

**National Press Club**  
**General Membership Meeting**  
**October 5, 2012**  
*Joel Whitaker, Secretary*

President Theresa Werner called the meeting to order in the Conference Rooms at 12:18 pm.

On a motion by Secretary Joel Whitaker, seconded from the floor, the minutes of the May General Membership Meeting were approved unanimously.

**Membership Report**

Membership Secretary Nyia Hawkins reported membership revenue is on budget. We now have 149 spouse members, up from 120 last year. We have one additional journalist member and have added new members from major outlets, as well as major bureau chiefs, and international members. Total membership is 3221, down about 80 members from last year.

We're now fully staffed in the Membership Department. But members are our best recruiters.

Art Wiese, chairman of the Fellowship Committee, read the list of those who have died since January. Wiese then discussed the Dues Assistance Program, a new program approved by the Board of Governors, to pay dues for six months for those suffering financial distress. He noted that this program is not a loan program, there are no requirements that it be repaid, although it would be lovely if it was when a member's personal economics improve. It's funded by the club's Welfare Fund and is totally confidential.

**Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Myron Belkind reported that since the May General Membership Meeting, we've experienced an uneven performance. In August, we lost \$361,000, significantly more than the \$300,000 deficit we expected. Primary cause was fewer news conferences.

September is showing a strong improvement, which looks as though it can continue through the rest of the year.

Despite some tough months this year, believe we can have a good year, despite concerns about the impact of the national debt crisis, new taxes and the impact of anticipated budget cuts on the Washington economy.

We are proposing a dues increase. Why have a policy of modest dues increases? We neglected dues increases for years. Most city club members pay much higher dues than ours. Members are an important part of our financial picture. Our services were designed for a club of 4,000 members, so an 800-member shortfall is a concern.

While the success of events and catering helps keep dues low, membership must help support the club, and we must be responsible stewards of the business.

Why not a dues freeze this year? Belkind asked, rhetorically. We must improve business performance now to meet our reserve target. Adding membership revenue is part of that. We still have \$400,000 in long-term debt, which we are working to pay down by next July.

Belkind explained that restaurants generate losses, banquets are profitable, audio-visual is profitable, and the Broadcast Operations Center is profitable when sales are above \$2 million, as they were in 2010 and 2011, but not likely to be this year.

Financial planning for after we reach reserves goal is being worked on by the strategic planning committee.

Profits while good have been declining for the last three years. Unless we change this pattern, we may not be generating much in the way of profits in the future.

We've been investing in refurbishing the club. We need to renovate remaining bathrooms and banquet rooms on 13th floor, converting to high-definition in the BOC. We need to invest in the main kitchen.

Belkind moved approval of \$1 a month dues increase for all membership categories except students, spouses, partners, widows and those in the "inactive" category. Donna Leinwand seconded.

During discussion, Leinwand asked what actions have been taken to increase business. A member and second called the question, but the call was not successful. Belkind said we are now advertising on the Fourth Estate Restaurant.

A member expressed concern about 'the creeping northward of reserves.'" Belkind responded that we have the reserves for extraordinary events, such as 9/11, that might we require the Club to be closed.

Peggy Orchowski, chair of the NPC Freelancers Committee, said that if dues are to be raised, we should know we are getting the same services, not less. "I find the library has less magazines, etc., which are essential to freelancers," she added.

Alan Bjerga: Auditors recommendation was that we have one-quarter of a year's revenue. Truly secure organizations have 6 months. With our revenue having increased, that reserve figure probably should be increased.

Bill McCloskey asked about the order of capital spending. Belkind: Renovating bathrooms is important. And the HD conversion in the BOC is important.

The reserve fund represents the working capital of the club.

Responding to a question about the exempt categories from dues increase, Belkind explained that a \$1 month increase would result in a large increase for categories such as widows, spouses, students. Retirees are included in the dues increase, because they pay about half the regular rates.

Belkind moved to call the question, with a second from the floor. Approved.

The membership then voted to approve the \$1-a-month increase in dues.

### **President's Report**

President Theresa Werner reviewed her year thus far.

On the Fourth Estate Award, we are doing what we should: Honoring the best of the best. The separate NPC Awards dinner was a special recognition of journalists who lost their lives in Syria.

A high point of the year was the released of an album featuring Louis Armstrong's last known public trumpet performance, which occurred January 29, 1971, at the Inauguration of then-incoming National Press Club President Vernon Louviere, a fellow native of New Orleans.

Werner noted that NPC member Kim Gregory of CBS News, knowing that Armstrong would be performing, brought some state-of-the-art field audio recording

equipment that evening to capture the event. About 300 copies of the recording (along with six additional tracks from a 1972 Armstrong tribute concert) were pressed to vinyl a year later for distribution to those who had attended Louviere's inaugural ball as *Satchmo at The National Press Club: Red Beans & Rice-ly Yours*. It would be the last issued recording of Louis Armstrong playing the trumpet.

Mr. Armstrong died in his sleep of a heart attack on July 6, 1971, a month before his 70th birthday.

The album was remastered and released via Smithsonian Folkways Recordings and achieved a No. 1 ranking on Amazon, Werner said.

NPC Luncheon Programs ranged from Janet Napolitano to Danica Patrick to the commandant of the Marine Corps.

The Club also honored Andrew Price, who served as a waiter for 45 years, most of them as head waiter, and decided to retire this year. We had a staff and luncheon reception, and we were able to honor him on C-Span.

The strategic plan is being updated. We learned people join the club for professional development and networking. Werner mentioned upcoming events, including the Silver Owl Hoot.

We have found ways to be current but still honor our traditions, Werner said, adding the Club is doing well thanks to our hard working members and staff.

### **Questions and Answers**

Peggy Orchowski, chair of the NPC Freelancers Committee, noted that many full-time journalists are becoming freelancers. She asked that members be able to control TVs in Truman Lounge. She said when she joined, a major benefit of the library was that we had racks of magazines. "Now we have one spindly little spindle with a few magazines."

Werner noted that changing channel isn't easy because you have to unlock the cabinet, go in the back and then change the channel. On magazines in the library, she said we have a problem of library materials walking away. "Things left at the front desk aren't free for you to pick up," she added.

After announcing the Annual Membership Meeting will be Friday, Jan. 18, 2013, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

JOEL WHITAKER  
Secretary