

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB
JANUARY 16, 2009
Myron Belkind, NPC Secretary**

President Sylvia Smith called the meeting to order at 12:08 p.m. About 80 members were in attendance.

The Minutes of the Oct. 3, 2008 General Membership Meeting were approved unanimously.

Membership Report: “The membership news is remarkably good in this climate,” said Membership Secretary Mark Hamrick, who reported that the Club’s membership of 3,640 at the end of 2008 was almost at the level of 3,673 a year ago, a loss of only 33 despite the economic cutbacks in the industry. “How do we explain that? Because in these times, the value of membership is more important than ever.”

There were 503 new members in 2008, compared to 469 in 2007, and total members Under 35 were 325 compared to 306 a year ago. Total resignations and suspensions were 554 in 2008 compared to 612 in 2007.

Treasurer’s Report: Treasurer Alan Bjerga reported that the key financial indicators for the year were positive. Costs had increased in 2008 by only 2.7% to \$12,277,928, while revenue had grown by a little more than 4%, to \$12,648,165. The result was a profit of \$370,237 compared to \$203,507 last year.

Bjerga said the Club needed to build up its Reserve Fund and to do so it was budgeting profits in 2009 of a little more than \$600,000.

“It’s ambitious, but I think we can hit it with more rental space now available in the Club,” he said. Specifically, Bjerga said the renovated Fourth Estate now had rental capacity it didn’t have before.

Bjerga also said the Broadcast Operations Center was operating in the black and that double-digit growth was forecast. Above all, he said that the Club has “to keep an eye on the pocketbook” in controlling expenses.

Report from Centennial Project

Past president Gil Klein said that the Club's Centennial Project of holding forums on the First Amendment, Freedom of the Press and the Future of Journalism reached 38 live audiences in 35 states and the District of Columbia and thousands more people who saw the panels on C-SPAN and local television and radio. The project was underwritten by Aviva North America.

"Everywhere I went, I found people had a high regard for the National Press Club and were amazed and pleased that we were bringing our program to them," Klein said.

"Yes, I found journalists struggling with the deteriorating economy and the burdens on the basic economic model for the news business by rapidly shifting technology. But I also found determination to provide serious journalism in the face of these conditions and enthusiasm for the possibilities of developing new ways of telling our stories and reaching new audiences."

Klein said that in his travels he found that "demand for accurate, dependable news is still great and growing. Credibility is a commodity we convey. If we lose that, we're out of business."

President's Report

President Smith listed highlights of the Centennial year accomplishments including improved communication with the members through the new NPC Wire offered online, creation of a Freelance Committee, refocusing training programs to keep journalists up to date on changing technology, emphasizing the Club's history through the Centennial documentary and the nation-wide professional seminars organized by past president Gil Klein and a Fourth Estate Dinner honoring CNN Special Correspondent Christiane Amanpour "that both raised money and was an excellent event."

"And, of course, we've had fun," Smith said. "Four hundred people attended the Centennial Gala; 700 attended Journapalooza and there was plenty in between them."

Smith also said two major renovations during the year would contribute to strengthening the Club's finances: the remodeling of the Library to create a classroom that also can be used for rentals and the renovation of the Fourth Estate Restaurant with redesigned access to the Winners Room.

Introduction of New President

Sylvia Smith formally handed the gavel to Donna Leinwand, who became the Club's 102nd president. Smith said the new president "comes with lots of great ideas, charm and energy. I am sure she will find this year as rewarding as I found 2008."

Introduction of New Officers and Board Members

Smith also introduced the other new officers--Vice President Alan Bjerga of Bloomberg News; Secretary Myron Belkind, retired AP foreign bureau chief; Treasurer Keith Hill, BNA, and Membership Secretary Mark Hamrick, AP Broadcast--and three newly elected members of the Board, Jessica Brady of Roll Call, Mike Soraghan of The Hill and Shawn Bullard, owner of the Duetto Group.

Remarks by President Donna Leinwand

"We are going to have a challenging year, but the Club is ready," said Leinwand.

Leinwand said the Press Club has enormous capital in the vast talent and skills of its Members. "I hope the Press Club is a place where we can help one another," she said. "We have so many skills we can all use."

She said the Club would facilitate members "to grow with new professional skills" offered through its professional development programs.

Leinwand paid tribute to outgoing president Smith, who received a standing ovation, for "an extraordinary year."

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:58 p.m.