

THE INTERNATIONAL RELOCATION COMMITTEE



Lisa Barnes, SR/WA, R/W-RAC, Chair of the International Relocation Committee, with IRWA Past President Dan Beardsley, SR/WA, at the 2006 Annual International Education Conference in Denver, CO.

Strong leadership. It's what ensures the continued growth and success of any organization. For the International Right of Way Association, it's our members who serve in this important leadership role.

Over the years, the Association's effectiveness has been directly linked to one vital component – the dedicated volunteers who comprise our International Committees. In serving various industries and market segments, their contributions have played an invaluable role in advancing the right of way profession. And, as with other IRWA committees, the benefits of participation are enormous.

“The members of the Relocation Committee are an impressive crowd by anyone's measure – they have an incredible amount of knowledge in this field and they are openly willing to share it with everyone.”

In an interview with Lisa Barnes, SR/WA, R/W-RAC, Chair of the International Relocation Committee, we see a deep concern for the people impacted by public projects. To ensure the public receives the highest quality professionalism, the committee requires all members to obtain their Right of Way Certification in Relocation Assistance (R/W-RAC).

And Lisa isn't shy about describing her committee as passionate about relocation. Apparently everyone who joins this committee has a genuine interest in the Uniform Act and 49 CRF Part 24. It's all about the regulations – learning them, understanding how they are applied and putting them into practice. When the regulations were revised in early 2005, every relocation professional in the U.S. needed to get up to speed. In response to the need, IRWA held 14 Uniform Relocation Act Seminars across the nation. Only four IRWA instructors were trained in facilitating these seminars. Lisa Barnes was one of those four.

BY BARBARA BILLITZER



Committee Members: Lisa Barnes, SR/WA, R/W-RAC; Tamara Benson, SR/WA, R/W-RAC; Tammie Bedlington, R/W-RAC; Lisa Harrison, SR/WA, R/W-RAC; Robert Merryman; Debra Reddick, R/W-RAC; Barbara Meekins, SR/WA, R/W-RAC; and Lee Satterfield Hamre, SR/WA, R/W-RAC

How would you describe your committee's overall mission?

LB: The International Relocation Committee (IRC) recently developed and implemented a Strategic Plan, and the identification of our mission statement was an integral part of that plan. Our mission is to create public awareness, trust and confidence in the right of way process by facilitating the development and delivery of professional training materials related to the relocation assistance provisions of the Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act and professional best practices for all right of way professionals.

What are your committee's main responsibilities?

LB: Our major responsibilities correspond with those of IRWA as a whole. We support the educational goals of the organization and continually review the Relocation Assistance courses to ensure that they provide current and accurate information. We work far in advance of the annual education conferences to deliver timely, interesting sessions and topics that will offer insight into a program that often has multiple "right" answers.

What are some of your current activities?

LB: As part of the Association's educational and professional development strategy, IRWA is reviewing all of its courses and revamping them using a standardized adult learning format. Our committee is assisting with subject matter expertise in the review of the relocation courses. We are also working closely with the International Professional Development Committee (IPDC) in evaluating instructor/facilitator qualifications and determining requirements for IRWA Relocation Assistance Courses. Concurrently, we are updating and revising Relocation Courses 500 and 505.

What is your greatest/most recent accomplishment?

LB: Last November, the IRC truly worked as a team in presenting 17 sessions at the Uniform Act Symposium in Anaheim. We offered three days of educational opportunities ranging from "The Impact of HUD Government Assisted Housing" to "Integrating Right of Way into the NEPA and Risk Assessment Processes."

I believe putting together a symposium or conference of this magnitude is a great example of the synergy we're able to create. The sharing of ideas, our commitment to deliver topics that are meaningful, the willingness to identify and obtain appropriate speakers; these all work together to deliver something that is far superior than what we could accomplish individually.

What are some major obstacles you face?

LB: As with any volunteer committee, finding adequate time to devote to committee activities is a challenge we all face. To set and meet deadlines for certain activities, realizing that the volunteers have full-time jobs, can often create stress. However, our committee always seems to step up and meet the challenges.

While we don't consider it an obstacle, we hope to attract more committee members from state and local public agencies and encourage their participation. We are constantly seeking new perspectives.

What made you originally decide to join this committee?

LB: Originally, I wanted to learn more about how other professionals practiced and performed the relocation functions. I had worked for the same agency, Florida Department of Transportation, for a number of years. I had also been an IRWA instructor for several years, and it became apparent that different agencies actually implement the Uniform Act in different ways. I realized that, by joining the IRC, I would benefit from the perspective, expertise and experience of professionals from various sectors: federal, state and local agencies, as well as consultants who worked for these agencies.

What have you gained from your participation?

LB: I did get what I originally came for and that was the knowledge and expertise shared by the other members of the committee. The members of the IRC are an impressive crowd by anyone's measure – they have an incredible amount of knowledge in this field and they are openly willing to share it with everyone. That willingness translates into relevant relocation courses, productive region forums and well-attended sessions at the education conferences. Another important thing I have gained is a greater appreciation for the value of volunteerism. Despite the fact that everyone is busy with work and family, they still find time to maintain a high standard of excellence for the committee.

How does your employer feel about your IRWA involvement?

LB: I work for ORC Training, LLC, which is an affiliate of O.R. Colan Associates. ORC has always been a strong supporter of IRWA, and they have been very supportive of my involvement with the organization. My role at the company is to oversee internal training. We have 85 employees who are members of the IRWA and the company funds their membership and course tuition for 40 hours of training annually.



Peter Campbell; Janet Cruppi; Mack Dickerson; Reginald Draheim, SR/WA, R/W-RAC; Rick Etter; Ron Fannin; Randy Ferrick; and Donna Harrison, SR/WA, R/W-RAC

Much of this training is for IRWA courses, and we encourage our employees to seek the SR/WA designation, as well as the individual Right of Way Certifications. Many of our employees are active in IRWA, serving as officers, committee chairs, vice chairs, representatives and members at the chapter, region and international levels.

I would like to share a quick story which demonstrates ORC's commitment to IRWA. I started to work for the company on March 1, 2005. One week later, I hit the road for three weeks to instruct the URA Update Seminars for IRWA. What other employer would enable a new employee take off for three weeks to teach classes for IRWA!

It is amazing to me the employer support that is received for all of our committee members. As with other committees, our volunteers are not funded by the Association to attend meetings; however, we generally still have an exceptional turnout. This is due to the unbelievable support contributed by their employers, who recognize the importance of our committee and believe in what we do.

What would you say is your committee's greatest strength?

LB: The knowledge and professionalism of our members is our greatest strength. People join this committee because they have a deep interest or passion for what they do – they really care about the Uniform Act and 49 CFR Part 24.

We are truly fortunate to have the support of our federal partners who serve as members of our committee. Two members represent the Federal Aviation Administration and Federal Transit Administration, and we generally have a representative from the Federal Highway Administration attend our meetings. We tend to make jokes about being relocation nerds or zealots or whatever you want to call it, but

the people on this committee do have the ability to find any chapter or verse in the regulations!

Since we care so deeply about the people who are impacted by public projects, the educational goals of IRWA are particularly important to this committee. We want to ensure that all right of way professionals receive the highest quality training possible. In fact, we require that all our committee members obtain their R/W-RAC certification or be working toward that certification, which demonstrates proficiency, expertise and professionalism in relocation assistance.

What goals do you have for the immediate future?

LB: As I mentioned previously, we are in the process of reviewing the instructor/facilitator qualifications for all relocation courses. By the conclusion of our next meeting in November, we hope to present specific requirements and suggestions to the IPDC. As part of the course revamping project, we're also assisting with the relocation courses. Additionally, updates to Courses 500 and 505 are scheduled for delivery to IRWA Headquarters by late summer.

How many members do you have?

LB: We currently have 29 members on our committee. In addition to the Chair and Vice Chair, we have eight regional representatives and 19 at-large members. To reinforce their commitment, we recently began asking members to sign a letter in June of each year. By signing this commitment letter, each member agrees to attend at least two meetings each year, actively serve on a subcommittee and to either have the R/W-RAC certification or achieve it by a specified date. This letter gives each member the opportunity to review and affirm his or her commitment to serve on the committee on an annual basis.



Vivian Howell, SR/WA, R/W-NAC; Donna Hunter; Clyde Johnson, SR/WA, R/W-RAC; Linda Kitchen-Peck, SR/WA; Cecilia Melanson, SR/WA, R/W-RAC; Michael Quijano, R/W-RAC; Donna Roche, SR/WA, R/W-RAC; and Candy Spitzer

How often do you meet?

LB: We typically meet three times each year. One meeting is scheduled in conjunction with the annual conference in June. We usually schedule a meeting in either October or November and another in February. These meetings have an agenda that follows the governance structure outlined by the IEC. Our regional representatives submit a report to the committee, as do our subcommittees, which consist of Education, Conference/Symposia, Research/Studies, Outreach and Strategic Planning.

How would someone interested get involved in this committee?

LB: Anyone interested is encouraged to contact me or our Vice Chair Tamara Benson, SR/WA, R/W-RAC, who is an invaluable asset to the committee. IRWA members are also welcome to contact anyone on the committee roster to obtain more information. (We do have a Social Subcommittee – and everyone wants to volunteer for that one.) I can promise you a lively discussion at every meeting!

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