

Minutes of the Hawaii Writers Guild (HWG) monthly Board of Directors (BOD) meeting, held via Zoom due to pandemic protocols. All times noted refer to Hawaii-Aleutian Standard Time. Items in **bold** indicate decisions made or actions required.

Officers and Directors present via Zoom:

Carol McMillan- *President*

Bruce Stern -*Vice President*

Bob Lupo -*Treasurer*

Donna Beumler -*Secretary*

Joy Fisher -*Public Relations Director*

Bryan Furer -*Events Director (provisional) and Regional Director, Volcano-area* (present for a portion of the meeting).

Other Members present via Zoom:

Nancy Baenziger (with Jacques Baenziger)

Duncan Dempster (*Webmaster*)

Zack Ehrmann (audio only)

Diane Revell (*Registered Agent*)

Margaret Zacharias (*Coordinator, "Readings and Responses"*)

Without objection, **Webmaster Duncan Dempster activated Zoom's "record" function.**

CALL TO ORDER: President Carol McMillan **called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.**

Organizational Structure Issues: Carol began by addressing the issue of the Guild's organizational structure, noting that the Guild's non-profit status pursuant to §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code has been the topic of much discussion in recent months. She had previously e-mailed to Board members on-line information concerning two non-profits with which she is familiar, and indicated that the organizations had been able to move forward toward achieving their goals, despite the pandemic of the past two years. She explained that she felt the status of HWG as a non-profit has led to confusion, and has become a contentious subject for some members, although she is not personally taking a position on this issue. Carol made reference to the Guild's bylaws, mission statement, website, and non-discrimination policy,

advising that she believes these materials may include language which is confusing and/or inconsistent with the Guild's present non-profit structure. Carol also reminded the Board that, while school/youth outreach is a stated goal of HWG, when the opportunity arose to participate in school-related writing activities, Carol was the only member who volunteered. She requested that, in the event that the Guild's non-profit structure is discussed in the future, that issue be handled by the Board in a logical, respectful, and dispassionate manner, and Carol suggested that a written list of pros and cons/benefits and detriments would be useful.

Bruce clarified that the use of the word "vendors" in HWG materials, about which Carol had expressed some concern, simply refers to businesses with whom the Guild may contract. He also noted that the Guild, as a non-profit organization, continues to grow. Furthermore, rather than Guild activities being curtailed by its non-profit status, Bruce cited the much-discussed and very real problem of the lack of volunteers in sufficient numbers as a key obstacle preventing the Guild from making the desired progress toward its stated goals. **He reiterated what has been identified previously by all Board members as a crucial component of the Guild's success: the need to find a way to engage more people, both in terms of numbers as well as diversity.**

Nancy mentioned that she had joined the meeting in part because she was intrigued by the agenda item which offered a presentation on "publishing and rejection" by Bruce, and that she had not otherwise been privy to the on-going dialogue regarding the Guild's non-profit status. She expressed the opinion that it should be a Guild priority to help members get their work before the public, and that there are many different ways in which that can be done. She added that networking activities should be a priority for HWG.

Duncan suggested that a "volunteer coordinator" position would be ideal in this regard. Both he and Bruce agreed that having someone take on that role could be a vital part of effectively identifying and coordinating members who would take on responsibility for planning and implementing presentations, readings, networking, etc. Bruce added that, in the past, public readings provided opportunities to develop interest in Guild volunteer activities.

Moving on to another aspect of Guild structure, Carol noted that, while Duncan remains HWG's hard-working and much-respected webmaster, he has resigned his position as a voting member of the Board. She suggested that Board members join her in searching for someone who can be trained by or assist Duncan in website management, and also serve as a voting member of the Board per HWG bylaws.

Finally, on the subject of the website, Carol observed that Duncan, as webmaster, currently screens all queries from the general public through the website's e-mail contact field, although Duncan indicated that can easily be changed to someone else (with the caveat there may be an additional fee involved for adding administrators). **Carol requested that Duncan remain the administrator in receipt of these e-mails, but that they be forwarded to her for her consideration.**

Member participation: Zack advised that he was calling in from Maui and was not able to appear with video. He cited concerns that HWG skews toward a more mature demographic, and is not realistically structured for efficacious participation by those under age 55. In particular, the Board meetings— in the past held during the day, mid-week— were not scheduled at a time when working people can easily attend. He also indicated that attendance at the Saturday “Readings and Responses” on-line group could be a big ask for those who only have the weekend to engage in non-employment related activities. Diane expressed her appreciation to Zack for responding to the “Member Guide” survey which she had e-mailed to members.¹ Diane, Carol, and Bruce then inquired about the Board’s decision to move the monthly meetings to the evening hours, and Zack, Nancy, and Jacques all **agreed that evening meetings were much more accessible.**

On the subject of engaging a younger and more diverse membership, Bryan mentioned the importance of determining the reason prospective members may wish to join HWG. He mentioned offering workshops, guest lectures, and other programs which would entice and inspire younger writers, and suggested a presentation on writing graphic novels as a specific proposal for consideration. Joy concurred with this suggestion. Diane then advised (via Zoom’s “chat room”) that the Guild’s website includes a form to propose new events under the “Events Calendar” tab, and that this form might be a useful mechanism for Bryan to use re: his suggestion of a graphic novel presentation.

Carol related her recent experiences with local writers who expressed their disappointment with the Guild’s lack of diversity, and encouraged Board members to keep an open mind with respect to the Guild’s structure and any changes that might be helpful moving forward. She noted that two members who do not ordinarily attend Board meetings had taken the time to join in at this evening hour; Joy, however, also pointed out that two members on the mainland who *do* ordinarily make an effort to virtually attend Board meetings are not able to do so because of the late hour. Carol reminded the Board that Johnson Kahili sent an e-mail outlining his concerns, and she opined that he brought up issues which need to be addressed.

PRESENTATION: “PUBLISHING AND REJECTION”: In an effort to create more interest among members in attending meetings and offering input, the Board has decided to include a presentation on a topic of general interest at each monthly meeting when possible. Vice President Bruce Stern volunteered to start off by speaking on the subject of publishing, as well as the often-related topic of rejection.

Bruce observed that one of the by-products of the pandemic has been that unpublished and even published writers who have found themselves with time on their hands have been flooding publishers and agents with their unsolicited manuscripts. However, it is incredibly difficult for a writer to achieve success of any type in this fashion, and many people will

¹ Discussed more fully, *infra*, at page 8.

understandably have trouble with that level of rejection. Bruce noted that all writers who submit their work naturally hope to receive positive feedback, but the percentage of writers who receive favorable responses from unsolicited (or “over-the-transom”) submissions is “vanishingly small.” He also remarked that, while a writer may in fact be quite talented and turn out a well-written book, efforts to get that product out in circulation before the public may entail dealing with a formidable amount of rejection.

Bruce then discussed the important distinctions between traditional publishing versus self-publishing, indicating that many writers who’ve failed to achieve the desired results *via* the traditional publishing arena have turned to self-publishing. Bruce has self-published a book using Amazon Kindle, and advises that, while this avenue is more accessible for novice writers, it is nevertheless a complex process to turn out a professional product which is easily readable and well-formatted. He did mention that many of the self-publishing services such as Amazon Kindle have advanced in recent years and become more user-friendly. Many of these self-publishing websites, including Amazon Kindle, are POD, or publish-on-demand, services with very quick turn around times, which is an efficient way for self-published authors to endeavor to distribute their books.

Once a writer has self-published his or her work, marketing of the product is the next step, and—as noted—is not a good fit for every writer. Although traditional publishing includes marketing among the services offered, self-published writers will typically need to pursue marketing strategies on their own. Bruce mentioned that, in the event a writer does not possess the necessary marketing skill set or otherwise chooses not to become involved in marketing, there are companies that will perform this service for a fee—although not every book will be accepted.

As a special observation with regard to writers in Hawaii, Bruce mentioned the potential tax implications of book sales, such as the State of Hawaii General Excise Tax (GET) wherein sellers are required to pay a tax to the state on revenues received. In this regard, Bruce reiterated that the GET is paid based upon *revenue*, not income or profit. It’s important to remember that the GET is separate and apart from any income tax obligations. He encouraged anyone who wishes more information in this regard to look into the state of Hawaii’s website, which contains additional information about applying for a GET license.² This website also explains how GET is calculated, passing the GET onto the purchasers, and deducting GET fees from income tax. In conclusion, Bruce reminded attendees that selling books is a business, and if you are self-publishing and offering your books for sale, there will be business implications to be aware of.

Margaret thanked Bruce (*via* Zoom’s “chat room”) for the valuable information he provided. She opined that this type of presentation is an important aspect of what the Guild can offer its members. Further, Margaret encouraged Bruce to connect with Diann Wilson in order to prepare a video recording of his presentation for the Guild’s YouTube program *Write On*. She

² <http://tax.hawaii.gov>

also advised that the “Kauai Writers Conference Online” is an additional resource for self-publishing seminars. She added that there are “reputable Hybrid publishers who split the upfront production costs with the author,” and mentioned the “She Writes” website in this regard.

Bryan agreed that this was an excellent topic to be presented, and noted there are other, similar, areas of interest which could serve as the basis for workshops designed to interest and even inspire members. He pointed out that having a good editor is also crucial to developing a professional product, and mentioned that the Volcano writers who wrote and published an anthology (soon to be followed by a second volume) learned about the importance of editing in the process of publishing their work. Bruce concurred on this point, advising that final editing can be a difficult process, and that there are professional editors who will charge a fee to do this, noting that editing is a task which may not be best suited to friends and family members of the author. **Carol suggested that Bruce and Bryan get together to discuss coordinating a workshop to more fully explore presentations of this type.**

Finally, Bruce commented that, while writers who are failing to receive the desired responses from traditional publishing companies may be better off self-publishing, there are challenges, including final editing and formatting, which remain a part of the process for many. He noted that support groups wherein writers are able to read their work and receive feedback in an inclusive and supportive environment can be very important. He observed that writing, publishing, and marketing are all part of the process for writers who wish to sell books. He also stated that for the majority of writers who have trouble handling rejection, traditional publishing may not be a good avenue to pursue. Indeed, learning how to handle rejection is a subject which the Guild would like to present to members in the future. Nancy agreed, suggesting that a helpful topic for members would be for the Guild to present information on coming to grips with rejection, and self-publishing options. On the issue of handling rejection, Margaret commented *via Zoom’s “chat room”* that a good “writing buddy” can be of help.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE: Vice President Bruce Stern provided a membership update both orally and in the form of membership documents which he had compiled and previously e-mailed to Board members. There are currently 81 active members of HWG, with one newly-accepted member pending the payment of dues.

Bruce then made reference to the “opt-in list” for those members who wish to share their e-mail addresses with other members. The opt-in list is not to be used for commercial purposes, but rather to facilitate interpersonal communication. This list allows members who wish to be included to seek advice and support on a variety of issues of their choosing, including self-publishing. Forty-nine members currently have asked to be included on the list, which Bruce recently distributed and will keep updated as may become necessary.

Bruce then addressed the use of HWG’s Google Groups e-mail service. There are only a limited number of people who are authorized to send e-mails to the membership using the Google Groups program, which is administered by Webmaster Duncan Dempster.

Duncan did acknowledge that it was an oversight to not remove the posting authority of a former member from whom authority had been withdrawn, but that has since been corrected. On the question of whether authorized members require prior permission from the Board in order to send emails to the membership, it was clarified that, if the e-mails from an authorized sender are within the purview of that individual's established role within HWG, prior permission is not required.

Margaret then inquired into whether the Board had deemed her e-mails referencing the on-line group *Readings and Responses* to be appropriate, noting that recent changes to the groups's structure have resulted in only two *Readings and Responses* e-mails being sent to the general membership per month. Joy sought to clarify these structural changes, and although a discussion was initiated on this subject, Carol noted that this is not an agenda item, she is not prepared to address it in detail, and **she would like to defer any further discussion until next month's meeting.**³

TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer Bob Lupo previously submitted via e-mail a "Final Treasurer's Log as of April 29, 2022," reflecting an ASB operating balance as of that date of \$7,388.12 (please see Attachment "A"). Bob advised that May has been a slow month in terms of the Guild's finances, and that since this log was finalized, one member has submitted a dues payment. Additionally, there have been two outgoing expenses for the month of May, resulting in a balance this date of \$7,403.12.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Donna provided an update regarding the Annual Ethics training held on April 27, 2022 and the conflict of interest forms to be completed by each attendee. Having collected all the COI forms submitted, there remains one outstanding; **Donna will reach out to that Board member with a request to submit his COI form at his convenience.**

Additionally, Donna is compiling a list of the Guild's tangible assets, in order to identify which member has Guild property at his or her home, and in what quantity. She has been provided information in this regard by Joy and Diane, and **will follow up with a third member who may be in possession of additional property.**

COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATES

³ Per Margaret's subsequent e-mail, she will not be available to attend the Guild's BOD meetings in June or July.

PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR Joy Fisher reported that there have been no public relations releases this month.

Joy brought up the subject of the Guild's website's "Calendar of Upcoming Events," noting that a member has brought to her attention that it would be helpful to be able to see activities listed under this tab on a regular basis (in addition to receiving notice *via* e-mail). **She observed that it would be a good practice to begin posting upcoming events under this tab on the website on a regular basis, as both members and non-members can access the Guild's website.**

Joy also made reference to the Guild's Facebook pages, of which there are two: one open to the public, one restricted to members, and both currently administered by Joy. She queried as to whether there remains a need for a members-only Facebook page, now that Bruce actively maintains and distributes an opt-in list. **Bruce indicated that he would like to see the Guild continue to post to both Facebook pages, as some people are very active in this regard. He agreed, however, that someone is needed to take over this role for Joy with respect to managing the Facebook pages.** Diane added that she believes Bryan administers a Volcano-area writers Facebook page as well. Carol mentioned that she has been talking to someone who may be interested in becoming a member, and who may be able to serve in a volunteer role, such as co-events director.

With respect to the Guild's affiliation with the Berkeley branch of the California Writers Club (CWC), Joy advised that the speakers series is on hiatus over the summer. However, the Berkeley group will be presenting readings of newly published work by its members, and, on June 16th, HWG/CWC member Cecilia Johansen will be reading her work. **Joy will e-mail information regarding how Guild members might virtually attend this reading in advance of the 16th.**

EVENTS DIRECTOR: Bryan Furer, as provisional events director, was not able to stay for the entire meeting and was unable to provide an update at this time.

WEBMASTER Duncan Dempster reported that he has been corresponding with the two new members who have joined this month in regard to developing their own personal "author's page" for the Guild's website.

Pertaining to Joy's comments about the website's "Calendar of Events," Duncan remarked that posting to the Calendar is a function of the webmaster, and that he should be notified of future events to be posted.

LATITUDES, 4th edition UPDATE: Bob Lupo, as managing editor of *Latitudes*, discussed plans for next years' edition, reminding the Board that he expects the submission window to open on September 1st and close on November 1st.

On the issue of the screenplay category for *Latitudes, 4th ed.*, Bob mentioned that he is searching for a second screenplay editor (in addition to Bryan) to review submissions. Several people mentioned that member Frank Reilly is adept at the screenplay genre, although it was observed that in the past he has indicated that his schedule would not allow him to assist in this regard. Bob commented that he'd like the screenplay editors to be in place and to finalize guidelines for screenplay submissions by late July.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Bryan Furer, on behalf of the Volcano-area writers, was unavailable to update the Board. Similarly, Eila Algood, was unavailable to provide an update regarding the Kohala-area writers group.

NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION MATERIALS: Diane Revell reported to the Board as follows: she had previously e-mailed a survey to all members inquiring as to what they would like to see among materials collated for a new member orientation packet. She received e-mails from four members in reply, and in turn sought some clarification. She then distributed *via* e-mail a draft outline of a new member orientation packet ("Member Guide") based upon the information she'd received as well as her own observations. This outline includes links to the Guild's website, and a short history of HWG. Diane then inquired of Board members as to whether they in the past have received questions from new or prospective members, and indicated that it would be helpful to know what type of concerns have been expressed as she compiles the materials for the "Member Guide."

Discussion then focused on the criteria for acceptance of an application for membership, the Board concurring that the current membership criteria is vague, and that there is a need to develop this more fully.

Margaret and Carol then brought up the previously-debated topic of prospective members demonstrating a connection with the state of Hawaii as part of the criteria for acceptance into HWG. Diane noted that she and Duncan had recently added a question to the membership application which had been designed to address this: "What prompted you to apply for membership in Hawaii Writers Guild." However, Margaret opined that the question is not specific enough to ascertain a Hawaii connection. Carol and Bruce requested that Duncan add a more specific (and mandatory) question to the membership application, although clearly non-residents will not automatically be denied membership solely based upon residency.

Bruce expressed his appreciation to Diane for her diligence in developing the “Member Guide,” which will provide helpful information for both new members and those considering membership. He proposed that she include references to non-HWG activities that are nevertheless loosely affiliated with the Guild, such as the writers groups at Tutu’s House, and in the North Kohala and Volcano areas. It was suggested that there may be an active writers group in the East Hawaii area, as well as on other islands, and Diane will reach out to members on neighbor islands in this regard.

IN CLOSING: Margaret expressed her appreciation to Board members for their commitment and hard work. Carol reiterated the need to attract a more diverse and younger membership, and Joy remarked that outreach to all potential members is important. Margaret also observed that the Guild’s on-line literary journal has been wonderfully successful in engaging writers who’d like to become members in order to seek the opportunity for publication in *Latitudes*, and in this regard, Donna mentioned that possibility of including a “student submission” category in future editions of *Latitudes*.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The next **Board of Directors meeting will be held on Thursday, June 23, 2022 at 6:30 pm.** Due to pandemic restrictions, all meetings for the foreseeable future will be **held via Zoom ONLY and will be hosted by Duncan.**

Requests for items to be added to the agenda for the next regular Board meeting should be sent via email to President Carol McMillan (sylvanease@gmail.com) and Secretary Donna Beumler (dmbaumler@gmail.com) at least 10 days prior to the next meeting (no later than June 13, 2022). The final agenda will be emailed to the full membership five days prior to the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted this 6th day of June, 2022,

By: ____*Donna Beumler*_____

Donna Beumler
Secretary, Hawaii Writers Guild

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT “A”: Final Treasurer’s Log, April 29, 2022

PARKING LOT:

Nothing at this time.

ATTACHMENT “A”

Final HWG Treasurer's Log as of April 29, 2022			
	ASB Operating Balance as of March 31, 2022		\$7,242.24
	April Inflows		
	Cheryl Ann O'Farrell, Membership Renewal		10.00
	Donna Maltz, Membership Renewal		20.00
	Sharon Ludan, Membership Initiation		40.00
	Duncan Dempster, Membership Renewal, PayPal		40.04
	Lucy L. Jones, Membership Initiation, PayPal		39.56
	Bruce Stern, Membership Renewal		39.56
	Miss Pianta, Membership Renewal, PayPal		39.56
	Don Kennedy, Membership Renewal, PayPal		39.56
	Jordan Barnes, Membership Renewal, PayPal		39.56
	Total April Inflows		307.84
	April Outflows		
	Reimbursed Diann Wilson for her Zoom Account, '21-'22, check #129*		-156.96
	ASB Monthly Service Fee, to be debited		-5.00
	Total April Outflows		-161.96
	ASB Operating Balance as of April 29, 2022		7388.12
	* Turns out that Duncan uses his Zoom Account for the Guild's BOD & Saturday Workshop meetings. He has not asked for reimbursement because he also uses Zoom for other activities, and it would be difficult to parse out the Guild's share of that expense.		
	To my surprise, we did not transfer Diann's account to the Guild nor used Diann's account.		
	I advised Diann to make sure she closes her Zoom account going forward.		