

# IAI Midwest Chapter

April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026, 1:30 pm – 2:00 pm

Chairperson Chris Girone

Motion to begin the meeting:

1. Kevin Morrison
2. Karie Carroll

Motion carried

Communications Chair:

Ken Velasquez presented the minutes via email to the group last meeting.

Girone asks for a motion to accept the minutes from the prior meeting.

- Minutes were prepared by Secretary Velasquez with AI-assisted notetaking to improve accuracy.
- The board agreed that the minutes accurately reflect prior discussion and voted to approve them promptly.

Motion to accept the minutes:

1. Aaron Winchman
2. Kevin Morrison

Motion carried

Roll Call:

Chairperson – Chris Girone - present

1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair – Grant Danby

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair – Aaron Winchman - present

Communications Chair – Ken Velasquez - present

Mentorship & Membership – Karie Carroll - present

Outreach & Engagement – Filipe Chavez

IAI Advisory Board – Linda Campbell

Past Chair – Kevin Morrison - present

IAI – David Lund

IAI – Emily Kuhn – present

Also, in attendance – Brian Corso

Total attendees: 7 (Seven)

### **Chairperson report: Chris Girone**

- Engagement Strategy: Focus on retailer partnerships, especially with Meijer, to boost member participation and outreach.
- Membership Clarifications: No full IAI membership needed for event participation, promoting accessibility to training and scholarships.
- Budget Challenges: Training budget cuts limit attendance; IAI can complement existing offerings to enhance retailer engagement.
- Webinar Planning: Shortened webinar duration to 90 minutes aims to increase registration and reduce attendee hesitation.
- Grassroots Participation: Emphasis on involving more store-level practitioners to strengthen chapter influence and training opportunities.
- Multi-Retailer Outreach: Plans for broader retailer engagement over the next 30-60 days to expand chapter presence.
  
- Initiated outreach to Meijer’s Midwest team to clarify membership and engagement options
  - Meijer has between 300 and 400 associates involved at various levels including store and district managers.
  - Clarified that individuals do not need full IAI membership to join calls or events, removing a key barrier.
  - Offered free training and CFI scholarship opportunities to encourage participation.
  - Highlighted that becoming the largest organization in the chapter would influence topic selection and training content.

- Plan to send recap emails and encourage Meijer staff to join the chapter's LinkedIn group for engagement.
- Plan to expand retailer outreach over the next 30 to 60 days
  - Chris will introduce Aaron to Meijer contacts to enable ongoing relationship building.
  - The strategy targets increasing grassroots involvement at the field level, not just executive participation.
  - Addressing misconceptions about membership is viewed as key to unlocking retailer engagement.
- Discussion of training budget challenges and certification priorities among retailers
  - Meijer's VP of Loss Prevention prioritizes LP foundation certifications (LPC, LPQ), which dominate training budgets.
  - The IAI offers CEUs recognized by the LP foundation, presenting a chance to complement existing budgets.
  - Chris advocated positioning IAI training as a secondary option to broaden retailer training opportunities.
  - Training budget cuts and travel restrictions limit attendance at conferences and certifications, complicating engagement efforts.
- Competitive context and cultural challenges in retailer training investment
  - Budget cuts have decreased vendor participation and overall conference attendance, impacting chapter sponsorship and fees.
  - Some organizations resist funding certifications like CFI fearing it makes employees more marketable to leave, a mentality Chris described from his experience at Dick's Sporting Goods.
  - This mindset creates challenges in gaining retailer support but also underscores the value proposition of IAI's offerings for career advancement.

### **Board Reports:**

**Chairperson – Chris Girone** – See above

**1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair – Grant Danby** – Notes from Karrie:

- First Chair team coordination and support

- Brian and Gray plan to connect with Grant ahead of the next call to prepare Q&A questions.
- Discussion of AI-generated graphics for social media posts showed positive reception but room for improvement in editing skills.
- Chris acknowledged a personal oversight in not registering for the upcoming webinar but plans to resolve this promptly.
- Member attendance challenges and backup plans
  - Brian will miss the next meeting due to a company summit in Itasca but offered to support the team remotely.
  - Carrie and Grant's participation status was unclear, with encouragement for them to take a larger role in future meetings.
  - The group emphasized the value of having multiple active members to cover absences and maintain meeting momentum.
- General communications and outreach efforts
  - Aaron sent meeting communications via email and LinkedIn with positive responses.
  - He plans to continue sending updates and scholarship info to maintain momentum.
  - The board expressed appreciation for ongoing outreach efforts and looks forward to increased engagement.

The board emphasized growing membership engagement, improving training access, and fostering retailer relationships to strengthen chapter influence.

- Focus on increasing grassroots participation among retailers
  - The priority is to get more store-level practitioners involved, not just higher-level managers.
  - Providing clear paths for joining calls and training without full membership lowers barriers to entry.
  - Influencing training topics via largest organizational representation creates an incentive for retailer engagement.
- Addressing budget constraints and competing certification priorities

- The board recognizes that retailer budgets are tight and training dollars are often committed elsewhere.
- Positioning IAI training as a complementary resource can open new avenues for funding and participation.
- The team sees potential to convert some LP foundation budgets to include IAI offerings over time.
- Leveraging relationships with existing partner organizations
  - The LP Foundation's support of IAI, including magazine promotion, provides a platform for visibility.
  - The chapter aims to build on these existing alliances to increase legitimacy and reach.
  - Coordinated communications and shared events can help knit the community closer.
- Ongoing outreach to multiple retailers planned (08:17, 26:06)
  - Beyond Meijer, the board intends to engage several other Midwest retailers in the next 1-2 months.
  - This approach supports a multi-retailer strategy to grow chapter size and influence.
  - Aaron and Chris will coordinate on introductions and follow-ups to maintain momentum.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair – Aaron Winchman**

- Send updated communication about the upcoming kickoff meeting including corrected meeting length and working registration link by Monday following meeting
- Tag and update LinkedIn and other shared posts with corrected meeting duration to encourage last-minute registrations
- Facilitate continued engagement with Meijer contacts and broader retailer outreach as introduced by Chris Lund

**Communications Chair – Ken Velasquez - None**

**Mentorship & Membership – Karrie Carroll**

- Coordinate early next week on preemptive questions for the kickoff meeting Q&A session and finalize with Grant.
- Assist in registration and access confirmation for upcoming webinar considering two-step verification issues.
- Additional notes listed above in 1<sup>st</sup> chair notes.

**Outreach & Engagement – Filipe Chavez - None**

**IAI Advisory Board – Linda Campbell - None**

**Past Chair – Kevin Morrison - None**

**IAI – David Lund - None**

**IAI – Emily Kuhn - None**

**Old Business:** - Listed above under 1<sup>st</sup> Chair notes

**New Business:** - Listed above under 1<sup>st</sup> Chair notes and Chairperson notes.

**Next Meeting:** Webinar – April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026, at 1:30 pm

**Motion to Adjourn:**

1. Kevin Morrison
  2. Brian Corso
- Meeting adjourned

