

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB  
OCT. 12, 2007  
SYLVIA SMITH, NPC SECRETARY

President Jerry Zremski called the meeting to order at 12:20 p.m. About 60 members were in attendance.

The minutes of the May meeting were approved.

Zremski introduced the Club's new general manager, Bill McCarren.

#### MEMBERSHIP

Membership Secretary Mark Hamrick reported that membership is down slightly from 2006, but there are reasons for optimism. He noted that these are challenging times for media businesses, leading people to question whether they will have long-term employment in the industry. He said the Club tries to react, but it is hard to get ahead of industry changes. He said total Club membership is 3,494, down 100 from 2006. Active membership is flat at 1,650 (1,658 in 2006), young members are down slightly, affiliates are 722 (734), associates are 744 (759) and non-resident members are 1,011 (1,013).

He said applications average 50 per month and that year to date applications are above 2006—250 compared to 216. He said that statistic shows that the Club is having a hard time retaining members because there are fewer journalists in the business and fewer bureaus pay their staffs' dues. He said work has to be done on retention, and the Club is working on efforts to revitalize aspects, including the web site.

Hamrick said the board is also working in a shift in how dues are paid. He said it seems mundane but the new approach will help with retention. He said members will be asked to have a credit card on file so their accounts can be charged monthly for dues. He said this will replace the twice-a-year billing. He said unless other arrangements are made, the monthly billing will go into effect Jan. 15, 2008, for all members.

Hamrick said he expects this shift will help with retention. He said that in recent years, the Club was confronted with hundreds of people who dropped out when the large semi-annual dues bill reached them. He said it's anticipated that monthly charges will be more palatable to members' personal financial situations. He said electronic payments are increasingly popular in U.S. culture, and the NPC is looking to reflect that. He said this will allow members to hold on to their money longer.

Treasurer Donna Leinwand noted that any Club member who wants to pay yearly dues in a lump sum may do that.

A Club member asked whether there was consideration given to offering a special deal to former members.

Hamrick said that's a good idea.

#### TREASURER

Leinwand said the Club experienced the usual summer downturn and that the August losses were \$365,000, which was bigger than expected. She

said it include a \$57,000 expense for the centennial, especially the lapel pins and other trinkets. She encouraged members to buy them.

She said that to help stem the losses, the board instructed McCarren to prepare a 2008 budget draft that assumes the Reliable Source will not be open on Saturdays in August. She said that policy has been adopted in the past, but often not until July. She said approving the policy as part of the 2008 budget will allow people to plan.

She said the Club is \$51,000 in the black, year to date. She said September and October are projected to be good income months.

Leinwand said it's been the policy in the past six years to have small dues increases tied to inflation rather than no increases for several years and then a large catch-up increase. She said the treasurer and Budget Committees recommended the board propose a 2 percent dues increase, rounded to the next highest dollar. She said that would put active dues at \$45 a month, up from \$43.92; associate at \$68 a month; and affiliate at \$57 a month.

Leinwand moved that the membership approve the dues increase.

Member Dave Anderson said a 2 percent increase hurts affiliate and associate members disproportionately. He said that since 1968 the dues gap has grown between actives and other categories. He said affiliates and associates account for more than 50 percent of the dues revenue. He said journalist members are not contributing their fair share. He said any dues increase should be a dollar amount.

Member Suzanne Struglinski asked Leinwand whether she knows how many journalists pay their own dues compared to affiliates and associates. Leinwand said she does not.

Anderson suggested the absence of a quorum (which is 75 active members). Zremski counted and confirmed there was no quorum.

Member Rod Kuckro said the board should reconsider a dollar amount increase. Former President Larry Lipman agreed and moved to authorize the board to increase dues by a flat dollar amount, based on the amount of revenue a 2 percent Clubwide increase would raise. He asked Anderson to withdraw his quorum call and pointed out that if the absence of a quorum is suggested, the Club rules allow the board to take action on the matter at its next meeting.

During discussion, Anderson said he would exempt young members from the flat-dollar dues increase approach. Leinwand was asked why 2 percent was chosen; she said it was tied to inflation. Former President Rick Dunham suggested a percentage increase that's capped at the amount actives would pay. Former President Gil Klein noted that there's a lot of downward pressure on journalists' salaries but probably not the same pressure on public relations salaries. Kuckro asked if there is any evidence that a dues increase causes members to resign. Leinwand said the Club has a harder time retaining active members than affiliate/associate members. Lipman said he wanted to change his motion that young members' dues would increase 2 percent but that all others would have a shared dollar amount.

Lipman said because there was no quorum, no action could be taken, but that he thinks the board heard the discussion. Zremski said the budget committee would deal with it and make a recommendation to the board.

#### CENTENNIAL

Lipman, chairman of the Centennial Committee, said lapel pins are on sale for \$5; medallions are on sale for \$10; a 2008 calendar with pictures from Club events is on sale for \$12. All three can be purchased for \$25.

He said *Reliable Sources*, the history of the Club, can be ordered and will be available at the Jan. 4, 2008, airing of the documentary. He said the gala is April 5, 2008. He said attendees will be encouraged to dress in period costume. Otherwise, it's business/cocktail dress. He said there will be two bands, and each committee will be asked to make some kind of showing.

Klein said people who purchase the history book before Oct. 15 will get a discount.

#### PRESIDENT

Zremski said there have been rumors that the bar will be closed. He said that is false. He said there is also a rumor that the library would be closed, which is also not true. He said paper towels will be restored to the restrooms.

Zremski said three library positions - director, research librarian and archivist - are being filled. A webmaster has been hired. He said long-time membership director Julie Schoo will be interim director. He said Schoo has been very involved in professional development programming for years. He said the library's role continues to evolve to more of a training center and journalists ask less and less for research assistance. He said Dunham, as president of the library board, has been moving the library to capitalize more on its tax-exempt status and expand its training programs. He said other journalism groups get \$50,000 grants for journalism training, and the library should do the same.

He said the Club is in the early stages of discussion about moving the research function and training room of the library to the fourth floor in an expanded space connected to the archives. He said the computers would remain somewhere on the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> floors, as would the reading room. He said the 13<sup>th</sup> floor space could be reconfigured to conference space, which would be good in two ways - space for member events and a major revenue producer. He said there would be more details as the months proceed.

Zremski reported that last month the Club had its first video luncheon program with the president of Iran. He said I was very successful, and the Club will repeat that format when it makes sense.

He asked members to fill out the survey they received online to assist with the strategic plan.

A member said there's value in keeping some kind of research presence in the main area of the Club. He said he uses it a lot after hours,

and that the 4<sup>th</sup> floor is out of sight, out of mind. He said keeping the library open later is a real asset.

Zremski said the computers would remain on 13-14 and would be available any time the Club is open, not just when the library is open, from 9 am to 6 pm. He said that more Club members visiting the services on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor would be good for the Club in the long run, especially as more members see and visit the broadcast studio. He said it would produce more synergy.

Another member said it's important to have a comfortable place to sit and read, especially for associate and retired members. He said, however, that the newspaper collection is not what it used to be.

Zremski said there will be a reading room on 13 or 14. Leinwand said she has suggested having a newspaper rack in the Truman Lounge.

Member David Schuchat asked why catering prices aren't raised. McCarren said the Club is at competitive rates. He said as services increase, prices can be pushed up.

#### ELECTION

Smith said the election is Dec. 14; absentee ballots will be available Nov. 13. There are five officer positions on the ballot, two three-year terms; one two-year term; and one two-year term for affiliate/associate members.

#### BYLAWS

Zremski moved and the membership approved the following change to the NPC Bylaws:

Amendment to Article II, Section 3, of the Club bylaws (changes in CAPS):

Section 3. Special Meetings: Special meetings of the Board of Governors or any committee thereof shall be held whenever called by the Chair or the President or the chair of such committee, as the case may be. Notice of the meeting shall be delivered to each Governor or committee member in person or by phone and email not less than 24 hours before the meeting is to be held. GOVERNORS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS MAY WAIVE FURTHER NOTICE BY RESPONDING TO THE EMAIL. The notice shall state the date, time and place of the meeting and the purpose thereof, except as otherwise expressly provided by law or the Club's Constitution or these Bylaws.

Zremski called for questions from the floor.

A member said the gym equipment should be improved to attract and retain young members. He said he was glad to hear a webmaster has been hired. He said there needs to be a forum for people to communicate with each other.

Zremski said he will be interested to see the results of the survey regarding the gym. He said he completely agrees with the second point.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 pm. The next meeting is Jan. 18, 2008.