

Minutes of the Hawaii Writers Guild (HWG) Special Planning Meeting, held *via* Zoom due to pandemic protocols. All times noted refer to Hawaii-Aleutian Standard Time.

Officers and Directors present via Zoom:

Diane Revell -*President and North Kohala-area Representative*

Bruce Stern -*Vice President*

Bob Lupo -*Treasurer*

Donna Beumler -*Secretary*

Joy Fisher -*Public Relations Director*

Others Members present via Zoom:

Duncan Dempster -*Webmaster*

Cecilia Johansen -*Co-editor "Member News"*

Frank Reilly -*Co-coordinator "Readings and Responses"*

Margaret Zacharias -*Co-coordinator "Readings and Responses"* joins at 6:30 pm

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

1. **CALL TO ORDER and WELCOME:** President Diane Revell called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm. Diane welcomed all present. She emphasized the need to make it a priority to consider the annual budget drafted by Treasurer Bob Lupo during this meeting. Pursuant to the Guild's bylaws, approval of the budget at the Special Planning meeting will allow the Guild to go forward during the year with those approved expenditures without the necessity of further Board action. Diane also made reference to the suggestions which members had e-mailed prior to the meeting, and which Donna had summarized in an e-mail to the Board. Diane noted that it is an important objective of this meeting to spend some time discussing members' suggestions.

2. **REVIEW OF CURRENT PROJECTS:**

(a.) **Website:** Webmaster Duncan Dempster advised that he has updated the website to reflect the composition of the 2023 Board, per the election results announced at the Annual Meeting on January 21, 2023. He will also endeavor to update the Google groups BOD e-mail list.

(b.) ***Latitudes, 4th ed. and “Best of” Latitudes***: Bob Lupo, as Managing Editor of *Latitudes*, advised as follows: Bob is happy to report that the *Latitudes* team is finishing up the last mile of the journal’s publishing “marathon,” and that the journal is on track for a mid-February publication date *via* the Guild’s website.¹ Bob indicated that it was a positive experience to work closely with authors in editing their work, and he appreciates the authors’ cooperation in this regard. He was pleased with the diversity of writing across all genres.

Bob also indicated that he has given some thought to developing a print version of the journal, along the lines of a “Best of *Latitudes*,” but found the concept of determining what constitutes “best” to be daunting. He proposed that a more collegial approach would be to publish in print format all four editions. Bob suggested that the first and second editions of *Latitudes* could be published in one volume, perhaps sometime in May or June, with the third and fourth editions being published in a second volume in September or October. Copies would be distributed free of charge to members, schools, veterans’ centers, hospitals, and other Hawaii-based organizations, with extra copies available for purchase. In this fashion, the Guild would be engaging in community outreach while offering an important benefit to its members, and also potentially adding a source of income. Bob noted that he is familiar with Amazon publishing, although he would need some assistance with this project.

Diane and Bruce agreed with Bob, and observed that more members would have their work represented in this fashion, as opposed to a “best of” volume. Bruce advised that it would probably be necessary to obtain releases from members whose work will be published. Joy queried whether this approach might result in flooding the market, and proposed, for example, a single volume, perhaps titled *Latitudes: The First Five Years*. Frank indicated agreement with the proposal to publish a print edition or editions, and added that many writers’ groups offer their anthologies or literary journals in print format for sale on their websites. Duncan reminded the Board that this project, like most all of HWG’s projects, will require members to volunteer to help or to otherwise offer their assistance. He advised that the *Latitudes* manuscripts currently exist in a variety of formats, and will need to be converted manually to the appropriate format for print publications; this is also true if the Guild anticipates publishing a Kindle book. Joy noted that member Rick Frazier is familiar with this process, having been instrumental in assisting the Volcano-area writers in publishing their two volumes of anthologies. Finally, Cece indicated her enthusiastic agreement with moving forward with a print edition, and commented that distribution of a print version of *Latitudes* will help to fulfill the Guild’s important goal of outreach to the community.

(c.) ***Member News***: Joy Fisher, co-editor of HWG’s on-line member newsletter, reported that she and Cece are prepared to continue with the twice-yearly publication of *Member News*. Joy anticipates that she and Cece should be able to complete the spring issue of the newsletter by the end of March, and then forward it at that time to Duncan for posting to the website. Joy also

¹ *Latitudes 4th ed.* actually premiered on February 4, 2023.

noted that this schedule will avoid the situation where Duncan would be working on posting both *Latitudes* as well as *Member News* during the same time frame. Cece noted her agreement.

(d.) **Opt-in e-mail list**: Vice President Bruce Stern advised that he will be updating the opt-in list for members who wish to share their e-mails with other members for purposes of networking. He reiterated that the list is not to be use for marketing or commercial purposes, but rather as a means for members to communicate with one another. In light of new members joining HWG, as well as given ordinary attrition, he typically updates the list roughly twice per year, and should be able to distribute a new list by mid-February. He has received favorable feedback from members who find the list of value to them in their writing endeavors. Diane suggested that Bruce identify those “opt-in” members who have multiple e-mail addresses, and confirm with each of them which address they’d like to use.

(e.) **Radio Theatre podcast**: Bryan Furer, Volcano-area Representative, was not available at this time to report on the status of the podcast. However, both Diane and Bruce noted that Bryan had recently advised that he is looking for people to assist him, in particular with the technical aspects of producing a podcast. Diane recalled that both Eila Algood and Johnson Kahili have some experience in this regard, although their availability and willingness to participate in such a project is unknown.

(f.) **Readings and Responses**: Frank Reilly, co-coordinator along with Margaret Zacharias of HWG’s on-line writers group, reported as follows: *Readings and Responses* has been hugely successful. The general (or “open forum”) sessions have generated interest and participation from members within the State, on the mainland, and even abroad. Recently, an invitation-only “fiction focus” group has been established, and that program is well-attended; efforts are also on-going to organize a “non-fiction focus” group. Frank stated that the on-line groups are extremely well-organized and are marketed effectively and efficiently— thanks largely due to Margaret’s efforts. He is open to questions or other feedback in this regard. Joy commented that she believes that *Readings and Responses* is growing in an orderly fashion and appreciates that it is a well-run program.

(g.) **Regional Writers’ groups**:

Volcano-area: Bryan Furer is not available to report this date.

North Kohala-area: Diane Revell reported that since the group resumed its Zoom sessions in September, there have been approximately four to six writers attending each meeting, which are held every other Thursday. There are new members who are showing up fairly regularly, and she will follow up with other potential new members.

Tutu’s House: Joy, Bruce, and Diane all suggested that the Waimea writers group “Tutu’s House” (which refers to the physical location of in-person meetings prior to the pandemic) be included in the Board’s discussion of regional writers’ groups. Bruce noted that he has been a

long-time member of the group, which is typically facilitated by HWG member Dave Fouts. There are approximately six very active members who attended weekly meetings on Tuesday mornings *via Zoom*. It is anticipated that the Tutu’s House group will resume in-person meetings when it is safe to do so, although there would continue to be a Zoom component available. Bruce is pleased with the continuity of the group, which has been active for many years now, and he would like to see new writers join the group. He noted that Tutu’s House can be considered in many ways the progenitor of Hawaii Writers Guild. Finally, Diane added that, when in-person meetings resume, there will likely have to be a discussion regarding budgeting for the expenses of meeting venues.

[Diane welcomes Margaret to the meeting, and explains that Frank previously provided a thorough report on the status of *Readings and Responses*. Margaret confirmed that she and Joy are working toward developing an invitation-only “non-fiction focus” on-line writers group. Margaret also wished to discuss the topic of creating a student writing contest, and was advised that this issue is scheduled to be discussed later in the meeting.]

Finally on the topic of regional writers groups, Frank indicated that he is very interested in developing such a group on Kauai. He notes that there is a significant interest among Kauai writers, in particular because several established writers’ groups have dissolved. It was suggested that Frank may wish to contact HWG member and fellow Kauai resident Cheryl Ann Farrell, who has previously indicated an interest in this regard.

(h.) ***Write On!***: Diann Wilson, producer and host of HWG’s on-line YouTube program, was not present this date. However, it was noted that Diann had—as recently as the Annual Meeting held on January 21st—issued an invitation to anyone who wished to be interviewed for this program on a relevant topic to contact her. Diane Revell mentioned that she, Diann, Joy, and Eila have been engaged in preliminary discussions about training volunteers to organize and to emcee in-person public readings, and that these types of training sessions might also be appropriately the subject of *Write On!* interviews. Joy also offered to assist with the “emceeing” portions of the training.

3. **RETURN TO PRE-PANDEMIC ACTIVITIES:**

(a.) **Expanding the Events Committee**: Diane remarked that Bryan had agreed to fill in as Events Committee director when Johnson Kahili stepped down, but that Bryan has always indicated (understandably) that he will need volunteers to assist him with identifying appropriate events, as well as organizing and staffing them. Diane remarked that, typically, the Guild staffs informational tables at community events such as the Cherry Blossom Festival and Christmas in July, and asked for additional input regarding what would be appropriate events at which the Guild might like to have a presence. Joy noted that HWG will not be represented at the Cherry Blossom Festival this year because we did not sign up for it. Joy and Bruce both observed that this festival is an important event for the Guild to participate in, and that we should make sure

that the organizers of the event know who to contact in October of each year to confirm our participation. Again, the need for volunteers was emphasized. Cece mentioned that the Guild may wish to contact Parks and Recreation in Hilo to confirm our interest in participating, and noted that this can also be accomplished by accessing their website.

(b.) **Public Readings**: Diane confirmed with Frank that one of the reasons behind efforts to organize a writers group on Kauai is the desire to hold public readings for the community. Diane will follow-up with Diann and Eila regarding training in this regard. Bruce cautioned that the COVID pandemic is on-going, and that there will be people who remain reticent to be involved in in-person group activities. He remarked that the Guild will need to be respectful of the wishes of individuals in terms of participating in this type of activity during a pandemic. Diane noted that she stopped by the Artists Cooperative in Kapa’au and engaged in a discussion with member Donna Maltz, who mentioned that the Artists Co-op may be sponsoring a public reading and book-selling opportunity sometime in late February; Diane will follow-up in this regard.

4. **MEMBERS SUGGESTIONS**:

(a.) **Mentorship program**: Diane recalled that Diann Wilson had in the past managed a small group representing a type of “writing buddies” program. Also, there has been discussion about pairing an experienced writer with someone who is more of a novice, in order to establish a one-on-one mentorship relationship. Bruce did advise that this is one of the purposes of the opt-in list and he is aware of at least one instance where a member in search of mentoring reached out to a more experienced member *via* the opt-in list. Diane indicated that she will contact Diann for more information about how she approached the “writing buddies” program, and the current status of that program. Bruce mentioned that, when he sends out an e-mail to members in an effort to update the opt-in list, he will consider including a reference to utilizing the list for mentorship purposes. He did observe in this regard that finding members who are willing to devote the time and energy to mentoring may be more difficult than identifying those members who wish to be mentored in their writing endeavors.

Joy observed that the “writing buddies” concept should be considered a different type of program than a mentorship program, as “writing buddies” anticipates two writers of relatively equal experience providing feedback and encouragement to each other. Diane believes that member Laura Burkhart had previously expressed some definite ideas about a mentorship program, and Diane will reach out to Laura as a possible resource in this regard. Bruce will write something up for the Board to review concerning spreading the word to members that the opt-in list can be utilized to potentially find a “writing buddy,” or even to develop a mentorship relationship.

(b.) **Engaging student writers/youth writing contest**: The Board next addressed the much-discussed topic of engaging student writers *via* a student writing contest. Margaret

provided a copy of her notes in this regard utilizing Zoom’s “chat room” function. Margaret believes that the Guild could be doing a better job of reaching out to young writers, and offered to assist as outlined in her notes. Cece also previously sent an e-mail with detailed suggestions regarding outreach to students and others (per the Guild’s bylaws), including her proposal to approach former member Mahealani Wendt. Cece’s e-mail did include a draft of a letter to Mahealani, and she asked that the Board provide her with feedback and/or the authority to send the letter. Donna located the letter and e-mailed it to Board members, and confirmed that she will add the topic of Board approval of the letter to the agenda for the February meeting.

(c.) **Community outreach**: Diane and Bruce inquired as to whether Guild-sponsored in-person public readings previously held at local libraries and at Tutu’s House in Waimea might be resuming soon, given what appears to be a waning of the more serious elements of the pandemic. Diane will follow-up with the library in Kapa’au to determine the librarian’s position on this issue, and Joy will contact Tutu’s House as well. Bruce asked that this topic be added to the agenda for the next Board meeting.

Further on the topic generally of community outreach, Diane observed that the Guild’s YouTube channel and currently available interview program *Write On!* are also accessible to the public.

(d.) **Developing greater diversity**: Diane noted that Donna had provided to the Board a list, previously referred to by Bruce, which summarized the greatly diverse backgrounds and some of the many areas of expertise of Guild members. However, all Board members acknowledged that finding ways to develop diversity in other areas is an important goal. In particular, Diane would like to see greater involvement in the Guild by younger people, although it is true that those people who have retired from established careers may have the ability to devote more time and energy to volunteer activities than younger people who are still working and perhaps raising children. On the issue of developing greater diversity within the Guild, Donna made reference to the upcoming event she is organizing on behalf of HWG to welcome author Janet Evanovich to the community, and advised that she has opened up the event to non-Guild members, some of whom are from backgrounds not currently represented in the Guild. In this way, Donna hopes to encourage a broader demographic to learn about HWG and to consider joining. Bruce asked Joy to make an effort to update the Guild’s tri-fold brochures and bring them with her to the event. Donna also related that the host of the event inquired about publicity; it was agreed that Joy will write and distribute a publicity release after the event in an effort to engage more writers in the community and interest them in the Guild.

(e.) **Other suggestions**:

i) Duncan addressed the suggestion from a member that the Guild hire a professional website designer: He reviewed the two main purposes of a website for an organization such as HWG, stating that the website is both a marketing tool and a resource for members. In Duncan’s experience, most websites for organizations similar to the Guild are not professionally designed,

but are built and maintained by amateurs and volunteers. His research reveals that freelance web designers typically charge between thirty and eighty dollars per hour, with a usual hourly rate of seventy-five dollars. Should the Guild wish to hire a professional designer, maintaining the website would still be a near-daily endeavor requiring a member to volunteer his or her time and expertise. Duncan notes in this regard that the search —over at least the past two-year time frame — for a member who is willing to serve as an apprentice webmaster has not borne fruit. Duncan also mentioned that much of the art of website design and maintenance is both subjective and subject to personal taste. He has received very little feedback concerning HWG’s website which he built and maintains; input he *has* received has ranged from “positive to laudatory.” He would appreciate greater and more active feedback with respect to what members and the BOD would like to see in a website, and what changes they might like made. Duncan suggested that hiring a website designer is probably not the best use of the Guild’s funds, but that it is important to continue to search for a member who is willing to work with him in an apprentice capacity. For example, the website’s calendar is not kept updated as it is extremely time-consuming to maintain, and no member has come forward to volunteer to help.

Diane followed up by noting that it is important to consider members’ suggestions, but without volunteers, very little of what’s been suggested can actually be implemented. Bruce agreed, and he and Cece complimented Duncan on a nicely-designed and well-maintained website.

Joy inquired of Duncan as to the website’s accessibility on cell phones. Duncan indicated that most cell phones can view the website reasonably well; although it’s “not as pretty” as when viewed on a computer screen, most of the information is accessible on these devices. Margaret congratulated Duncan on building and maintaining a user-friendly website which is easily accessible and which contains a wealth of information.

Finally, Diane asked about two members who recently expressed an interest in assisting with website management. Duncan advised that neither of the members followed through in this regard. Diane will approach one of the two members, who occasionally attends the writers group which she facilitates, in an effort to determine whether she’s still interested.

ii.) Cece raised the issue of how best to encourage greater member involvement, and suggested that the BOD open its meetings each month with a call to members to read their work on a first-come-first-serve basis, either at the beginning or at the end of the meeting. She advised that this is currently the practice with another writers group with which she is familiar, and results in very well-attended meetings with enthusiastic participation. Diane responded that Donna sends out an e-mail every month in advance of each meeting inviting members to attend *via* Zoom and provide their input or suggestions; however, very rarely will a member choose to join the Board meeting. Further, several months ago the Board e-mailed an invitation to members to read their work at the beginning of a Board meeting, but there was no response. Bruce and Diane believe that this could become a permanent feature of each Board meeting, and, with consistency, there might be a better response.

iii.) Pertaining to the issue of maintaining a YouTube presence, Diane confirmed that Diann Wilson will continue to produce and host the interview program *Write On!* Further, the Guild is in need of a volunteer or volunteers to host and maintain *Inside the Writers Studio*, which has been on hiatus since Eila Algood moved on to other projects.

iv.) The Board then considered the suggestion that the Guild sponsor a “writers support group” to assist members with technical support and assistance (as opposed to readings and critiques). Diane asked Bruce to consider mentioning to members that this type of assistance could be a potential benefit of the “opt-in” list, noting that without a volunteer to organize and facilitate such a support group, implementation in a formal sense would be difficult.

v.) Finally, the issue of creating additional membership categories for potential members who support writers and/or the mission of the Guild, but who are not themselves writers, was addressed. Diane asked that this be added to the agenda for the February meeting, advising that time is running short, and it is imperative that we consider and vote on the draft of the estimated annual budget prepared by Bob.

6. FINANCIAL PLANNING:

(a) **Annual budget (Bylaws §8.1.2):** On January 25th, Bob e-mailed to Board members a draft of the estimated budget for 2023, with side-by-side comparisons to actual operating budgets for the years 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. He noted that planning for expenses is still a somewhat tentative endeavor in light of the on-going pandemic and the concomitant uncertainty surrounding in-person gatherings. The last normal operating year in terms of the Guild’s budget was 2019, which was pre-pandemic. During 2019, the Guild’s operating expenses were just under \$4000 —slightly higher than would have been typically expected due to costs associated with applying for non-profit status pursuant to IRS Code §501(c)(3). Operating revenues during 2019 amounted to about \$3500, resulting in a loss of just over \$300. Bob advises that normal operating expenses for a typical year approximate \$3000 to \$3300, while operating revenues usually track expenses pretty closely. A notable exception would be the year 2021, during which activities were strictly curtailed or eliminated because of COVID, and expenses were, accordingly, much lower than usual. Also in 2021, the Guild grew from 55 to 78 members, leading to an increase in revenue generated by dues paid by new members —likely also an offshoot of the pandemic.

Diane inquired as to whether Bob had budgeted for expenses related to publishing print copies of *Latitudes*. Bob responded that the estimated budget does not include such an expense, which at this time is yet to be determined, but can certainly be added as the project progresses and more details are firmed up. Duncan advised that publishing through Amazon is essentially free, but suggested that the Board may wish to consider spending the money to hire someone to take on the project. Bob stated that he would look into the expenses of publishing through

Amazon and also inquire as to the costs of purchasing the books for distribution to members and community organizations. Bruce and Duncan noted that it is their experience that it's quite affordable to purchase your own books from Amazon, at about \$10 per copy. Bob queried as to whether this might be an expense which a grant might cover.

Bruce commented that the framework of the 2023 annual budget prepared by Bob is very helpful. He did note that the expense allowed for the Cherry Blossom Festival can be deleted, as the Guild missed the cut off to participate in that event. Also, the line-item for rental of space in the Thelma Parker Library for in-person readings will likely be eliminated, as the goal is to move those readings to Tutu's House. Bob is hopeful that this year will be a more normal operating year than recent years in terms of expenses. The Board generally would like to see the Guild's Annual Meeting resume as an in-person gathering this time next year, if it is safe to do so.

Bruce moved for approval of Bob's estimated 2023 budget; Diane seconded the motion. All Board members present voted *aye*. The motion passed and the estimated annual budget for 2023 was approved.

(b.) **Grant opportunities**: Diane mentioned that she has been in touch with the North Kohala Community Resource Center (NKCRC) regarding grant training classes. She will follow up with NKCRC for more details. It was noted that, in the past, the Board has been made aware of grant funding opportunities available through the Laura J. Musser Rural Initiative Program which assists non-profit organizations with general operating expenses. The Board engaged in a brief discussion regarding specific projects which might be considered appropriate for grant funding; these include prizes for a student writing contest, and assisting with the development of a podcast.

7. **OTHER MATTERS**:

Frank offered his appreciation for being included in the meeting and given an opportunity to be heard concerning the proposal to organize a self-sustaining writers group on Kauai with the support of HWG. Diane indicated her enthusiastic support of such "satellite" groups on neighbor islands, and mentioned that she'd like to discuss in the future including a line-item in the budget to assist these groups in paying for the expenses of an annual meeting-type event. Bruce and Joy asked Frank to go ahead and begin soliciting writers who have an interest in participating in such a group. Donna will add Frank's proposal to the agenda for the February Board meeting, and Bruce asked that Frank draft a short, one-page summary of how he envisions the group developing, and other pertinent details. Diane stated that she would like to consider the Kauai group as a "pilot project" which could be replicated on other islands. Joy moved to give Frank the Guild's sanction to move forward with a pilot program; Bruce seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Margaret offered her support to Frank in this endeavor, and added that she would like to see HWG develop a close relationship with the Kauai Writers Conference, which offers a plethora of resources to Hawaii writers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The next **Board of Directors meeting** is scheduled for February 23, 2023 at 6:30 pm.

Due to the on-going pandemic, 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 Diane Revell (diane.b.revell@gmail.com) and Secretary Donna Beumler (dmbaumler@gmail.com) at least 10 days prior to the next meeting (no later than February 13, 2023). The final agenda will be emailed to the full membership five days prior to the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at **8:02 pm.**

Respectfully submitted this 17th day of February, 2023.

By: *__Donna Beumler__*

Donna Beumler

Secretary

Hawaii Writers Guild