

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB  
Nov. 17, 2008  
Maureen Groppe, Secretary**

Chairman Keith Hill called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. Present were President Sylvia Smith, Vice President Donna Leinwand, Membership Secretary Mark Hamrick, Secretary Maureen Groppe, Vice Chairman John Donnelly, former president Jerry Zremski and Governors John Hughes, Lou Priebe, Gayela Bynum, and Jennifer Sergent. Also General Manager Bill McCarren, Director of Membership Sarahanne Driggs and member Jessica Brady.

**BOARD AND COMMITTEE LIASON REPORTS**

Freedom of the Press: Smith issued a statement condemning the violent deaths of journalists in Mexico and Pakistan.

Broadcast: The XM program continues, despite budget cuts after the merger of XM and Sirius. The executive producer is proposing ways to widen distribution.

Communications and Marketing: Prepared a list of local high schools for mailings to encourage student attendance at Club luncheons. Promotion of the forums continues.

History: Prepared a program on Ike Pappas for XM; vetting the 2009 oral history list; purchased a transcription machine for transcribing oral histories; overseeing the display of front-page newspaper mats on the 14th floor; preparing a February exhibit on Abraham Lincoln.

Travel: Spaces remain for the Dublin trip. Possible destinations for 2010 include South Africa, China, Buenos Aires, Laos, France and Scotland.

4th Estate Dinner: The dinner has raised twice the \$25,000 fundraising goal.

Strategic Planning: Working on chapter drafts received from committees. Hoping to finish plan by year's end.

Speakers: The remaining luncheons for the year include the head of Conoco Phillips and the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church.

Newsmakers: Held 68 newsmakers so far. Upcoming newsmakers include House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and a member of the Kazakhstan parliament.

International Correspondents: Hosting an international media panel discussion on the presidential election results and a Cyprus Embassy night.

Book and Author: The Book Fair is Nov. 18.

**Groppe moved and the board approved the minutes of the October meeting.**

**Groppe moved and the board approved giving her the authority to appoint this year's election board.**

**Groppe moved and the board approved giving management permission to rent out part of the 4th Estate for private evening events while keeping restaurant service in the Winner's Room. The management will report back to the board in six months on any issues with that arrangement.**

Smith said that the renovations of the restaurant included changing the second entrance to the Winner's Room so it does not go through the kitchen. This allows the Club to have a nicer entrance for either restaurant goers, if the rest of the 4th Estate is rented, or for private parties renting the Winner's Room.

Zremski asked McCarren how often he expects to rent out most of the restaurant. McCarren said he's not certain, but probably not often.

#### MEMBERSHIP

**Hamrick moved and the board approved the applications of 28 members.** Hamrick said that's a strong number considering the state of the economy in general and of the journalism industry in particular.

**Hamrick moved and the board approved retired dues status for two members.**

Hamrick said Driggs and McCarren suggested the Club continue the centennial year waiver of initiation fees through the April 6 anniversary. No one objected to the idea, which may be pursued by the next president

#### TREASURER'S REPORT

Leinwand said the 2009 budget planning hasn't changed much since the board approved the budget assumptions. She asked whether the board wanted to commit to buying tickets for the National Press Foundation and Washington Press Foundation annual dinners.

Smith said she did not get an overwhelming response when the Club asked other journalism organizations to support the Club's centennial. She said the \$2,500 or \$3,500 the Club spends buying a table at these dinners could be better spent on training, outreach or development of the Club and its members. Smith asked if anyone felt strongly that the Club should continue to buy tables. No one did.

#### GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

McCarren said October was the Club's third best month this year. Both revenue and profit were higher than projected. They were lower than last year's but would not have been if the Fourth Estate had not been closed for renovation. McCarren projects the Club will end the year with a \$400,000 profit, which would be an 85 percent increase from last year. Business for early 2009 looks good but is hard to project after the first few months.

**Smith moved and the board approved going into executive session to discuss union matters.**

**Smith moved and the board approved leaving executive session.**

Hamrick asked whether the Saturday business at the Reliable Source supports keeping it open. (The number of Saturday covers since Sept. 6 were 4, 12, 18, 5, 6, and 8.) He said the board has discussed the issue for years and "the feet have voted and they're at home." Sergent agreed. Zremski said the numbers show that recent efforts made to improve usage on Saturdays was an artificial construct that fell apart once the efforts ceased. McCarren said he is still exploring whether it makes sense to replace Saturday service at the Reliable Source with service at the 4th Estate, which would also be open to the public.

McCarren said he and Smith have discussed presidential inauguration activities that could help members cover or enjoy the festivities. While a few members suggested the Club hold its own inauguration party, Smith said she didn't think that's a good idea for several reasons including that members will be busy and the Club will be having an inauguration party for its own president. Other options they are looking at include: serving hot drinks during the day, showing the inaugural events on the big TVs in the Reliable Source, adding kid-friendly items to the menu, and using the library training room as an extra space reporters can file from if all the computers and laptop stations are full.

McCarren asked the board to review the 2009 budget documents and get back to him with questions or comments before the next budget committee meeting. McCarren said the budget projects profits will be up next year for several reasons, including new room rates and new rental space.

#### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Smith said the Nov. 18 ribbon cutting of the Fourth Estate will lead into the Book Fair.

Smith asked board members to send her suggestions for this year's Vivian Award winners.

Smith said member Maria Recio proposed creating the Lee Walczak Award for Political Analysis, in honor of her late husband, a longtime Business Week bureau chief and White House correspondent. The award would be for one year but would become permanent if Recio can raise enough funds to endow it.

**Smith moved and the board approved creating the award for 2009, provided enough money is given the Club to pay for the cash award and the administrative costs.**

Zresmki said the award is a great idea as the Club doesn't have one like it. Donnelly, Leinwand and Bynum agreed.

Smith discussed a number of changes to the existing awards program to address the fact that the program is costing more than the trust fund generates each year. Smith moved that the board set all award amounts at \$500 and direct Smith and McCarren to discuss the ramifications of that with the families that endowed specific awards.

Groppe said she would prefer setting the award amounts at \$750 as \$500 would be a big change for many of the awards and is much lower than other awards given in Washington. Sergent and Donnelly said they also preferred the \$750 level. Smith tabled her motion.

**Smith moved that the board eliminate the cash prize for the two Freedom of the Press awards.** She said they are not given for a specific entry, but for general activities. She said they would be given for honor, the way the 4th Estate Award does not include a cash prize. Zremski said it would not look right for the Club to give a cash prize for animal reporting and not for press freedom activities. He said a \$500 award can mean a lot to a journalist in the Ukraine. **The motion failed. Those voting in favor were Smith, Groppe, Hughes and Hamrick. Those opposed were Hill, Leinwand, Donnelly and Sergent.**

**Smith moved and the board approved consolidating the consumer television and radio categories into one broadcast category.**

**Smith moved and the board approved giving only one online award, instead of two.**

**Smith moved and the board approved giving only one newsletter award, instead of two.**

**Smith moved and the board approved giving only one award aimed at regional reporters. Hughes voted no.** Hughes said former president Jonathan Salant pointed out that regional reporters have been important to the Club. Groppe said the two categories aimed at regional reporters draw by far the most entries from Club members but there is also a non-Press Club award that honors regional reporting. Hamrick and Donnelly said the board should be consistent if it is consolidating other categories. Zremski said the number of regional reporters in Washington is shrinking. Smith said the body-of-work award, which honors versatility, would be the better one to keep as that's a better recognition of the kind of job regional reporters have.

Smith said she has not heard back from Joe Anselmo or former president Rick Dunham about whether another \$50,000 will be raised to cover the full cost of the Dornheim Award.

Smith said she will talk to Ted Rowse about the need to fully cover the costs of the press criticism awards.

Smith said Salant suggested another way to cut costs would be to not give the judges a free meal at the Fourth Estate. Groppe said it's difficult to recruit all the necessary judges and it's a nice gesture to make for the amount of time they put into reading and discussing the entries.

McCarren suggested the Club could stick with the \$500 cash award but give free memberships to nonmember winners as both an extra prize and a recruitment tool. Board members disagreed on whether winners who are already members should get their membership comped and whether the cost of the free

membership should be taken from the trust fund or accounted for in some other way.

Zremski suggested the Club could stay within budget and give out \$750 awards if the consumer newspaper and consumer periodical categories were combined into a single print category. The board could also raise the new entry fee for nonmembers from \$20 to \$25. Groppe said there are nearly as many periodical entries and newspaper entries and it could be difficult for the judges to compare them.

Sergent asked whether the press criticism book award could be eliminated instead. Smith said that decision is up to the award's funder.

**Donnelly moved and the board approved giving \$750 to all award winners, combining the consumer newspaper and periodical categories into a single print/online category, raising the entry fee for nonmembers to \$25, and giving the nonmember winners a complimentary membership for the remainder of the year.**

**Zremski moved and the board approved thanking Smith and Groppe for their research and work on the awards program.**

NEW BUSINESS:

**Hill reported that on Sept. 30, the board approved by email vote a motion by Smith to award honorary membership to Tom Hoy, a former staff photographer for the Washington Star.**

**Hill reported that on Oct. 31, the board approved by email vote a motion by Smith to allow the Club's Norman Rockwell painting to be loaned to the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Mass., for including the museum's exhibit called "Norman Rockwell: Behind the Camera."**

**Groppe moved and the board approved setting the next meeting for Dec. 15.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.