

## **March 2004 Board Meeting Minutes**

### **NATIONAL PRESS CLUB BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING MARCH 15, 2004**

By Sylvia Smith, Secretary

Vice chairwoman Donna Leinwand called the meeting to order at 6:40 pm. Present were President Sheila Cherry, Vice President Rick Dunham, Secretary Sylvia Smith, Membership secretary Jerry Zremski, Treasurer Jonathan Salant, Vice chairwoman Donna Leinwand and Governors Jerry Bastarache, Alison Bethel, Larry Bivins, Gayla Bynum and General manager John Bloom, Membership director Julie Schoo. Chairman John Donnelly was detained. Absent were Governors Jack Cushman, John Gallagher and Mark Hamrick.

#### **MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

Zremski reported that for the first time in a considerable time, membership was higher than the previous year (3,704 compared to 3,658 in 2003). He said the membership recruitment subcommittee had its initial meeting and will be involved in recruitment activities in April. He said invitation letters to likely non-resident actives will be sent as well as a letter to ASNE members. He said there will be a delay in sending invitation letters to newly accredited D.C. journalists because the NPC must obtain permission from the Standing Committee before receiving the new journalists' names. Dunham suggested a similar list should be sought from the Periodical Gallery. Zremski said 6 ads for AJR are being prepared, with Clarence Page featured in the first one. A scholarship winner may be featured in the second one. The ads are a trade for NPC services. Salant said an ad campaign was tried several years ago and was a dismal failure that brought in no new members. Zremski said not every ad or piece of literature the Club does should be a hard sell, and some should merely attempt to introduce the Club to non-members and establish the Club's image.

A reception for new members is scheduled for May 17 in the First Amendment Lounge from 6 to 8 pm.

Leinwand asked about the status of associate members who are on hold. Zremski said there are 44, about half the number of last year because the active membership has increased.

Dunham moved approval of 21 new members:

Active: Peter Barnes, bureau chief, Hearst Argyle Television; Chris Berry, president/general manager, WMAL; David McWhinny, BBC video editor.

Active under 34: Rochelle Jackson, Bureau of National Affairs legal editor.

Active under 30: Kimberly Johnson, associate editor, McGraw-Hill Publishing.

Provisional under 30: Ashley Roque, editor/staff writer, Georgetown Media Group.

Active non-resident: Jeanne Phillips, "Dear Abby" columnist; Cara Rotondaro, Chatham Record reporter.

Graduate student: Mobahre Matinyi, Johns Hopkins University.

Affiliate: Christopher Guidette, assistant vice president of corporate communication, ISP; Jan Peek, counselor, Royal Netherlands Embassy; Jeanne Sackler, director of public affairs for Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

Affiliate under 34: Stephanie Aronson, senior director of public strategies, PBS.

Associate: George Barrow IV, private mortgage/financial, Wells Fargo; Elaine Cambi, editor of AIAA; Jill Herzog, executive vice president of Social & Health Services, LTD.

Associate under 34: Sarah Walpole, marketing specialist at NISH.

Active re-instatement: Mark Willen, Kiplinger Washington senior editor.

Associate reinstatement: Ronald Baumgarten Jr., attorney at Covington & Burling; Fred Rotondaro, chair,

consulting group, Tiber Potomac; Evelyn Chapman Witt, freelancer.

Zremski moved and the board approved retired dues status for 2 members and non-dues status for 1.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Salant suggested all new members get invited to sit at the head table at an NPC luncheon.

Salant said the Club's finances have turned the corner: catering bookings are up from budget. He moved and the board approved authorizing an extension of the line of credit from March 31 to June 30.

Salant moved and the board approved authorizing Bloom to offer a lease to the Eric Friedheim Library, increasing the rent from \$7,000 a year to \$9,000, based on inflation, and the administrative fee at \$12,000, up from \$10,000. The lease must also be approved by the library board.

Donnelly assumed the chair.

Salant said the board approved his motion in December asking Bloom to determine whether people who pay by credit card are more likely to retain their memberships. He said the results show that it costs the Club more to administer credit card payments than checks and that people are no more likely to renew their memberships. He said it appears to him that the credit card default policy is not one the board needs to pursue.

### **GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

Bloom said the first photo album of NPC members is complete. He said every time Bachrach Photographers completes 50 photos, another album will be released. He said 79 people had their pictures taken; 30 purchased 0copies from Bachrach at a 30% discount.

Bloom said the agreement with Washington Sports Clubs is in effect. He said some promo material is still to come and that he provided information to the Record. He said WSC is interested in playing a role in the 5K. Dunham said he has already received some thank-yous from young members for the new arrangement with WSC. Smith noted that for every 15 memberships, the Club will receive a free membership, so the board should think about how to use them. Bloom asked the board to reiterate that the WSC arrangement is not an effort to eliminate the fitness center, and Smith said the Record article should take note of that. Donnelly said he would see to a Record item with that information included.

Bloom said sales are increasing in both restaurants. Eleven percent of Fourth Estate customers in February were non-members. He said the Washington Post's restaurant critic ate at the Fourth Estate and planned a report for the March 28 Post magazine.

Bloom said almost every night during the Unity conference in August, the Club is the venue for a group sponsoring an event for Unity. He recommended the Club schedule a timely Luncheon speaker for that period. Zremski said material about the Club, guest memberships and invitations to join will be in the Unity packets. He said Bloom's recommendation for a Luncheon speaker was a good one because the Unity conference is not scheduling lunches.

Bloom noted it is C-SPAN's 25th anniversary and wondered whether the board has any plans for recognizing the anniversary.

Donnelly asked what accounted for the spike in restaurant revenue in November. Bloom said it was the Book Fair. Donnelly also asked whether there was any talk about getting the Fourth Estate listed in the Zagat review. Bloom said not at this point.

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Cherry said the staff is doing a great job on Friday nights checking membership cards. She said he would be a good gesture for board members to sign in voluntarily. Bloom said the sponsors of a number of internship programs were called and asked to convey to the interns that they should be respectful of the Club and strongly suggesting they monitor how many guests they bring to taco night. Donnelly asked whether there needs to be any board action on the taco night/intern situation. No one spoke up.

### **COMMITTEE AND BOARD LIAISON REPORTS**

Smith said the House Committee is doing its annual tour of the archives on April 5 and that board members are invited.

She said the exhibits subcommittee is working on a list of exhibits for the year.

Dunham said judging is approaching for the NPC awards and asked board members to let him or Chairwoman Lolita Baldor know if they want to judge.

He said the Travel Committee has 29 participants for the trip to China, the gourmet trip to Ireland was canceled due to low turnout, the NYC trip is Sept. 17 to 19 to see Thoroughly Modern Millie, cost \$530.

He said the 5K Committee is pushing for sponsorships and hopes to raise enough money for 2 scholarships.

Salant said softball begins in April, and the NPC will have a team. He suggested the Club have a family picnic in conjunction with one of the games.

Bynum said the Events Committee is working on a holiday bazaar, the St. Patrick's Day dinner sold out; and karaoke night is March 25.

Bastarache said he suggested to the Events Committee that congressional, White House and military nights be revived.

Bethel said the first round of scholarship judging was completed with further winnowing ahead and the final choice March 27. She said Chairwoman Kathy Kiely asked that the committee be allowed to draft a letter to the finalists who are not chosen and invite them to be part of an NPC database that members and employers could tap into for prospective employees.

She said the Forums Committee has several panels scheduled but was concerned by requests to do some program that appeared to be more narrow than the committee's mission. She said the committee needs some new members.

Leinwand said the last Pub Quiz sponsored by the Young Members Committee had 17 teams.

Cherry said the Speakers Committee has lined up excellent speakers.

Donnelly said the Freedom of the Press Committee wrote to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld in December about a new policy of withholding unclassified material. He said the response was lame. The committee is unsure what its next step is. He said the committee co-sponsored the annual release of press repression that is done yearly by the Committee to Protect Journalists. He said the committee is also involved in a group that advocates making government records available electronically.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

Donnelly asked whether any board member wants to revisit the opt-out policy for receiving the Record electronically. Bastarache said Publications Committee members fear that if people who don't use email have to fill out a form, many people will miss out. He said the committee thinks the easiest thing to do is to let people request emailed Records. Dunham said if the Record staff feels strongly about that, the Record editor should come talk to the board. Zremski said it was his understanding that if the Club does not have an email address for someone, he or she will receive the Record in print and through the mail. (The board consensus was that his understanding is correct.) Cherry said Publications Committee chairman Dick Schalk understands that at some point the board will make a decision, it will appear in the Record. She said some people feel they aren't asking for

a change in the status quo yet have to do something to keep things the way they are. She said she would not choose to receive the Record by email. Bethel said she doesn't think she should have to do something to get the Record in printed form. She said the board needs to do a better job of selling the idea to members. Salant said on a few people felt strongly enough about the opt-out policy to attend the general membership meeting. He said if people really don't care whether they receive the Record in print or by email, the board should do what's best for the Club. Leinwand said people will be asked whether they want a link or a pdf file; people whose computers can handle a pdf file won't get one. She said if the member's email address is inactive or if the member doesn't have an email address, the computer program will recognize that and generate a list of people who will receive the Record in print. Bivins said turnout at the general membership meeting is not a good barometer of how many people don't want the Record in email, and he said he doesn't think the board should make any further decisions until someone from the Record attends a board meeting. Cherry said Tom Glad has received requests from 450 people to continue to receive the Record in print. Zremski said he is concerned that there still exists an element of uncertainty and confusion that the board might change a policy that it has already set. He asked how many months that uncertainty will be allowed to exist. Donnelly noted that the straw vote at the general membership meeting was not binding and that at some point the board will have to be firm. He said he will bring it up next month. He said some technical issues are unresolved and that it's probably a month or more before the task force will be able to brief the board. Leinwand said there is only one technical issue remaining: in what form the printer will send the electronic file. Dunham said it's very important to have the Publications Committee represented at the next meeting. Donnelly said he will formally invite the committee, and the board will vote in April. Bivins said there should only be a vote if there is a motion to change the policy, because the board has already voted to adopt an opt-out policy. Zremski noted that at some point there will be budgetary implications because the budget was prepared taking into account the anticipated savings of having an electronic Record. Donnelly said a related issue is that the straw poll at the general membership meeting asked the board to consider accepting advertising in the Record. He said Richard Sammon, chairman of the task force, some members have concerns and are opposed to the idea. Some concerns are that it might appear that the Club endorses the views of a group that advertises in the Record, that it might change the mailing code the Record uses and therefore increase the cost and whether advertising would affect the space available for Club news. Dunham said the board would have to carefully consider how to set the standards for ads. Donnelly said there might be a significant workload issue. Salant moved that the task force should be asked to consider the issue and make recommendations and revenue predictions. Bethel said perhaps the Record should do a special advertising section twice a year. It was noted that that is the function the Membership Directory serves. Smith said she is reluctant to ask the task force to research something if there isn't support on the board for allowing ads in the Record. Salant said there may be something the board hasn't thought of. Bethel said if Unity wanted to buy a \$500 ad, the Club should consider it. She said ethics is not her main concern. But she said if the task force already has too many responsibilities, perhaps some other group should look into it. Bethel offered a friendly amendment, accepted by Salant and seconded by Dunham, that the issue be assigned to a task force. Bivins said a Record task force already exists. The motion was approved with support from Cherry, Donnelly, Dunham, Salant, Bethel. Opposition from Smith, Zremski and Leinwand.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Smith asked Bloom to make it his policy to inform the board of staff departures. He said he would. Bloom said when the board set the staff holidays for 2004, it was based on federal holidays. Now, however, the federal government has changed its list for 2004 to make Dec. 31 the New Year's holiday. He said the union contract requires the Club to recognize federal holidays. If the Club is open on Dec. 31, union members must be informed and would be paid double time. The board discussed the situation, taking into account whether there would be a Club party and how much it would cost to pay staff double time. Bivins asked whether the union

members would agree to trade Dec. 31 for another day. Zremski said being closed on New Year's Eve would be disappointment to a small but important group of members. He moved and the board approved asking Bloom to negotiate with the union so the Club can remain open on New Year's Eve.

Salant said the Membership Director would be more useful if members were also grouped under the states and issues they cover. Zremski said that was a good idea but the letters are about to go out to update information for inclusion in next year's directory. Cherry asked whether the on-line directory could be arranged that way. Bloom noted that the on-line version is available to members only. Zremski said the Club could consider doing a CD ROM version that would be sortable. Salant said he would explore the various ideas with Zremski and the Club staff.

Donnelly asked for suggestions on how to commemorate the 25th anniversary of C-SPAN. Bloom suggested a plaque. Donnelly asked Bloom to look into it.

Cherry commended Bethel for recruiting "Dear Abby" columnist Jeanne Philips as a member. She said the President's Club reception will be April 1.

Smith moved and the Board approved the minutes of the February meeting.

The next meeting is April 19, 2004

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm

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