

MEETING OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB BOARD OF GOVERNORS

March 16, 2009

Myron Belkind, Secretary

Chair Jennifer Sergent called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. Present were President Donna Leinwand, Vice President Alan Bjerga, Secretary Myron Belkind, Treasurer Keith Hill, Membership Secretary Mark Hamrick, Governors Shawn Bullard, John Donnelly, Jennifer Sergent, Mike Soraghan, Theresa Werner, and former president Sylvia Smith. Also General Manager Bill McCarren, Director of Membership Sarahanne Driggs and Director of Membership Recruitment Jane Middleton. Absent were Governors Dipka Bhambhani, Jessica Brady and John Hughes.

Belkind moved and the Board approved the minutes of the Feb. 23 meeting.

MEMBERSHIP

On the recommendation of Membership Secretary Mark Hamrick, the Board approved the application of 32 members (see list at end of Minutes), retired status for 25 members and a six-month dues waiver for 5 members.

Against the backdrop of the continuing economic recession in general and the specific job losses in the media, Hamrick said every effort was being made to maintain a stable membership for the Club so that any cancellations are offset or more than made up by new member applications throughout the year. He said he saw “no particular reason for alarm” on the membership front at this time and pointed out that 152 new member applications had so far been approved in 2009, through March, and that total members as of March 2009 were 3,662 compared to 3,661 in March 2008.

Board members offered a number of suggestions for retaining and increasing membership through an e-mail exchange in advance of the formal Board meeting, as follows:

Alan Bjerga: How can we as Board members help in reaching out to members? All ideas are welcomed.

Dipka Bhambhani: We have focused on recruitment and we've done well, but retaining our members and engaging them is of utmost importance now if we don't want to lose more members.

Keith Hill: Board members and officers (including me) need to do better at member outreach, particularly talking to members one on one when the opportunity arises to find out their concerns and ideas. But, that's half of the equation. The other half, which we cannot control, is the willingness of members to learn about and use those benefits. If we do a better communications job, I would hope that more members would take advantage of the benefits the club has to offer.

Sylvia Smith: I think Keith makes some good points. I think we can do a better job of telling folks what they get for their memberships, both in tangible and intangible bennies. There are probably multiple ways to communicate them, and one is the Wire. Having suggested it, I know I ought to step up and say I will compile the items. But I can't take on the whole project. If, however, everyone on this list sent me 5 items that would fit nicely into this listing -- and perhaps we could ask the senior staff to help as well -- I certainly could choose one a week to run in the Wire.

Mike Soraghan: Two late thoughts: First, should we do more "care and feeding" of the editors and executives of publications that pay all or a lot of their employees' membership costs? Also, are there ways to advertise to prospective members which employers pay a portion of their dues? Most of my co-workers don't know that they can get the company to pay a portion. Second, I was at a meeting the other day in which a committee was talking about their "journalists' survival camp." They were talking about putting out the brochures from all the places we get discounts (health club, State Department credit union) at a table at the event. Should we have them on display more at the Club, maybe in the lobby or at the entrance to the Reliable Source? Also, we should look at ways to improve the computer software for accounting purposes so that membership dues can be broken out from house account details on invoices.

Theresa Werner: We do a good job recruiting, but now we need to work on retention.

Keith Hill: Have we ever invited executive editors/publishers to lunch the same way we invite new members? I know we'd have some scheduling issues, but it could be worth a shot...I'm a Turner Classic Movie fanatic. Every August, they do "Summer Under the Stars." For the whole month, they take each day and show one actor's pictures (e.g.--- on the first, they show all Bogart movies, on the second, all Ingrid Bergman movies, etc.). We could take one month and say on one day out of that month we will invite any executive editor/publisher of a domestic publication (be they members or not) to lunch (or dinner) with a board member or officer (or several, depending on the response). On another day that month, we invite foreign editors/publishers in the city. We can extend it to partners of PR firms. Just a thought.

Donna Leinwand thanked everyone for "so many great suggestions" via their e-mails and said they all would be considered.

THE WIRE

Former President Sylvia Smith urged Board Liaisons to encourage their committee chairs to use the Wire to announce meetings of interest to the Club at large, to revise initial announcements when sending in reminders and, most importantly, to send in articles and pictures on committee events especially those featuring guest speakers or that take place away from the Club such as Embassy Nights.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

Photography and International Correspondents: Plans are proceeding for the two committees to co-sponsor a photo exhibit on "Faces of South Asia," featuring photography by NPC member Michael Foley, June 1-12. The opening of the exhibit on Monday, June 1, will coincide with the annual International Membership Recruitment Reception in the evening.

Photography: There was a meeting on March 9 of more than 10 new Club members who have volunteered to take photos of Club events and make them available for immediate use on the Club's Web site and for the Wire. President Leinwand welcomed the new group and said she was receiving very favorable feedback from Members about the success of the new photo coverage arrangements that enabled the Club to offer same-day coverage of events both for the Wire and the Club's Web site. Photo assignments are being coordinated by Photography Committee Chair Darlene Shields and Archivist Marlene Justsen. Upcoming speakers for the Photography Committee: Noel St. John, a committee member, on use of metadata, March 25, and Sharon Farmer, former director of the White House Photographer Office, April 29.

International Correspondents: For its April 14 meeting, former NPC President Sylvia Smith will give a presentation on covering Congress, focusing on how DC-based foreign correspondents can cover Congress even if they do not have direct access to Senators and Members of the House. There was a very successful South African Embassy Night on March 12 arranged through Nadira Bayat, the embassy's public diplomacy counselor who is a new member of the Club, with 170 Club members and guests attending. Other upcoming events: May 12, discussion the Iranian elections in June; June 1, Fifth Annual International Membership Recruitment reception

Communications and Marketing: The committee's Connections Task Force met to map out plans for this series of four programs designed to improve communication and understanding between the club's Active and Associate/Affiliate members. Programs targeted toward Associate/Affiliate members: We need more members to step forward if we want to swing this task force into action. The idea behind it: In April 2007, the committee sponsored "Connecting Reporters and Sources: The Electronic Beat," a half-day event that included two panels and a mini-media training session in the Club's Broadcast Operations Center. We plan to revive this in 2009. Archiving our programs: David Umansky raised the idea of videotaping our programs as a means of providing a benefit for non-resident members. The committee will brainstorm, then organize, ideas to overcome budget limitations.

5K: Planning is proceeding very well for this year's race, tentatively scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 12.

Newsmakers: Through March 14, there were a total of 12 Newsmakers held since the beginning of the year.

Freedom of the Press: The Press Freedom Committee issued a press release on PR Wire and an announcement in the Record and the Wire about a new series of classes that the National Press Club is sponsoring with the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. The classes, open first to NPC members and then to all professional journalists if space permits, aim to give reporters a better understanding of legal issues that affect journalists. The classes, spearheaded by the chair of the training subcommittee, Cori Zarek, are free to members and cost \$10 for non-members. The first class will take place in the Library Classroom this Wednesday at 10 a.m., timed to coincide with Sunshine Week. It will explore the basis of federal and state freedom of information laws, including the types of records a journalist can expect to get and good stories that have emerged from records requests. It also will look at recent changes to the federal FOIA and how the Obama administration appears to be treating government transparency issues generally. The second class, scheduled for April 21 at 6pm, will address specific considerations to keep in mind when reporting on business or financial issues, such as products, bankruptcy, markets, scandals or consumer issues. The class will examine cases, such as the libel case filed by Texas cattlemen against Oprah Winfrey and the case filed by Suzuki against Consumer Reports, to see how courts have interpreted the law as applied to the facts of those cases. Each monthly class will address a different subject area and will be taught by media attorneys and journalists who are experts in the fields covered. Other topics include: copyright issues, access to court records, access to electronic communications, protecting anonymity, legal aspects of sports credentialing and the phenomenon of secret cases and courts.

Book and Author: The following events have been scheduled:
April 7, 6:30 p.m. -- Paul Dickson, *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary*, and Allen Barra, *Yogi Berra: Eternal Yankee*
April 28, Chris Matthews, *The Hardball Handbook: How to Win at Life*
June 3, 6:30 p.m. -- Michael Connelly, *The Scarecrow*
June 16, 6:30 p.m. -- David Ignatius, *The Increment*

History Committee: Two major events planned for April 30.
1.) Owls Spring Hoot, April 30 -- We're working with the Owls to organize the Hoot, including a 20-30 panel discussion featuring four Owls who were Club presidents and were responsible for creating the Owls committee. Young Members Committee will be helping us out with promoting the event among our younger members (a group of YMs are planning to attend the event). It is very important to get YMs involved with this event.
2.) Phototagging event with the Owls in the 4th floor BOC, April 30, 4-6 pm before the Hoot. Just like last year, we'll invite the Owls to help identify old photos. This will be a fundraiser event sponsored by the History Committee for Owls.

Events: The Events committee is meeting later March to discuss upcoming film events and to put final touches on "Commedia dell Media," a standup comedy night at the NPC on Friday, April 3. The committee is also bringing in Alice Rivlin, the first director of the Congressional Budget Office and a member of the New York Stock Exchange Board of Directors, as part of its continuing business breakfast series on April 3.

Speakers: Upcoming luncheon speakers are Alma J. Powell, national chair of America's Promise Alliance, April 1; Marti Ahtisaari, 2008 Nobel Peace Prize Winner, April 7; Douglas Shulman, IRS Commissioner, April 13; Fran Drescher, U.S. State Department's Special Envoy for Women's Health, April 14; Dominique Strauss-Kahn, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, 2:30pm April 16.

Broadcast: Attendance at the last two meetings has been extremely good, indicating that enthusiasm for the group's work is strong. This includes several new members who have stepped forward. The committee is continuing to work on the possibility of having a local radio outlet air "From The National Press Club". There is some progress being made. Committee Chair Ken Mellgren calls the conversations "encouraging". One issue that may need to be considered is whether we should copyright these broadcasts, something that hasn't been done before (as far as we know). He is working on an exhibit for the display case in the lobby called "Tools of the Trade", which would feature historic journalism artifacts. The committee is also looking at an expansion of subcommittees.

Travel: Trips are planned to Costa Rica April 22-30, Baltic Cruise July 12-22, Adriatic Cruise Aug. 2-9, Malta and Tunisia Nov. 11-22, and Madrid, Moscow or Paris for Martin Luther King's birthday weekend, Jan. 13-18 2010. A trip also is planned to Harper's Ferry in cooperation with the Civil War Trust at a date to be announced. Travel Committee also is looking for less expensive overseas trips in view of the economy.

Professional Development: The committee's biggest event to date will be the NPC Journalism Survival Boot Camp on Saturday, May 2. This will include an opening and closing session, specific breakout sessions and a networking luncheon. The committee is focusing on career issues and will have a life coach, financial experts, resume/CV experts, marketing/branding experts, a panel with someone from BNA, Bloomberg, CQ and other places that are still advertising jobs. "Cross asset" help from other committees will be needed. It is hoped the freelance committee will organize a breakout session.

Awards: There were some delays in getting the entry forms out this year because of the changes in the number and type of awards. But the brochures are now printed and on the Web. Joann Booze has sent them to the groups she has previously been in touch with. Awards Chair Larry Lipman will be sending a letter this week to other journalism organizations. The deadline has been moved back to May 1. The awards dinner will be Aug. 3. Larry says he has almost all of the judging panels filled.

Wine and Dinner: The committee had its first meeting last month and laid out a plan for pursuing popular chefs and cookbook authors. The committee has outlined the procedures for booking an event and assigned personalities for committee members to pursue.

Young Members: The committee is co-sponsoring with the Events Committee a St. Patrick's Day Happy Hour in conjunction with the Reliable Source's St. Patrick's Day Buffet. In order to work more actively in the Club on a variety of topics, the Young Members will have Inter-Committee Liaisons (ICLs) to better serve a community of interests.

**General Summary of Reports from President, Treasurer and General Manager
Profit in February; Saturday Expansion Moves Ahead
(From the report to Members circulated In The Wire March 18)**

The National Press Club made a profit for the second consecutive month in February, putting the Club on track in an uncertain economy to meet its goal of \$1 million in our rainy day reserve fund at mid-year. □ The Board of Governors at its meeting March 16 also expressed support to enhance member services by extending restaurant services to include dinner on Saturdays in the Fourth Estate Restaurant.

Brunch would move from the Reliable Source to the newly renovated restaurant on the 13th floor. President Donna Leinwand said that the Saturday brunch service would be improved, with new menu items added, and that prices would remain the same. There also would be bar service in the Winners' Room. □ □

The Board planned to vote formally on the proposal after Leinwand briefs and seeks recommendations from the House Committee on plans for the all-day service in the Fourth Estate. The House Committee was unable to meet as scheduled in March because of the snow storm. (See update, below, on the Board's approval of moving ahead with expanding Saturday operations.)

The Club generated a \$15,000 profit in February, a 130% increase of last year when the Club had a \$47,000 loss. Taken together with the strong January financial results that were the best in the Club's history, the profit for the first two months of 2009 is \$185,341. □ □ Treasurer Keith Hill said the financial outlook is strong for March, but he expects a downturn in business in April. In particular, March is performing well with more than \$750,000 in known business on the books before the month opened and revenue expected to be close to the \$1.3 million budgeted for the month, pointing the Club toward its third consecutive monthly profit and possibly one of its best first quarterly results. □ □

General Manager Bill McCarren said a factor in the strong performance so far this year is that the Club is taking full advantage of the new spaces now available for rental including the new library conference facility and the Fourth Estate itself following its recent renovation. □ □

McCarren also said that wireless capability would be expanded throughout the Club -- on the 4th, 13th and 14th floors -- to provide more services to members and also to have it available in all banqueting and conference rooms, including the ballroom, for the benefit of clients who expect full wireless facilities when they reserve space. He said he is talking to multiple vendors to get the best service for the best price. □ □ He also said that the Club was looking to upgrade the software used for membership services including billings so that accounts can be tracked more efficiently and members can be provided accurate up-to-date information on a timely basis. □

UPDATES ON EXPANDING SATURDAY OPERATIONS

House Committee Votes 5-8 Against Board Recommendation

Following is a report from President Leinwand to the Board of Governors on her meeting with the House Committee on April 6 regarding having Saturday brunch and bar facilities moved to the Fourth Estate, which would stay open for the first time for Saturday dinner:

I presented before the House committee today the Board's recommendation. They were nearly unanimous in their wish to have the Fourth Estate open for dinner. However, they want to keep the Reliable Source bar open, too. Obviously, we cannot afford to do both. So ultimately, the House Committee voted 5 to 8 against recommending favorably the board's proposal to shift all operations to the Fourth Estate. The House Committee vote is a recommendation only and is not binding. I continue to support the proposal for shifting Saturday operations to the Fourth Estate. Member email in favor of the proposal is running about 35 to 1 at this point. I think this is something most of our members want. I vote aye.

President Donna Leinwand then offered the following motion, which was seconded by Board Chair Jennifer Sergent:

I move that the National Press Club conduct its Saturday restaurant and bar operations at the Fourth Estate Restaurant and extend its Saturday restaurant operations to include Saturday night dinner service. Brunch service would begin at 11 a.m. and current Reliable Source brunch menu items and prices shall be retained until subject to regular House Committee review. New menu items and tea service may be added. The Fourth Estate may close at 4 p.m. to prepare for dinner service and will reopen by 6 p.m. The Winners' Room shall be reserved as an exclusive members bar area from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m., unless otherwise directed by the Board of Governors. The Fourth Estate will close for dinner service on Monday nights.

Notice was sent to all Board members via e-mail as required by Article II, Sec. 3 of the bylaws. All board members acknowledged receipt of the e-mail within the 24-hour time period. All board members voted before 10 a.m. Wednesday, April 8, when the voting closed. The final vote was 11-1

Board Members in Favor: Mark Hamrick, Keith Hill, Jessica Brady, John Hughes, John Donnelly, Jennifer Sergent, Theresa Werner, Alan Bjerga, Donna Leinwand, Mke Soraghan, Myron Belkind.

Board Member Against: Dipka Bhambhani.

Comments submitted by board members during the vote on Saturday Operations:

Shawn Bullard: Although not recorded, is it possible to post my strong support on such an important measure so that my peers are aware where I stand in the present as well as in the future? Thanks, Shawn

John Hughes: The proposal before us is to close the Reliable Source on Saturdays and open the Fourth Estate for brunch and evening service the same day. I want to thank Donna, Bill and everyone who was involved in bringing this proposal forward.

I have listened carefully to people making arguments on all sides of this issue. Most everyone is enthusiastic about the Saturday night opening of the Fourth Estate. Many have regret about the Reliable Source closing, including people who don't use the service but like being part of a Club that offers it.

Clearly, the best solution is all of the above. I can envision the time when the Reliable Source and Fourth Estate are open during the day and evening because demand makes it impossible to close any of our services on Saturday. Why should that day be far off?

In the meantime, can we shift Saturday service to the Fourth Estate and seize a wonderful opportunity to be open there on Saturday nights? A long-time supporter of Saturday Reliable Source service told me, "Let's give it a try."

I embrace that spirit and ask all loyal supporters of Saturday hours at the Reliable Source to do the same. We collectively must take our best shot to make this work. That means running a successful restaurant and making the members-only space as inviting and hospitable as possible.

As the board's House Committee liaison, I am in an advantageous position to help. I am asking the House Committee, as the transition moves forward, to let me know directly what we, the board, can do to make this as successful as possible for members. They have my word I will follow up. What I ask in return is their good-faith effort to "give it a try."

If we all put our best effort forward, and the transition is not successful, I will seek changes as part of the normal budget process at the end of the year.

Thank you all so much. I vote aye.

Sylvia Smith (ex-officio): If I had a vote, I would certainly vote aye as well. There will always be people who object to any change or want all options without regard to cost. The board must make the best decision based on member interest, financial well-being and common sense. This motion reflects favorably on all three. I would point out that the NPC has the luxury of making decisions such as this that, in the unlikely event of being shown to be in error in the months ahead, can be reversed with little problem.

Alan Bjerga: I think it's important to keep in mind that actually, we **can** afford to keep the Reliable Source as well as the Fourth Estate open on Saturdays. We also can afford a weekly printed Record, a printed member directory and tickets for ourselves to black-tie dinners. We choose not to do these things because we have overarching goals that have been endorsed by our members and by the board -- to run a responsible business operation and build our reserve funds while expanding member service. That's why I'm voting for the motion. Going against the wishes of a member committee that oversees an area of club operations isn't something to take lightly. It's important to remember two things: First, the measure being proposed does reflect an effort to honor their concerns -- two years ago several board members were in favor of closing the club on Saturday completely, and it was from an effort to seek middle ground that this solution was proposed. Second, while the board acts on the recommendations of committees, that is not the same as simply following the wants of each one, an error that really would make us run out of money. The board's role is to respect member wishes while looking at the club as a whole and making tough choices on resource allocation, especially when there are strong arguments and counter-arguments on each side of an issue. This is one of those tough choices. I want to thank Donna and her predecessors for their work on this issue. I also want to thank the Saturday task force and the House Committee for the work they've done to keep Saturday alive at the club. And I want to remind everyone that the end result of this is **added** service, greater revenue potential and a chance to reach out to potential new members. That covers quite a lot of what we were elected to do.

Myron Belkind: I vote yes, for the over-all well-being of the Club and its members.

Mark Hamrick: I agree that we must move ahead. It might have been another thing if the R.S. had been seeing a steady stream of Saturday business. Members have voted with their feet by staying away. I believe we will provide an opportunity for greater value with the Saturday-only shift to the Fourth Estate.

Dipka Bhambhani said in an e-mail to the Board of Governors prior to its March 16 meeting, which she could not attend, that she "liked the proposal" for dinner to be served in the Fourth Estate on Saturdays "but only if it allows the Reliable Source bar area to remain open on Saturdays."

Closing Comments on New Photo Coverage Arrangements: Former President Sylvia Smith complimented President Leinwand for her "masterful handling" of bringing about the new changes in photo coverage of Cub events involving an expansion in the number of Club members who have volunteered to take photographs and offer their photos immediately to the Club's Website, the NPC Wire and to the members via same-day downloads. The Board unanimously supported Smith's comments.

The Board approved the following dates of forthcoming meetings:

--Next Board of Governors Meeting: 6:30pm, Monday, April 20

--Next General Membership Meeting: Noon, Friday, May 8

The March 16 meeting was adjourned at 8:33pm.

NEW MEMBER APPLICATIONS APPROVED

The Board also approved by the application of 32 new members:

Active

Alf Ole Ask – Aftenposten, Correspondent; Roman A. Holton - Ascension Media Group, LLC, President, CEO; Zoltan Mikes - World Business, Press Online News, Sr. Editor; Diana Schwaeble - American Metal Market, Washington Correspondent

Active Reinstatement

Sharafat Hussain – DCTV, Producer

Active Non-Resident

Erickson Samuel Blakney – Freelance, Journalist; Kayleigh Kulp - Southern Maryland Newspapers/The Maryland Independent, Regional Business Reporter; Julia Myers-Bartley - Freelance, KSNT - 27 News, MSNBC, Former Reporter, Booking Producer; Nancy Ramsey - Sports Illustrated, Freelance; Christina M. Wong - CBC Radio, Independent Producer of Radio Documentaries

Active Under 35

Robert Iafolla - Los Angeles Daily Journal, Staff Writer; Jennifer Liberto - CNN Money, Sr. Writer of Financial News

Active Under 30

Dagmar Benesova - World Business Press Online News, Editor, Reporter; Melisa Cabo - Telam S.E., Correspondent; Caroline Laurin - Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Associate Producer; Reuben Miller - Deal Reporter of Financial Times, Regulatory & Legislative Correspondent

Affiliate

Joseph A. Fredericks - U.S. Agency for International Development, Director, Public Information; Lee Jackson - Defense Transportation Journal, Writer; Jacqui Porth - U.S. State Department, America.gov, Writer/Editor

Affiliate Under 35

Douglas James Lundgren - Senior Executives Association, Editor, Writer - ACTION Newsletter; Eric Mittenthol - International Food Information Council, Director, Media Relations; Fiona Shanks – USAID, Head of Information Support/ Public Information Officer

Associate

Jessica R. Herrera-Flannigan - Monument Policy Group, Partner; Perry Pidgeon Hooks - Hooks Book Events, President, Co-owner; Lloyd V. Seested, III - Citigroup - Smith Barney, Consultant; Bruce Sorensen - W Washington DC, Director of Sales & Marketing; Jake Stafford - Meridian International Center, Director of Communications & External Affairs

Associate Under 35

Caitlin Williams - HMC Architects, P.R. Consultant

Student

Steven Patrick Ercolani - Rutgers University, Student; Shakirah Hill - Georgetown University, Student; Mu Li - University of Missouri School of Journalism, Student; Gregory Perreault - Georgetown University Washington Journalism Center, Student