

## 2017 Candidates for IAAI Board of Directors

**Tom Wegner**, IAAI-CFI, MIAAI, Illionis

**How long have you been a member of the IAAI?** 14 years

**How many IAAI Annual Meetings have you attended?** 5

**Which years?** 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016

**Do you regularly attend your State/Provincial Chapter meetings and activities?** Yes

**List any offices held in your State Chapter.** Training and Education Chair, seven years; Director, three years; Vice President, four years; President, 2014-present.

**Please list any International offices held, special projects or Committee work, indicating years of service** Insurance Advisory Committee 1 year; Assisted with 2014 ATC site selection committee one year

**If you are elected, will you take an active role in the IAAI, and with your present position, attend all annual meetings and board meetings during your term of office?** Yes

**Describe, in 100 words or less, why you feel you are qualified for this position.**

I joined the IL-IAAI 21 years ago, the International 14 years ago and am currently active in both organizations. With the IL-IAAI, I have served on several committees including: Chair and Co-Chair of the Training and Education Committee for seven consecutive years, Director for three years, Vice-President for four years and currently serving my second term as President. Under my leadership, the IL Chapter was presented with the James L. Smith Outstanding Chapter Award for 2015. I currently sit on the IAAI Insurance Advisory Committee and assisted the site-selection committee for the 2014 ITC.

**Why do you want to become a Director or Officer of the IAAI?** I have always viewed the Director's position as the voice of the membership. The IAAI leadership team is made of 12 Directors for a reason, to provide a diverse sampling of the members. I believe I possess the qualities necessary to be a dedicated leader and independent voice who is forward thinking as to the future of this great organization. Sustainability of any organization is the ability to set aside personal agendas and do what is right for the greater good. I believe if I am elected, I can bring fresh ideas not only regarding training but ideas to help diversify and expand our membership. I will seek out ways to provide the very best training to our membership at the most affordable price through sponsorships and donations. I would like to see more hands-on training versus lecture and PowerPoint presentations. I understand the value in lectured presentations, but a non-traditional hands on class could provide an even more effective training program thus greater retention.

**What do you believe are your best leadership traits and how would you use them as a Director or Officer of the IAAI?** One of the leadership traits I possess is the ability to listen. As President of the IL-Chapter, I have found it important to listen to problems, suggestions or opinions, resulting in a true understanding of the communication. By listening, a leader opens the lines of communication engaging and encouraging the member to be more active and involved with the leadership team. A leader or leadership team is foolish to think they have all the answers. I believe in a synergistic approach to organizational leadership. Working together we can be more effective. The sum of the IAAI leadership team is greater than any one part or individual. I possess leadership courage. As a leader, you cannot be afraid to take an adverse position or worry about keeping everyone happy. As a leader, I have a greater responsibility to the entire membership, not just a few select individuals. I do not mind being the sole person disagreeing with the group if I'm confident in my beliefs. I am a committed leader who does not shy away from difficult decisions. The saying, "because we have always done it that way," I find unacceptable. An organization can be doing something a certain way with some degree of success, but there comes a time to look at the way we do business and explore different avenues to achieve greater success.

**What steps do you believe should be taken to grow membership?** For any organization growth is always a priority; not many organizations turn potential members away. The IAAI has to be concerned with a perceived targeted membership. In other words, our brand of being "Global Leaders in Fire Investigation" might lead to the impression on a potential member that the IAAI just deals in fire investigation, when in fact, we are so much more. The IAAI is a resource for a diverse group of professions. We need to appeal to other professions by getting our message out, providing relevant training, and sharing the resources we have showcasing the IAAI's standing in the fire and legislative arenas. I believe we need to proactively reach out to other organizations not only within the fire investigation field but insurance organizations, law enforcement agencies, legal community, construction and



demolition organizations and public organizations. We can do this through advertising, monetary or time donations, and targeted training programs offered at a reduced rate. The underlying factors are budget cuts and financial constraints placed on both the public and private sectors. The IAAI needs to impart the investment approach to potential members and organizations. A mindset focusing on the quality of our product at a rate that is affordable and proves an investment into an individual's or organization's future. As an example, the IL-IAAI Chapter sought to target

the insurance industry this last year as our market to increase insurance membership. We put on a couple of free seminars to adjusters from other insurance industry organizations. We were able to provide the training at no cost to the students by using our network of resources providing venues, vehicles to burn and burn cells to use at little or no cost each time. Vendors such as board-up companies, tow companies, law firms quickly donated their resources, time and money in exchange to be put in front of potential clients. It worked plain and simple.

**How would you propose to improve relationships and communications between the International and Chapters?** Today's communications are often blast emails, publications, websites and modes other than face to face or even voice to voice. I may be a bit old-fashioned, but I believe personal communication can alleviate misunderstanding and be efficient in some cases. That said, I am open to exploring the use of technology in communication. The Chapter Liaison program in place is a great vehicle for communication. I think it would be beneficial to have quarterly communications between the Liaisons and their assigned perspective Chapters. This will provide a structured program where concerns and ideas can be exchanged by both the Chapters and their Liaisons. I do not believe it should stop there, as I mentioned earlier a Director should serve as a voice of the membership. Directors should remain in contact with the Liaisons and Chapters to stay current with issues and concerns faced by our membership. Obviously, this will take effort on the part of the Director, however, is it not the duty of a Director to be available and provide support to the very members that supported and elected them?

**What are your recommendations for future funding of CFITrainer.Net®?**

CFITrainer.net is one of the most valuable programs the IAAI offers to members and non-members alike. The information contained in the different modules provides valuable information to a diverse range of occupations. The cost of developing just one module can cost tens of thousands of dollars, and we have been fortunate enough to get grants to help sustain the CFITrainer.net program for over 80,000 users worldwide. Funding for CFITrainer.net is always dependent on grants. Funding is being reduced globally, becoming less available as more public and private organizations are seeking grant money for their programs or initiatives. I would propose that the IAAI seek out corporate sponsorship from different business entities that can benefit from the use of CFITrainer.net. A tiered system that charges a certain level of sponsorship based on the number of employees who would be potential users. The other way I would fund CFITrainer.net is to restrict access to membership. This could help increase membership as well as fund CFITrainer.net. A standalone membership to CFITrainer.net could be offered at a reduced price compared to membership fees, for those users that would prefer not to have membership status. Whatever direction or solution is determined to work best, we need to get away from being solely reliant on grant(s) to sustain the future development of one of the most valuable resources we offer.

**Other than training fire investigators, what two or three other elements do you consider as critical to the mission of the IAAI?** Being known as "Global Leaders in Fire Investigation," comes with a tremendous amount of responsibility. The IAAI is a premier organization in the field and should provide a variety of resources to our members and non-members alike. The IAAI website could be used as a tool to provide a list of links to various websites used in fire investigation, fire safety tips, a database of reference materials or brief articles from Board members. Again, this would be a way to draw potential members into the organization. Another responsibility we have is safety to our members and the public. Not too long ago fire investigators were walking through fire scenes without the proper PPE. The public did not realize the importance of a CO detector or an evacuation plan in the event of an emergency. The IAAI being over 8,000 members strong and reaching to all areas of the world we have an opportunity to be an advocate not only for the safety of our members but the public as a whole.