

National Press Club
General Membership Meeting
October 16, 2020

President Mike Freedman opened the meeting at noon.

He noted the last time they met, the Press Club had halted in-person services because of the coronavirus. The Club has since opened with limits and restrictions. Half the staff has been furloughed and 15% pay cuts have been imposed on remaining staff. Still, programs have continued and membership remains steady.

“We are here, we will be here, and we will get through this,” Freedman said.

1. **Motion to approve minutes:** Secretary Emily Wilins instructed members that the minutes from the May 13 meeting had been emailed to them and could be found at a link below the live video. She asked for the yays and nays to be emailed to her.
2. **President's Report:** Freedman noted the Club is open in a limited capacity and food plus other items are available through pick-up or delivery.

At the end of June 46 employees were furloughed at the end of June. They are receiving health and benefits. They also received a \$200 gift card for groceries.

Events have continued at the Club, including ones featuring Jane Goodall, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, and filmmaker Ken Burns.

Freedman thanked many staffers, members and others who helped make the Club's events possible in this challenging year.

The Club also launched Help the Heroes, which provides meals to Howard University Hospital workers. The initiative is funded through Club members and corporate partners.

The Club is continuing press freedom efforts to bring Austin Tice home and demand justice for Jamal Khashoggi.

The Club is continuing its scholarship program to college and graduate-level journalists. The Club offered 200-some reporters in the “Report for America” program and all 2020 Howard University journalism graduates a free one-year membership to the Club.

The New York Festivals honored the Club with a lifetime achievement award for more than a century of telling stories.

3. **Report of the NPCJI President:** President Angela Greiling Keane said the pandemic has been able to reach more people -4,495- through online programs as well as the Institute's newsletter.

Of participants, 83% participated in an Institute event for the first time.

The Institute has worked on several press freedom programs, including those involving Austin Tice and a fallen journalists memorial bill, which passed the U.S. House of Representative in September.

Fundraising from individual donors has increased this year.

She reminded everyone to get their tickets for the Fourth Estate Gala on November 18.

4. **Membership Report:** Membership: Membership Secretary Eileen O'Reilly said coronavirus had a negative impact on Club membership.

Total membership is down 6% from last year - there are currently 2,781 members compared to 2,952 at this time last year.

Journalism members have been a 7% decrease: 1,361 currency from 1,470
Communicator members have decreased by 5% 789 from 827.

Fortunately, the decrease remains small and appears to have plateaued. The Club was able to accommodate and support members who would otherwise struggle to maintain their membership at this time.

The Club has both a dues assistance program and an "inactive" status that allows them to maintain their membership for \$10 per month.

Members who have been laid off or are struggling financially to email Membership Director Kate Helster at khelster@press.org.

O'Reilly also talked about the offer for members to pay their dues by Nov. 6 and get all of 2022 free. She also noted there is a career center and career resources offered at a discount for Club members.

5. **Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Danny Al-Faruque noted the Club has \$15 million in cash and investments, about \$11 million in long-term investments.

The Club has a \$1.5 million PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) loan. The loan can be converted into a grant, but that has not happened yet. The Club also has a \$2 million line of credit from the Club's bank.

The Club has been operating at a loss since April and has lost about \$3.6 million in the 2020 fiscal year - the \$1.5 million loan is included in that.

The Club has opened up for in-person services since the last general membership meeting, including the Reliable Source and the Broadcast Center. The Club's largest revenue source was events, which are still happening but not at the level they were pre-pandemic.

Near the end of June, the Club reduced payroll by 50% by furloughs and decreasing payments to remaining staff. The aforementioned loan was taken out to decrease some of the losses and delay the furloughing of staff.

Al-Faruque said the Board is working to prepare a budget, although it would be more difficult than previous years to plan given uncertainty on the vaccine. He said the Club is expected to make a loss in 2021, but could expect to come back to more normal operations in 2022.

Compared to where the Club was at the start of the pandemic, the Club has found ways to work with current restrictions better equipped to handle the rest of the pandemic. While it was difficult to furlough staff and ask to take a pay cut, the Club is set up for long-term financial stability.

Executive Director Bill McCarren spoke following Al-Faruque, to emphasize the importance of maintaining the health and safety of staff, members and people who have come to visit the Club. McCarren said while some staff and members have tested positive for the coronavirus, there has been no outbreak or person who got sick at the Club.

6. **Tally of votes on May minutes:** Wilkins announced with a tally of 22 yays, the minutes were approved.
7. **Questions and Answers:** Vice President Lisa Matthews moderated.

A member asked when events would be back up and running at the Club. McCarren noted there were events being held at the Club currently, although they were smaller and socially distanced. McCarren said he expected there would be no business for large, ballroom-filling events until a vaccine is developed and widely distributed

A member asked about if the Club is still limited to accommodating 30 members, and how that works when an outside group. McCarren said there's been no reservations testing the number of 30, and when they happen the Club could raise the limit. McCarren said it is possible to have 30 members in the Club in addition to an outside event, and they are watching the overall mix. Members should still be able to access the Club, even with outside events going on.

A member asked about reopening the Fourth Estate. McCarren said they were looking at those options, but there wasn't enough business right now. The Fourth Estate chefs are working at the Reliable Source.

Board of Governors member Mark Schoeff asked about the beloved Friday taco nights. McCarren noted that returning to a normal taco night would probably require a vaccine. McCarren said taco nights can be done virtually, with kits delivered.

Former president Jeff Ballou asked about fundraising for the Fourth Estate gala. Freedman said it was going well and noted Al-Jazeera, where Ballou is an editor, had just donated \$10,000. The group has so far raised \$52,000 for the event.

Matthews asked Club members to stay safe and engaged.

8. **Conclusion:**Board members thanked members for remaining engaged with the Club and staff for the work they did.
9. Freedman motioned to adjourn. Matthews moved and Vice Chair Kimberly Adams seconded.

(Minutes compiled by Secretary Emily Wilkins)