

**National Press Club
General Membership Meeting**

Jan. 16, 2015

President Myron Belkind calls for a minute of silence in memory of the editor and journalists murdered at the Charlie Hebdo magazine in Paris on Jan. 7.

President Belkind opens the meeting at 12:18 p.m.

Secretary Andrea Snyder Edney makes a motion to approve the fall general membership meeting minutes. Approved.

Membership Secretary Mark Wojno: Thank you for coming. Thanks NPC staff: Melinda Cooke, Membership Director; Sarahanne Driggs, director of membership retention, as well as Ruth Mohammed and Allyson Cannon and other staff who have helped advance membership at the club, and Executive Director Bill McCarren.

2014 was an interesting year. As of today, we have 3,188 members, which is down by about 38 members from last year at this time. We want to see positive numbers. One of the things that we did this year was initiate the Member-Get-a-Member campaign:

In 2014, we had that campaign account for almost a third of our members. This year we had 313 new members join the club and 111 of those members came through the Member-Get-a-Member campaign. We need you to keep helping to recruit members, bring your friends and peers in the communications and journalism profession. The person who brought in the most members will be honored at today's meeting.

We will be bringing in 23 new members to the club after this meeting, so that's a good start. But again, bring your friends to the club and please encourage them to join. I'd also like to welcome our succeeding membership secretary, Joseph Morton. Joe will be taking very good care of you all.

Also in 2014, we added new members from prestigious organizations including the executive editor of National Public Radio, president of the Poynter Institute, a documentary producer for Al Jazeera, a correspondent for the Seoul Broadcasting System, an executive vice president of Univision, national political correspondent for Thompson-Reuters and the DC bureau chief for the New York Post.

As I wrap up 2014, my second term as membership secretary, I want to thank all of you for the feedback on how we can improve, including the services we provide to members,

such as a 50 percent off of an annual members to ZipCar, as well as a \$20 credit or free ride when you sign up with Uber and use the code NATIONALPRESS. There are cards at the front desk if anyone would like more information.

We have expanded our reciprocal memberships, including the University Press Club in Lansing, Michigan, the Faisalabad Press Club in Faisalabad, Pakistan, and the International Press Club in Prague, Czech Republic. So I'd like to thank you very much for a great 2014, and here's to a great 2015 ahead. Onward and upward.

President Myron Belkind calls on Treasurer Tommy Burr for his report.

Treasurer Burr: Good to see you hear today. I am Thomas Burr, treasurer of the National Press Club for about the next 12 minutes until I hand over to the capable hands of Mark Wojno**.

Let's start with some breaking news today, the National Press Club has had a successful year. We had an operational profit of about \$900,000 in 2014. The club has made a profit for nearly 8 consecutive years. Nearly a million dollars for the last two and we're headed in the right direction. Revenue came in around \$12.6 million for 2014. Reserves and cash availability is up \$693,000 over last year, that's a 35 percent increase, and that's something we should celebrate as club members, that we are building our reserves. Profit margin will be similar to last year's. We're making progress.

Revenue over the last four years, we've been consistent around the \$12 million mark, and up in 2014 over 2013.

This is impressive, take a look at the business climate. We all know the economy has been improving but there have been some issues. We had a lot of a lot of snow in the first quarter. You can't plan for problems with weather, as a business. We're doing our best to improve on that because we know the weather is going to happen. On the bright side, growth was up in the later part of the year. Our new sales unit is geared up and ready and they have a goal of making an extra million dollars in revenue for the Club this year. We have three people in the sales unit, three people whose job it is to just bring in new revenue for the club. Overall, we're in a positive position. A decade ago we were in trouble. We were almost worried about making payroll. Now our cash reserves are almost \$2.6 million. That's impressive because 10 years ago we didn't really have any reserves. Also, we now have zero long-term debt, meaning we are financing our business through our cash position. We haven't had to borrow money to finance club operations. Our short-term debt is at \$110,000, which is half of where we were a year ago.

Our work continues; our auditor has suggested that we have half of our annual revenue in our reserves. If you remember after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the business climate in this city was down. Nobody was going anywhere, people didn't have conferences and we want to make sure that if some horrible event like that were to happen again, the Club wouldn't have to close its doors because we'd have no cash reserves and business coming through. So we're continuing to build our reserves, but we're trying to get there in our strategic plan.

We still have capital improvements to carry out. For example, if you go into the Holeman Lounge, you'll see a brand-new, beautiful bamboo floor. We hope the economy will continue to improve. It's still slow, but if there are problems, I think we're ready for them and I think we can continue to build on a strong foundation.

Would like to quickly give thanks to our Executive Director Bill McCarren and our Accounting Director Georgetta George, who have answered all the questions I have, since I'm a reporter, not a business person.

I'm happy to answer any questions about the budget, about the business operations.

Member Jan Du Plain: How many events did we have last year and where do we get the most of our revenue?

Executive Director McCarren/Treasurer Burr: Ca 2,000 events.

Treasurer Burr: Most of our revenue comes from business operations, such as renting rooms, catering, broadcast operations. In fact membership dues, while a source of revenue for the Club, are not a majority source for the club by any means. We subsidize our membership dues with our business operations. Which is why it is critical that the Club continue to operate as a successful business. All of things that we do are funded that way.

Member Alan Bjerga: What's the reserves target, is there a date? That has implications in terms of revenue streams and investment and other areas in which to improve the Club.

Treasurer Burr: That's a moving target. In the strategic plan, we had called for \$3.5 million at the end of last year. We didn't meet that goal. We're getting there. We aren't just building reserves, we're doing other things with our profit, like continuing to improve the Club, like redoing rooms like this conference room, like the Holeman

lounge. We continue to hold events that cost us money but are worth it. And we're keeping membership dues low. I don't know if we'll hit a point with reserves and say "that's it, that's perfect." I hope that point comes, I hope that we hit that profit and we can do that. There are goals for what we want to do to improve the Club, including redoing the Zenger room, the staircase will need to be redone in the next 20 years and that's a big cost.

Executive Director Bill McCarren always says just because you have reserves doesn't mean that you can have a pony. It's very important that we continue to build the reserves, to continue to make the club a better place.

Member Bjerga: You can also use the reserves to justify never getting a pony, and I'm just wondering what the political purpose of the reserves is at this point.

Treasurer Burr: We face a lot of challenges as a business. The Marriott Marquis is an absolutely beautiful hotel that has great conference spaces that could steal from things that we hold here, dinners for example. We want to make sure that as these other businesses come in, we are protecting ourselves in case we lose some of that business and don't get that business back.

I'm sure there will be a endpoint at which we can say "O.K., our reserves are good, now we can spend some extra money and do something different with the Club," maybe buy half a pony. Does that help? I'm not a politician but I'm giving it a shot.

Member Bjerga: Well, sure, but you hold Club office and you have this responsibility and there have been a succession of treasurers who have all worked very hard and it's great to see the progress towards this goal. It's just interesting to see the same comments every year, "We're hoping to get somewhere, someday off in the future."

Treasurer Burr: We're a business. With any business, it's always been a moving target with Because our revenues are different every year and we've increased our revenues that doesn't mean that we can say, "We want x amount and that's where we're going to stay forever." We are getting there, we are getting to a point where we're more comfortable than we were a couple of years ago and being in a more comfortable spot means we're in a spot where we can do more.

President Myron Belkind: I am truly honored to stand before you to give my final president's report. I want to begin with my deep thanks to everyone. From my colleagues on the board of governors, to the committee chairs, to all the member volunteers who served on those committees, to all of you in the general membership,

and to our truly outstanding staff who serve under the direction of Executive Director Bill McCarren. I want to thank you all for working so hard to contribute to the continuing success of the National Press Club.

Last Jan. 25, the theme of my remarks at the Club's first-ever international inaugural was that I had and I continue to have immense optimism about our profession and about our National Press Club.

Our profession has weathered major storms, major upheavals that generated major job losses, especially on the print side over the last decade. But there are growing signs that more and more new jobs are being created as a result of the digital revolution.

Studies show that more and more people are reading news around the world. Either in traditional media forms or via the new media. But amidst this optimism, let us recognize the increasing dangers faced by journalists, and we honored the memories of the victims of the Charlie Hebdo attacks at the start of our meeting. 2014 was a very dangerous year for our profession. Sixty-six journalists killed. A hundred and nineteen kidnapped. And 178 imprisoned. I renew my appeal today with a statement issued on my last day as president to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah e-Sisi to free the three Al-Jazeera journalists who have been in prison for more than a year and remain in prison even after their convictions were overturned on Jan. 1.

As we speak of the dangers of our profession, let us renew our own commitment to ensure that we as journalists also as professional communicators, who we are pleased to have as part of our membership, let us ensure that we maintain the highest professional standards to ensure accuracy in all of our reporting and ensure that no-one does anything to damage his or her credibility or that of our profession. I also remain more optimistic than ever about our 107-year-old National Press Club. We have enhanced the Club's international outreach. And also to ensure that the club continues to be a strong beacon of press freedom worldwide. I thank the two winners of this year's Bernie Krug award, Jan Du Plain and John Donnelly, who is busy working today at Congressional Quarterly, for helping us achieve both goals.

I'd like to recognize another important event from Dec. 4, when the Capital Press Club, which was formed in 1944 for African-American journalists and communicators who could not join the National Press Club then because we did not admit them until 1955. I'd like to acknowledge Hazel Trice Edney, the president of the Capital Press Club, who chose to have their 70th anniversary celebration at the National Press Club. I was honored to speak that night and acknowledge Hazel and to give her that night her new National Press Club membership card. We are going to have an important forum on Jan.

26, the Capital Press Club and the National Press Club are going to have an important discussion of the coverage of race in America. Please mark your calendars and please sign up, we expect the ballroom to be full. Thank you again for the honor of being your 107th president. I've been fortunate to have had the opportunity during my 40-some years as a foreign correspondent for the Associated Press and for the past 10 years as an educator at George Washington University to try to contribute to our profession. I can honestly say that serving as president of the National Press Club has been the culmination of my professional life and my highest honor. I thank you, I thank you so very much.

<<Standing ovation>>

Thank you and finally to highlight how the National Press Club has been a venue for world leaders for decades, here's a short video presentation that includes the four who came to National Press Club in 2014.

Roles clip to the tune of "It's a Small, Small World." Includes Czech President Vaclav Havel in 1991, Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1994, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in 2005, Iranian leader Ahmed Ahmadinejad in 2007. Congolese President Joseph Kabila Kabange in 2014.

I'd like to thank our great AV department and especially thank Laura Coker, who has been editing and following the teleprompter that we used for the first time this year.

I'd like to go back to some old business from our October membership meeting and give you an update. As I told you in October, an outside group rented one of our rooms and mistakenly sent out a news release without saying the event was off the record. It was not our mistake but we are very sorry that they did this. We stand for press freedom, we abhor the idea of journalists being invited to a public policy discussion and then being told the event is off the record. It's wrong. We never do that at our events. We don't want private groups to do it at events that they hold at our facilities.

I asked a committee of the Board of Governors to examine this, they came back with recommendations. We are putting language in our contracts to tell groups that if they are inviting press to a public policy event, it had better be on the record. If our customers want special ground rules, they must get reporters to agree to them in advance. I've alerted staff to ensure that this policy is carried out. Incidents like the one that happened in October are rare at the National Press Club and I believe that the steps we are putting in place will prevent these incidents from ever occurring again.

Under new business, I would like to present the winner of the President's Club 2014

"Member-Get-a-Member" campaign to Donna Leinwand Leger. And also to present to her the Vivian Award for outstanding service to the club. She chairs not one, not two committees. She serves as vice-chair of the Speakers Committee, she chairs the Publications Committee, she chairs the Wine and Food Committee and has given the club many years of service including during her year as president. You set a great example. You are sitting next to John Cosgrove, who has an award named after him, for presidents who fulfill the standards required for the John P. Cosgrove award. Donna won the award in 2013, Jerry Zremski won the award in 2014.

<<Applause>>

The next item is the transfer of the gavel to the 108th president of the National Press Club, John Hughes. I am truly honored to transfer the gavel to you. I have worked with you for almost a decade on the board of governors and I know you will be a great president in 2015.

President John Hughes: Thank you. Myron has been such an outstanding president of the National Press Club this past year, putting us on the map better than ever for our international issues and you set such a high bar for us who follow you. I told my wife this morning I want to go clothes-shopping this weekend because doesn't he always look great? Myron, thank you so much. Let's show Myron our appreciation.

<<Applause>>

Thank you everybody. I'm so honored. My heart is full. I'm extremely honored to take on this role and I'm going to do my best for you. I'm going to work very hard for you. We're going to have a great year. We're in a position to have a great year thanks to Myron and thanks to everyone else who have worked so hard.

Board members who are here, could you please stand up and be recognized for your work?

This is the board** -- they work so hard for you and make a lot of tough decisions that really put us on a great glide path. So thank you so much to the governors.

Who's got their inaugural tickets? Inauguration is next Saturday. What's wrong with the rest of you, come on now! I'm very excited. Michael Bloomberg is coming to speak, coming to the National Press Club. We are honored that he's coming. I think that shows what he thinks about us. That he's willing to come down here on a Saturday evening and speak to us. As mayor of New York City, the billions of dollars of philanthropy projects they do around the world, the fascinating leader of this company, Bloomberg,

that didn't exist too long ago. Buy your tickets soon, so you don't have to be up in the balcony.

And District Country music is going to be playing in the ballroom on Feb. 21. These are big names, big country acts, it will be an great evening. And of course the State of the Union Tuesday night, we're going to be watching that here, it's going to be a lot of fun. Where is a better place to watch it than the National Press Club? If you're up in the Press Gallery, you're probably also working, so it's even more fun to be here. Or you can file your story [here](#).

When you take over as president an organization that's in such great shape, you're very fortunate. You heard our treasurer talk about our finances. We're in a position of strength with our finances. You heard about our programs. I feel like we're in a position of strength with our programs. The speakers have never been better. Two-thirds of our committee chairs, I'm happy to say, are going to be continuing in 2015. Because things are going well at the club. We don't need whole-scale transformation because things are going very well. And I'm going to work very hard to make sure that things keep going very well.

We're not going to just meet where we are, we're going to continue getting better. That's the challenge of every president. Keep the Club growing, keep the Club getting better. We took a great leap forward on press freedom. The problems are enormous. The attack in Paris was so awful. We have a large bully pulpit at the National Press Club, we've spoken out with great success, we're going to do that even more. And we're going to set the Press Freedom Committee on a path for even greater success -- why? Because it's our role. We have to do it. If we don't do it, who else will do it? We fight for this great profession and we're going to fight harder than ever in 2015.

Membership, fellowship, fraternity. I'm talking to the members. I can't emphasize enough how important membership is. Our profession has just been knocked hard. We've lost so many professional journalists. So many friends of mine have lost their jobs over the past 10 years, it's been heart-breaking. Now we've had great professional development programs to help train people, help people move on to new positions and new careers. We're obviously going to keep doing that. The decrease in membership has leveled off but as I look at the club, there's no reason that thing can't go north. Talked with Joe Morton, Tommy Burr, our new board member Evan wonders why at first we recruited him to the board. I said, "Evan, you're going to help get that membership number up with me, and I'll tell you how. So we're going to work on that because we're too good to not have more of our colleagues in this space." The communicators will want to be here because the journalists they want to talk to will be here.

For those of you who have done so much for the club, I thank you and I look forward to working hard on your behalf. One of the reasons Myron set such a high bar was because he was here so much. Every time you came to the Club, Myron was here. I think he was the most visible president in a long time because of his presence here. Well Bloomberg is going to install four large screens in the president's office on Tuesday and I'm going to be allowed to work here. I will still go into the office in the mornings, but around 10 a.m. I'll be coming down to the office here. I encourage you to come down to the office to take a look. Andrea works on a similar set-up. You'll see what a breaking news desk looks like in 2014. The data and chimes and the earphones, it's pretty amazing, a lot of fun.

I'm very excited, I thank you, let's have a great 2015.

President Hughes makes motion to hold next general membership meeting the first Friday in May, May 1. Andrea Snyder Edney seconds. Approved.

President Hughes asks whether there's any additional business. None.

President Hughes adjourns meeting.

** The National Press Club membership elected the following officers for 2015: John Hughes (Bloomberg News) as president, Thomas Burr (Salt Lake Tribune) as vice president, Marc Wojno (Kiplinger) as treasurer, Andrea Snyder Edney (Bloomberg News) as secretary, Joseph Morton (Omaha World Herald) as membership secretary. Board members include: Chairman Ken Mellgren (Associated Press, Retired), Vice Chairman Jeff Ballou (Al Jazeera), Frederica Dunn (Jamestown Post Journal), Marilyn Geewax (National Public Radio), Molly McCluskey (Freelance), Evan McMorris-Santoro (BuzzFeed), Ed Barks (Barks Communications), Tom McMahon, (Motorola Solutions), Anthony Shop (Social Driver), President Ex Officio Myron Belkind, (George Washington University), National Journalism Institute President Ex Officio Barbara Cochran (University of Missouri).