

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING  
OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB  
January 15, 2010  
Myron Belkind, NPC Secretary**

The Annual Membership Meeting was called to order by former president Sylvia Smith at 12:15pm in place of Donna Leinwand, last year's president, who was in Haiti covering the earthquake for USA Today.

Alan Bjerga received the presidential gavel from Sylvia Smith, becoming the Club's 103<sup>rd</sup> president.

To the applause of the nearly 80 members who met in the ballroom for the meeting, Smith and Bjerga both paid tribute to Leinwand's year as president.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the General Membership Meeting of Oct. 2, 2009 were approved.

**President's Report**

Alan Bjerga introduced four new members of the Board of Governors: Edward Barks, Rodrigo Valderrama and Mark Wojno and Membership Secretary Angela Greiling Keane.

In his remarks, Bjerga said the Club is in "great shape" financially "even as our industry is facing difficult times."

Bjerga pledged to focus "more than ever" on professional development programs as part of an investment in member services. He said he would seek initiatives for more fundraising projects to benefit the NPC's Eric Friedheim Library, which administers the professional development projects.

He also said he would make himself accessible to the members through e-mails, resumption of monthly lunches with the president on Saturdays, beginning on Feb. 13, and monthly bar hours with the president.

## **Membership Report**

Membership Secretary Keane said that in a “tough year”, total members now stood at 3,471, compared to 3,615 a year ago. She said there was “good news” in that Young Members, those aged below 35, had increased from 318 to 358.

## **New Membership Retention Task Force Formed**

Vice President Mark Hamrick announced the setting up of a “Membership Retention Task Force” that will include former Board members, current Board members and others representing the membership. “We have been great at recruiting. We now need to ensure we give value to retain members,” he said. The task force will meet quarterly and will issue a report at the end of the year.

## **Treasurer’s Report**

Treasurer Keith Hill said the Club’s preliminary results for 2009 showed profits of about \$1 million, a major improvement over \$370,000 in 2008, and revenue of nearly \$12.9 million, about \$300,000 more than in the previous year.

## **Open Session**

During an open session for members to ask questions, these issues arose:

--Vineeta Anand said she felt it was wrong that Affiliates and Associates pay more dues than Active Members but do not have an equal vote with the Actives. Bjerga said he was opposed to full voting rights for the Affiliates and Associates who do not qualify for the Active category, but he said that as a result of the changes in the NPC Constitution and Bylaws last year there now are three seats designated on the Board of Governors for Affiliates and Associates, instead of two previously. Past president Jerry Zremski, who headed the Strategic Committee that recommended the additional seat, said that the three Affiliate/Associate representatives on the Board do get to vote on the budget when the Board goes into session as a Committee of the Whole to approve the budget.

Rodrigo Valderrama, a newly elected Board member representing Affiliates and Associates, said, “Although we have differences on this issue, we all can continue to work for the good of the Club.”

--Fourth Estate Restaurant: Joe Motheral said he wanted to put in a “good word” for the Fourth Estate Restaurant, where he said he found the food very good and often brought in guests. President Bjerga said that “we have a potential rock star chef” in Susan N, Delbert, who joined the Club as executive chef in November.

--Past president Zremski praised “the extraordinary efforts of General Manager Bill McCarren to make the Club more profitable with minimum impact on the members.”

--Several members raised the question of the closure of the Reliable Source bar and restaurant at brunch time on Saturdays since last May, when the Club’s Saturday operations were moved to the Fourth Estate Restaurant as part of an effort to boost revenue by having the Club opened throughout the day including on Saturday evenings and to extend the hours of member services including the fitness center and the computer work areas on the 14th floor into the evening. Bjerga said that comparative figures showed that the Fourth Estate revenues for brunch time only on Saturdays for the period May to December 2009 were \$8,300, compared to \$8,000 for the Reliable Source for the same period in 2008. However, he said total Saturday revenues for the Fourth Estate were triple those in the Reliable Source when taking the all-day operations into account including from Saturday evening dining.

A motion calling on the Board to reopen the Reliable Source on Saturdays for brunch failed owing to lack of the necessary 75 Active members who were needed for a quorum.

### **Next General Membership Meeting May 7**

The next general membership meeting was set for noon, Friday, May 7.

The Annual Membership Meeting adjourned at 1:05pm.