

**Minutes**  
**NATIONAL PRESS CLUB**  
**GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**  
**January 21, 2011**

The General Membership Committee meeting was called to order by President Alan Bjerga at 12:25 p.m. in the conference rooms of the National Press Club.

President Bjerga called for acceptance of the minutes of the previous meeting. By voice vote, they were accepted unanimously.

**President's Report**

President Bjerga reviewed significant events of the past year. Among the most significant events:

-- Although "Snowglopulous" closed the Federal Government and National Press Club for five days in February, a news conference by the Ambassador of Haiti to the United States was held at the Press Club as scheduled. The Club called in a skeleton crew to host the event, which had not only reporters by also international television camera coverage. "This showed the National Press Club is a place where news happens," President Bjerga said. "We took a bath financially, but we could do that because we have strong reserves."

-- In April, Rupert Murdoch, chairman of News Corp., appeared at the Club, appearing on the Kalb Report and discussing the future of digital technology.

-- In May, the Club signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Georgetown University. As a result, Georgetown is now holding some journalism classes here and the Club has forged a number of connections with other colleges, too.

-- Also in May, the Professional Development Committee sponsored the second annual Journalism Bootcamp. Although the industry has gone through a tough period financially, with a number of layoffs, furloughs and similar actions, "there were signs of life as people embraced new media."

-- In July, Venus Williams spoke about her new book. The club also held the annual 5K race to raise money for scholarships. The day before the 5K, 300 people attended the club's "first ever" fitness luncheon.

-- The Reliable Source was remolded in August. The Club also hosted its annual Journalism Awards banquet in August, which was well attended.

-- In September, not only did several top Congressional leaders appear at Speakers Luncheons, but President Bjerga spent two weeks speaking around the Midwest about the future of journalism. As he went from town to town, he was reminded what high regard people in America's Heartland hold the National Press Club.

-- The annual Book Fair and Freedom of the Press Award dinner was held in November.

-- The chairman of The Coca-Cola Co. appeared at a Speakers Luncheon in December, demonstrating a new vending machine which allows users to create virtually any Coca-Cola concoction they wish.

-- The Club's annual New Year's Eve Ball, featuring Doc Scantlin and his Imperial Palms Orchestra, welcomed the New Year.

-- In January, Tim Pawlenty, the former governor of Minnesota and an aspirant for the Republican nomination for President, appeared at a Speakers Luncheon.

## **Membership**

Membership Secretary Angela Greiling Keane reported the club's Board of Governors will be approving 55 members in January, "the biggest January in at least five years," except for the inauguration year when a number of journalists joined the club to gain access to our facilities to cover the inauguration of President Barack Obama.

We have 3,382 members, down from 3,469 a year ago, Keane noted. The Club has 3,102 dues-paying members, nearly one-third of whom do not live in the Washington metropolitan region. Two hundred eighty members are under 35 years old. To boost our membership "we need the help of everyone," Keane said, adding that most people join either because they have been here for an event or because a member invited them.

She noted that spouse and partner members are now full members, and added that Student membership is up 60%. "We hope to retain them as they grow professionally," she added.

In response to a member question, she noted that Club rules were changed a couple of years ago to accommodate news bloggers.

In response to another question, she said Journalist members total 1,546 and Communicator members total 1,466.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Keith Hill reported the club earned \$1.4 million on \$13.66 million of revenue. Both revenue and profit were up from last year.

June was the club's best monthly performance ever, and August, historically the month in which the Club loses the most money, continued that pattern. But revenue of \$535,000 for the month was a record.

The Broadcast Operations Center turned a profit last year reversing a small loss in 2009. The BOC's revenue last year was more than \$2.3 million, a record, and added substantially to the Club's profit. About one-third of the work done in the BOC is never seen on television, but instead is fed directly to the Web.

The Club has \$1.2 million in cash reserves.

Treasurer Hill moved the Membership to approve a 1.8% dues increase across all categories. That sparked several questions. Asked why a dues increase is needed, Theresa Werner, chairman of the Board of Governors, noted that it's not just to keep up with inflation (although President Bjerga, who covers

Agriculture for Bloomberg, noted that food costs are up 3% year over year) but also to comply with recommendations from the Club's auditors. The auditors have recommended the Club have a minimum of three months' revenue in reserve in the event of another event, such as the terrorists attacks which occurred on Sept. 11, 2001 "or if our good luck comes to an end."

Executive Director William McCarren noted that when he reported to work the first day, the Club was operating month-to-month, and President Bjerga noted that in August 2007, the club had reserves of just \$14,000. "Had September not been a good month -- had there been another 9/11 -- we would not have been able to meet payroll," he said.

Following the discussion, the motion to increase dues 1.8% was approved by the membership on a voice vote. There were a handful of votes in opposition.

Incoming Treasurer Myron Belkind outlined the club's 2011 financial goals. The first is to earn \$1.54 million of profits. If this objective is achieved, it will be the third year of profits of \$1 million or more. The second is to meet our goal for reserves, and the third is to pay down long-term debt to below \$1 million.

### **Mark Hamrick Assumes the Gavel as President**

President Bjerga passed the gavel to incoming President Mark Hamrick, saying, "I believe Mark is the best person to lead this club at this point in its history. I think Mark is ready."

In his remarks, Hamrick said: "People are very passionate about the club," and introduced John Cosgrove, who was inaugurated as Club President 50 years ago. He noted that U.S. President John F. Kennedy appeared for Cosgrove's inauguration party.

Thanking former Club President Sylvia Smith for launching The Wire, President Hamrick said his No. 1 priority is improving communications to members. His second priority is diversity within the club. The club will reach out to other journalism groups, he said, adding that "Our club stands at the intersection of professional and social activities. We're going to insure that value and good service are there, that it's not all in the financials." The third priority is to expand the club's involvement with social media, he said.

The date for the next General Membership Meeting was fixed as May 6.

President Hamrick called for a motion to adjourn. It was so moved and seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

JOEL WHITAKER  
Club Secretary