

MEETING OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Nov. 23, 2009

Mike Soraghan, Acting Secretary

- Board Chair Jennifer Sergent called the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

Board members in attendance: President Donna Leinwand, Vice President Alan Bjerga, Treasurer Keith Hill, Dipka Bhambhani, John Donnelly, Theresa Werner, Mike Soraghan, John Hughes, Gayela Bynum, Shawn Bullard and Sylvia Smith (ex-officio)
 - Not attending: Secretary Myron Belkind, Membership Secretary Mark Hamrick, Jessica Brady
 - Staff: Bill McCarren, Sarahanne Driggs

- Minutes from the Oct. 19, 2009 meeting were unanimously approved.

- Jennifer Sergent moved on behalf of Secretary Myron Belkind to appoint five active members, Sylvia Smith, Melissa Charbonneau, Arshad Mahmud, Mark Schoeff and Andrea Stone to serve as the election board in charge of the balloting and counting of votes for the Dec. 11 National Press Club elections. Sylvia Smith is to serve as chair. The motion was agreed to on a voice vote.

- Jennifer Sergent moved passage of the membership applications, which were approved. She also moved approval of applications for retired dues status.
 - The board approved 25 member applications (the list of the new members is at the end of this month's minutes). The total new members so far this year is 393, compared to 397 for the same period last year.
 - Three members were given retired status, and four members were given hardship dues waivers.

- Committee reports:
 - Speakers Committee
Upcoming speakers:
 - Nov. 23: Ambassador Nancy G. Brinker, founding chair of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure (speakers' press conference).
 - Nov. 30: HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco
 - Dec. 4: Joy Zinoman, artistic director and co-founder, Studio Theatre
 - Dec.8: Gary Knell, president and CEO, Sesame Workshop
 - Dec. 14: Karen Mills, administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration

- Book and Author

The 32nd Annual Book Fair on Nov. 17 grossed \$55,000, compared to last year's \$48,000. There was general consensus that the Book Fair was very successful. Top pols, pundits and cultural legends brought a spillover crowd of nearly 1,000 book lovers to the event. Even with a few last-minute cancellations, the Book Fair included a robust lineup of nearly 100 authors, including Ann Coulter, Kinky Friedman, Gwen Ifill, Jim Lehrer, Isabelle Gilles, Ken Auletta, Sen. Barbara Boxer, Rep. Henry Waxman, and Top Chef's Spike and Carla.

"Cousin Brucie" Morrow, member of the Radio Hall of Fame, Broadcasting & Cable's Hall of Fame, and the National Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame, will speak Dec. 10 at 6:30pm about his new book *Rock & Roll...and the Beat Goes On*.

- Newsmakers:

There were eight Newsmaker events in November, for a total of 76 so far this year.

- Travel

The Travel Committee held its annual reception last week on Thursday, Nov. 19. Despite the wet weather, about 40 people attended, and the committee was able to rustle up some additional interest in its upcoming trips.

There was a lot of interest in the Madrid trip during the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. More than 30 have already signed up for that trip. And there are 20 signed up or interested in the Turkey trip. They're finding that February in Cartagena is appealing to many, but they're worried that they need to do more publicize it. They're also worried that it's scheduled so close to the Madrid trip.

The committee is skipping its December meeting and will hold its next meeting on the third Tuesday in January.

- Young Members Committee

The Wine & Spirits Wholesaler Association's State of the Alcohol Industry Briefing and Reception will be Dec. 10 in the Ballroom. Young Members have been invited to attend the WSWA's briefing prior to the association's reception being held in the NPC Ball Room.

Cocktails with Champions, will be Dec. 14 with Steve Roberts
The Israeli Embassy Night has been postponed until further notice.

- Photography Committee

Ron Edmonds presented to the Photography Committee on Oct. 28 a signed print of his trilogy of Pulitzer Prize photos of the 1981 assassination attempt of President Reagan. President Donna Leinwand accepted the photos on behalf of the Club. The photos are on display in a new, expanded Pulitzer section on the wall near the Fourth Estate Restaurant next to a plaque honoring Joseph Pulitzer.

Patrick Greenlee and Zack Brown, representatives of **Shutterstock**, a photo agency, spoke to the Photography Committee on Nov. 18 about buying and selling images, and the founding of Shutterstock, the largest subscription-based stock photo agency in the world. It was launched in 2003, and its library now has more than 8 million images, including video footage.

The committee will conclude its year with its annual luncheon on Dec. 16 when its members will have their own photo competition.
- International Correspondents Committee

The committee had a timely event Nov. 2 on Afghanistan that filled the Conference Rooms with nearly 100 attendees who came to hear Malalai Joya, a women's right activist who was suspended in 2007 from the Afghan Parliament for accusing members of being allied with warlords and drug barons. The committee will conclude its year with its annual brunch at an international restaurant, which will be on Dec. 6 at the Meiwah Restaurant.
- Books & Brunch

"The Ayatollah Begs To Differ: The Paradox of Modern Iran" by Hooman Majd, an Iranian-American writer who is the grandson of an eminent ayatollah and the son of an Iranian diplomat, was the subject of the next Books & Brunch at noon Saturday, Nov. 21, in the Fourth Estate Restaurant.

"Scoop", Evelyn Waugh's classic satirical novel about journalism, will be the subject of Books & Brunch on Saturday, Dec. 19.
- Events Committee

The Events Committee highlighted the past month with its joint Halloween party with the Young Members Committee. It also hosted a Phillips Museum tour. An Israeli embassy night co-sponsored with Young Members fell through, but will be rescheduled. Looking ahead, the committee is hosting "Dinner and a Movie" with "A Streetcar Named Desire" on Dec. 3. The committee also is hosting a panel in December with writers from The Onion. A tour of the Freer Museum is also planned.

- **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Keith Hill delivered his report that the club ended September with revenue of \$1,236,000 and profit of \$259,852. Profit was 101 percent above 2008 and 40 percent over budget. Profit margin was 21 percent.

The club's cash position is about \$951,887, close to \$1 million in profit.

The club reduced both short and long-term debt in October (\$1.2 million long-term and \$200,000 short-term).

The club is on track for \$1 million in profits this year.

The board then engaged in a general discussion about the "Key financial issues for 2010" as part of the budget process. The discussion started with the general poor state of the economy and its lingering effect on club operations. Bill McCarren noted that the economy is doing better, but could still go south. He noted that clients might not be as willing to spend next year because their budgets were set in the particularly lean months of 2009. The board then discussed the seasonal dips in business. Bill McCarren noted that the full benefit of closing the Fourth Estate on Monday nights, allowing more events and catering, will be seen more fully in next year's budget. Dipka Bhambani asked how many times the Fourth Estate has been booked on a Monday night. McCarren said not many, but the bookings bring in about \$4,000, equivalent to several months of restaurant profits. President Leinwand noted that Saturday service in the Fourth Estate is "catching on," noting that on a recent Saturday there were 60 people for brunch and 30 people for dinner and the restaurant was even noisy at times. McCarren noted that people are having dinner at the Fourth Estate before going to the theater.

Alan Bjerga noted the projection that the new profit sharing program will produce gains, and suggested that member service should be part of the criteria for financial rewards for employees. McCarren said it was worth doing, to remind employees that the reason the club exists is because of the members.

- **General Manager's Report**

Bill McCarren introduced the new chef for the Fourth Estate, Susan Delbert. He noted that her hiring had won some local coverage for the Fourth Estate.

Susan Delbert spoke and said she liked that she did not have to "fix something broken" but enhance something that is working. She noted that many people in Washington don't know that the restaurant is open to the public.

Sylvia Smith asked about the practice of sending 10 percent of profits to the Library, which was left out of the budget assumptions. In August, the club sent \$37,500. McCarren said he is trying to encourage a "development environment" in which the library would be more self-sustaining. He said the club gains no tax benefit from sending extra money to the Library.

Jennifer Sergent asked about the budget assumption that states that the "NPC will support the Library by doing 3 major fundraisers in 2010, including the Fourth Estate dinner, the book fair and the 5K run." She asked if that locked the club into holding those events in 2010. Bullard suggested changing "including" to "such as," and President Leinwand said that would be done. She also noted that the budget assumptions are not binding.

Sylvia Smith asked how the club expected to increase revenues so much. McCarren said it would be through better marketing rather than raising prices.

On committee funding, President Leinwand said the Speakers Committee spent less money in 2009 because more luncheon events have been sellouts.

Sylvia Smith asked about the "banquet service charge." McCarren said that money used to go to bonuses and now goes to "the house" and will become part of the profit-sharing plan.

McCarren then asked that any proposed changes be sent to him and Jennifer Sergent.

- **President's Report**

President Leinwand that the Freedom of the Press dinner with Tom Friedman was successful as a fundraiser. She noted that there were only three "comped" tickets. She said it was not a sellout, but raised as much as the event with Christiane Amanpour. The recent wine event raised \$4,300.

Leinwand said the book fair grossed \$55,000 and the SEED Foundation sold all of its books.

Leinwand noted that there have been discussions with Mrs. Friedheim about the travel reporting award, which has been handled by the Library in the past. It has been a lot of work and has not raised money. Leinwand said Mrs. Friedheim has asked for the award to continue. She has agreed to create a \$150,000 endowment for three travel awards (print, broadcast and online). Leinwand said if there was no objection, the travel awards would be added to the regular list of NPC awards. There was no objection.

Leinwand raised the question of whether criminal background checks should be required for those seeking election to the board. She noted that some officers have a fiduciary duty to the club, sign checks and sign tax returns. John Hughes asked what would happen if someone was found to have a criminal record. Leinwand said she did not know. Sylvia Smith said it would need a bylaws change. Leinwand said people would have to agree before a background check could be run. There was also a discussion of what offenses would disqualify someone from the board. Alan Bjerga asked if there was a requirement that members have "good

character." Jessica Brady is researching a good moral character clause for members. Mike Soraghan suggested that all members might be required to disclose serious convictions when they applied. A background check would then show if they'd lied on their applications. Dipka Bhambani asked where the idea came from. Leinwand said it came from realizing that she had a background check done for the club's liquor license, and there is nothing in the rules to cover bad situations. McCarren noted that no large corporation would allow officers with serious criminal convictions. Leinwand asked for volunteers to serve on a task force to look into the matter. Keith Hill and Mike Soraghan volunteered.

- New business
 - Alan Bjerga raised the question of whether the 5K, Book Fair, Fourth Estate are grouped too closely together because they're all late in the year. Jennifer Sergent asked that thoughts and ideas could be sent to Alan and copied to her. They are to be compiled for discussion at the December meeting.
 - Jennifer Sergent raised a question about how many guests are appropriate for a member to bring to Taco Night on Fridays at the Reliable Source. She said one member regularly invites 30 or so people. After someone put the invitation on Facebook, Taco Night was even listed in a local news outlet as an open event for non-members. Sergent asked McCarren to get a brief analysis of what Taco Night is for and what it costs. Bjerga said he'd always understood the limit to be six guests per member. Sylvia Smith said the board had set a policy that the McClendon Room can't be reserved on Friday nights and that was not being observed, which allowed the abuse to continue. Leinwand said she couldn't find a record of that in the minutes. McCarren referenced a discussion of the topic in his monthly report, which noted that it costs about \$600 extra to host Taco Night each Friday. Bullard asked if the guests presented an opportunity to recruit new members. Gayela Bynum suggested a cover charge.
 - Sylvia Smith made a motion that it be explicit policy that the McClendon Room may not be reserved on Friday nights, and that policy should be made clear to management. Leinwand seconded the motion.
 - It was also suggested that it could be reserved if all attendees ordered from the menu. A cover charge was also suggested.
 - Soraghan suggested a friendly amendment that the policy could be waived by the club president to allow for special circumstances. Smith agreed to the amendment and the motion was approved by voice vote.

- The Board then went into executive session.

- The next meeting of the Board was scheduled for Dec. 21, 2009

- The Board adjourned at 9:30pm.

New Member Applications Approved

Active:

Georgie Anne Geyer - Universal Press Syndicate, Columnist; E. Drake Lundell – Kiplinger, Editor; Peer Meinert - German Press Agency – DPA, Correspondent; Amena Husein Saiyid - Platts Inc., Associate Editor; Philippe-Joseph Salazar - University of Cape Town, Professor, Director of Graduate Program in Rhetoric (Media)

Active Non-Resident:

Arline Kaplan, Huntington Beach, CA – Self - Independent Writer, Freelance - Psychiatric Times; Don Philpott, Maitland, FL - Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Editor, International Homeland Security; Mark J. Prendergast, Flushing, NY - St. John's University, Professor of Journalism; J. Alex Tarquinio, New York, NY - Smart Money Magazine, Staff Writer

Active Non-Resident Reinstatement:

Klaus Justsen, St. Helena, SC - Jyllands Posten, U.S. Bureau Chief

Active Under 30:

Audrey Dutton - Source Media/The Bond Buyer, Reporter; Danielle M. George - AHN Media Corp., Sr. Editorial Lead; Courtney P. Thomas - America's Most Wanted/STF Productions, Production Assistant

Provisional Under 30:

Matthew Berger - Inter Press Service, Correspondent; Ryan J. Reilly - Main Justice, Reporter - Justice Department News

Affiliate:

Roberta L. Graham - Office of the Federal Coordinator for Alaska Natural Gas Projects, Special Assistant/Public Affairs; M. Rizvi Hassen - Embassy of Sri Lanka, First Secretary, Media; Janet M. Philips - The White House, White House Photo Archivist

Associate:

Nawal Kamel - The World Bank, Director; Vickie Curd Ladt - Ladts Consulting Services, Inc., President; Robin Leeds - Winning Strategies, LLC, CEO; Deborah Weixl - American Bar Association, Director, Strategic Communications & Planning

Associate Reinstatement:

Patricia McMurray - Quinn Gillespie Associates, Director, Communications

Student:

Millicent Hunter - American University, Student, M.A. Public Communications; Jessica Lihalakha - Howard University, Student