

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING OF THE NATIONAL
PRESS CLUB

Oct. 3, 2008

JOHN HUGHES, NPC BOARD OF GOVERNORS

President Sylvia Smith called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. About 50 members were in attendance.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Smith thanked Vice President Donna Leinwand for hosting today's speakers luncheon.

Smith discussed the Club's focus on training programs, including the Reporters Without Newsrooms project.

Smith updated the members on the status of two renovation projects. The upgrades to the Library are complete. The cost of the renovation was paid through the Eric Friedheim bequest. The Fourth Estate Restaurant renovation has run into some humps and is taking longer and costing more. New expected open date is Oct 25.

Smith discussed Club communication efforts. She said the Wire has had excellent early reviews from Club members who say they appreciate being kept up to date on events; from committee chairs who are glad to have another venue to promote their events and to issue reminders about upcoming programs; and from members who say they are glad to receive fewer emails from the Club. The Record continues to be printed but has been rescheduled to twice a month because of lack of volunteer resources.

Smith reported that the upcoming Fourth Estate Award Dinner is sold out, or will be, with about 350 people versus about 120 at last year's event. The event is now a fundraiser to support the library, and that has attracted some sponsors.

Smith discussed the upcoming election, which is Dec 12, for five officer positions, two three-year terms and one two-year term for the non-voting seat. Nominating petitions are due Nov 14 and nominations open Oct. 13.

Smith reported on the new Press Club placemats, the creation of the new Freelance Committee, the recognition for the Club's employees of the month and the upcoming NPC Centennial Forums event in Maryland.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Smith reported that there are 3,608 members of Oct 1, compared to 3,550 same time last year. The Club recruited 368 new members and lost fewer members through resignations, suspensions and deaths.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Alan Bjerga reported that profit for the year going into October is \$215,738, compared with about \$24,000 last year. Club employees deserve some of the credit for the improvement as many took voluntary furloughs in August. He said the board's budget assumptions for the coming year call for a reserve of one month's expenses as of July 1, 2009. He discussed a proposed dues increase of \$1 per member per month for 2009 but held off on membership discussion of the proposal until it is formally made later in the meeting.

Member Jonathan Salant asked if members paying dues monthly rather than twice a year has helped membership retention. Bjerga said the change has helped cash flow and that he wouldn't be surprised if it helped retention. Smith said last year before the monthly dues were implemented there were 328 suspensions and this year there are 141, so that it has helped.

OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

Bjerga proposed a dues increase of \$1 per month per member each month, or \$12 per year. The motion was seconded by several members.

The motion was discussed.

Marshall Cohen said the economy has taken a serious hit and some members have dropped out because they can no longer afford a membership. He asked if the increase could be voluntary or postponed.

David Schuchat said it is never a good time to raise dues and that the increase was reasonable.

Ron Baygents said he wondered if the increase is big enough. Bjerga reviewed his reason for going with an increase of that size, saying it was reasonable given what is happening in the industry.

Lou Priebe said a Press Club membership is still the best bargain in town and that the requested increase was small for the benefits members get.

Vineeta Anand said every increase hurts when a person is out of a job. She said the Club must do a better job of advertising that it offers "hardship" dues rebates for members going through financial difficulties.

One member asked if members would get a \$25 rebate since the cost of subscribing to the Record is \$50 per year and the number of times it is being published is being cut in half. Smith said the \$50 isn't an accurate cost of what

the Record costs to produce or what members pay for it and that no rebate would be forthcoming.

Gerry Bastarache called for the quorum.

Smith said a number of 75 active members must be present in order to achieve a quorum to vote on the proposed dues increase. Bjerga counted 28. No quorum was present and therefore no vote was taken.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1 p.m. The next meeting is Jan. 16, 2009.