

National Press Club
General Membership Meeting
January 20, 2023

2022 National Press Club President Jen Judson opened the general membership meeting at 12:10pm.

Approval of the Minutes: Secretary Alisa Parenti moved to approve the minutes from the Oct. 21 General Membership Meeting. Sharma seconded. Member Sharon Kotok asked the minutes be amended to include the question about allowing oral questions of panelists and speakers at the NPC. Parenti confirmed the minutes would be edited to reflect that discussion. With that change, the minutes were approved unanimously.

Membership Report: Membership Secretary Mike Balsamo announced the Club has about 2600 total members, which is exactly where we were last year. Membership has remained steady since the fall of 2021. Balsamo noted increasing applications from quality news organizations. He said December marks a month of cleanup for the membership department in which staff work to notify members who have any past due membership balances and outstanding debts. In the first quarter of the year, he said, there's usually a drop off of about 100 members as we go through our annual renewal process. Balsamo encouraged members to check their emails to make sure to renew membership for the 2023 calendar year. In 2022, more than 250 new members joined the National Press Club. The number of young members – those 35 and under – is up more than 25 percent, year over year. The journalist category has also increased by about 2 percent, year over year to 1338 members. The communicator category has remained. Balsamo finished by thanking the membership committee who vet membership applications each month.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Emily Wilkins was traveling and unable to attend the meeting, so Judson presented the Treasurer's Report to members.

Judson noted the Club's financial situation had improved as a result of the easing pandemic. The Events business took a positive turn, with profitable months in both March and April. Judson noted that the Club is adding to its reserves instead of taking from them. In April, operating revenues were \$1.06 million with operating profit of \$389,000. Judson said that is comparable to a good month in non-covid times. The Club has continued to reduce debt. It currently holds \$1.8 million in debt with \$1 million available in a line of credit if needed, Judson said. The planned sale of a piece of art also brought the Club and the Journalism Institute improved financial liquidity. Judson noted that challenges do remain, including inflation, weakness in the stock market, and a labor shortage. Judson said the Club anticipates a loss for 2022, but one that's not as steep as originally projected. And in 2023, the Club is expected to break even.

When asked about the possibility of collecting art as a Club investment, Judson and Executive Director Bill McCarren noted the additional costs associated with housing, insuring and

preserving works of art.

A motion to approve the minutes from the last General Membership Meeting in January was made and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

2022 President Report: Judson said this was supposed to be the year that the Club was moving past covid, but the pandemic has held on. She explained that the Club has kept its vaccination check policy to keep the venue safe for families with young children and for people who are immunocompromised. Judson discussed her inaugural, which featured food from her home state of Colorado. Judson said many in-person events have started back up, including interviews with Eric Holder, Dr. Anthony Fauci, Fran Drescher and others. The work Judson is most proud of, she noted, is the effort around press freedom. She said that after a video-taped appeal to President Biden, he acknowledged the Austin Tice case at the White House Correspondents Dinner. Biden also met with Austin Tice's parents at the beginning of May.

Judson said the Club has continued to raise the issue of journalists killed in Mexico and Ukraine, issuing statements each time another tragic loss occurs. The scale of the murders – 11 in Mexico and 13 in Ukraine – is almost unimaginable, Judson said. The Club had innovative press freedom programs earlier in the year, including two film screenings. Judson mentioned a unique panel on the Spotify podcast 544 Days by Jason Rezaian, which drew a large evening crowd. Judson encouraged members to attend the NPC Awards Dinner, held in person for the first time since 2019. Finally, Judson commented on the astonishing progress the Club has made since March, with a 'can do' spirit. After thanking members, Judson opened the floor to questions.

Q&A:

Q: Are there plans to bring back the book fair?

A: McCarren said the book fair is not going to take place this year as it takes many months to plan and is a crowded event. McCarren says it is something that may come back after 2023.

Q: What are the plans to raise awareness about the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh?

A: Judson noted that the Club released a statement immediately after Abu Akleh's death and held a moment of silence with Al Jazeera at the Club on Thursday following her death. McCarren said plans are underway to put Abu Akleh's photo on some of the screens in the Club.

Q: Should the messaging around Shireen Abu Akleh highlight that she was an American journalist killed doing her job?

A: Rachel Oswald, a volunteer on the Press Freedom Committee said a lot of thought is given to the exact wording of the statements. She mentioned that at the National Press Club, "we are overwhelmingly Americans, but we're not just Americans." Oswald said when the Club issues statements, she doesn't want it to be accused of only caring about American journalists who are killed.

Q: Could more be done to highlight Palestinian journalists who have been killed while

reporting?

A: Judson responded that the National Press Club operates as a team when it comes to press freedom. She encouraged members who have thoughts and feedback to get involved on the Press Freedom Team. McCarren outlined more about the timing and volume of press freedom efforts at the Club, noting it's unlikely any organization in the world could say they've done more to support American journalists in trouble than the National Press Club.

Q: When will the library reopened?

A: Judson noted that the Institute runs the library, with four staff members who work for the Institute. Judson said a decision has been made to unlock the doors on June 1, so members will be able to access the library.

Q: What is the status of the Club's archivist?

A: McCarren said Jeff Schlossberg is the archivist. He was among the people who were furloughed during the pandemic, although he has remained involved. McCarren said the archivist is called in for the day as needed. If members need to help with archives, they should contact McCarren directly ahead of time.

Q: Could more be done on the issue of Julian Assange?

A: The Club previously held events focused on cybersecurity training, highlighting risks to journalists and their sources. Over the years, it was noted, the Club has been focused on the issues that the Assange case brought out, and it continues to keep track of the legal issues around the case.

Q: Is there an event at the Club today with a Moscow correspondent?

A: Mark Schoeff, Jr. noted that *The Wire* ran a story about update about an Update-1 podcast interview with a former Moscow correspondent who discussed Putin and the Ukraine invasion. Schoeff, Jr. noted that Update-1 is the National Press Club's podcast, and *The Wire* regularly provides links to current episodes.

Hearing no other questions, Judson moved to adjourn the general membership meeting. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.