commitment.
 6. Develop a checklist as part of this more detailed process for mentoring.
- Attendance
 1. Ensure new members have a clear and detailed understanding to the time required to be a TAP member.
 2. Ensure that perspective members understand the TAP calendar, time commitment and average number of meetings members would normally attend.
 3. Consider replacing members faster if they cannot commit to the responsibility.
 4. These must be taken on a case by case circumstances.
 - Project Workflow Guidance

The possibility for a dropdown choice on www.improveirs.gov to allow the person entering the issue to choose the area the comment might flow to better the screening system.
 - Referral Concurrence Assessment

No consensus issues at this time.

Annual Report Template

Martinez thanked the members of Annual Report committee for their work. The committee is currently working on the table of contents with currently no change to the TAP mission or vision. There is an introduction to the TAP program since this report goes to the public, the NTA, the IRS Commissioner, to Secretary of Treasury and to Congress.

The committee is preparing to send the chair report templates to each committee chair. We will include referrals sent in 2019 and responded to in 2020. They are also preparing a report with all the referrals and sent to the IRS this year for committee chairs to use. The initial draft is due on October 16, 2020. We will review the reports for grammar, punctuation and consistency throughout. We will provide feedback as needed on these reports.

Martinez also mentioned this report goes all the way up to Congress, so we want to be sure the finished product is consistent and professional. The second draft will be due on November 13, 2020 with the final report due on December 11, 2020.

Martinez said they plan to review template for chair reports and sending it out for the Chairs to start their reports next month. Committee Analysts and DFOs will be available for assistance.

There will be a special events or activities section for activities not specific to a committee that should be shared. There will be a letter from incoming chair to be included. The chair report templates should be finalized by September 4, 2020 to be sent to chairs shortly thereafter.

2021 Project Proposal

Price Potential proposals:

100 million calls to toll-free line each year. The main complaints are that no questions answered; No call back option; www.irs.gov is not the only or best option.

1. The time it takes to speak to Customer Service Representatives (CSRs).
2. Involuntary disconnects; courtesy disconnects.
3. Callback technology.
4. Using technology to get to right person using proper functioning phone tree.

Steve Selden Potential Proposals:

None to report since much of the committee's work come from direct referrals from the IRS.

Tracy Bunner Potential Proposals:

1. Types of referrals the committee gets. Research on how to get issues specific to this committee.
2. Ways to make the committee efficient in a virtual environment.
3. Mentoring education and improvements.

Jim Buttonow Potential Proposals:

1. How does the IRS accelerate their six-year modernization efforts?
2. Getting access to this digitally via online accounts.
3. Meet taxpayers where they need to be met.

Cheryl Williams Potential Proposals:

1. Change subcommittee to something more appropriate with the times.
2. Standardize publication time frames.
3. A high school hackathon to test the IRS security.

Nina Tross Potential Proposals:

1. Not much work since TACs are closed.
2. Working a few holdover issues currently.

Laurie Brock Potential Proposals:

1. Make the most of the new website training when it becomes available.
2. Outreach with the Outreach committee
3. Working on social media
4. Newsletters

Chair Election Planning

Jimerson defined the election official's duties for the committee so members understand this job. This official oversees the entire election process for the next TAP National Chair and Vice-Chair. Members running for leadership positions are not eligible to be the election official.

- October 20, 2020 will be the session on being a TAP Chair or Vice-Chair.
- Nominations will be due by midnight October 26, 2020
- Campaign states due by midnight October 30, 2020

- Meet the candidate's session November 5, 2020
- Ballots sent to all member November 13, 2020
- Votes/completed ballots due by midnight November 13, 2020
- Results announced November 17, 2020

Patricia Anthony self-nominated. Martinez will work with Anthony for this responsibility.

TAP Member Survey Results

Jeans reported the purpose of this survey and how it helps improve TAP for the next year.

Overall satisfaction declined from 2018 to 2019. The government shutdown and late start to the TAP year may have played a big part with this.

Outreach training is an area of opportunity to be improved. Establishing relationship with LTA; Gathering sources from prior members; and Utilizing www.tapspace.org Outreach Toolkit. Go to military bases.

Do you find the scope and depth of the committee assignments efficient?

Better outreach; communications of newsletter; communicating active projects with other committees for input; working with IRS on new initiatives; and focus groups/studies.

Staff making the introduction to the community stakeholder liaison members including the TAP members might be a better way to establish a relationship for the members.

I understand the importance of the mentor/mentee role and responsibility?

More people to volunteer to be mentors; More training for mentors; pairing at face to face; having routine scheduled discussions; following with mentees; JC agenda discussion

Action Items

- Taking actions on the mentor suggestions to improve this program.
- Martinez to send wrap-up list out to include today for JC and maybe to all members.

Public Input/Closing

Kleiber thanked all and reminded the members of tomorrow's month JC meeting. English officially closed the call.

Next Joint Committee Meeting is August 27, 2020 at 1:30 p.m. ET