

Minutes of the Hawaii Writers Guild (HWG) Board 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 Regional Representative*

Bob Lupo —*Treasurer*

Donna Beumler —*Secretary*

Joy Fisher —*Public Relations Director*

Bryan Furer —*Events Director and Volcano-area Regional Representative, joins at 6:48 pm*

Others Members present via Zoom:

Duncan Dempster —*Webmaster*

Carol Prescott

Angela Leslee

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** President Diane Revell called the meeting to order at **6:32 pm**.

2. **COMMUNITY OUTREACH/STUDENT WRITING PROJECT:**

a.) Special BOD meeting re: community outreach/student writing project, with guest Mahealani Wendt, held on March 9, 2023: Diane provided a summary of the meeting held on March 9th, the Minutes of which have been finalized and posted to the Guild's website. She noted that, in addition to the four HWG members who joined the Zoom call, three Board members also participated in the meeting, which was facilitated by Webmaster Duncan Dempster. Some of the participants are very experienced in the field of education and Diane was pleased with the exchange of ideas. In what turned out to be something of a brainstorming session, the topic of organizing a student writing "contest" was discussed at length, with some attendees expressing a strong preference for a non-competitive type of student writing "project." The point was made in this regard that a "contest" would likely not attract or interest students who typically do not believe they write well enough or otherwise possess the academic skills necessary to win a contest. Several other participants in the meeting recalled their own very positive past experiences with high school writing contests. Diane also mentioned that the group discussed offering as an award or prize membership in HWG, which would then permit the student or students to submit their writing for publication in *Latitudes*, with "publication" being potentially an important component of the college application process.

b. Opportunity to attend presentation/readings in Hilo (Maui-based Peace Poem Project) on April 29, 2023: Diane noted that the group also discussed the Maui-based “Peace Poem Project.” HWG was encouraged to have a presence at the awards ceremony, to be held on April 29th at UH- Hilo, and which does include Big Island students as contest winners. Member Gwyn Gorg has been in contact with the organizer of the event, Melinda Gohn, and forwarded an e-mail which includes details of the ceremony as well as reference to six different areas where volunteer help is needed. However, the e-mail also appears to indicate that space at the event is limited. Diane has since endeavored several times to contact Melinda to clarify whether volunteer help is still needed, and whether there is space for HWG members to attend and support the project, but no response has been received.

c. Creative writing class project at North Kohala Library: Diane made reference to a project being developed by members Carol Prescott and Michael Foley, which would offer a creative writing class to students at the library in Kapa’au. Carol recently inquired as to whether she and Michael would have the support of the Guild in this endeavor, and Diane proposed that this project be added to the agenda for the April BOD meeting. (See e-mail summary from Carol Prescott, appended as ATTACHMENT “A”). Diane opined that the project certainly could address an important goal of outreach to students in the community. Carol clarified that the plan is to offer a writing workshop for middle and high school students which meets every other week to encourage creative writing, and to provide a forum for public school students to meet homeschooled and non-public school students as well. Joy inquired as to whether she should write an article for the Guild’s on-line member newsletter about the project, but Carol felt that would be premature at this point. She anticipates that the classes might begin in the summer or fall. Diane mentioned to Carol that the Minutes of the March 9th special meeting contain quite a bit of contact information and other resources pertinent to local schools.

d. Facilitation by member Phil Anderson of public reading on Maui with guest Minelle Mahtani: Diane provided an update regarding a request by Canadian-based author Minelle Mahtani for the Guild to organize a reading of her soon-to-be published book on indigenous topics at a venue on Maui in April. Diane was very pleased that member Phil Anderson volunteered to assist Minelle, and has forwarded to her the necessary form to request a slot toward the end of April at a Maui library. Once the details are set, Joy, as Public Relations Director for HWG, will publicize the event. Diane has also put Mahealani Wendt in contact with Minelle, as Mahealani and Minelle appear to share an interest in indigenous studies.

3. GRANT WRITING TRAINING OPTIONS:

Donna previously prepared and distributed to the BOD a memorandum reflecting the results of her survey of some of the on-line grant writing courses available, and appended the memo as Attachment “A” to the meeting agenda. The available on-line courses range from very

formal and expensive, to basic courses offered at no cost. Donna mentioned that she will take one of the free, 3-hour grant writing courses to find out more about how grants might be relevant to the Guild's projects and activities, but noted that she felt that any real plunge into the grant-writing arena should be delayed until HWG has more definitively identified projects upon which to consider spending grant funds.

Diane recalled that a topic at the March 9th special BOD meeting had been in reference to a Hawaii government-based grant program which supports "author-in-residence" funding for presentations in the schools. She believes that this particular grant application may be a simpler process than others. Donna noted that details of this government program can be found in the Minutes of the meeting. She mentioned that member Gwyn Gorg had discussed how she'd utilized this source of funding to offer a very successful theatrical program to students many years ago.

4. PROPOSAL: Expanding membership categories [Bylaws §3.11]:

Donna, advising that a member has suggested expanding membership categories, previously circulated a memorandum to the BOD (appended to the agenda as Attachment "B") which summarized what particular membership categories look like among some fellow writers' groups and clubs across the country and in England. This is a rather complicated topic which would ultimately involve an amendment to the Bylaws and changes to the website. Additionally, Vice President Bruce Stern, who is not available to attend today's meeting, has indicated he has some thoughts on this issue as well. However, the memo is intended to be a very preliminary summary of possible options.

Donna noted that the current HWG definition of member is limited to writers "in print," and suggested that the definition, at a minimum, may need to be re-written in order to address a more modern concept of what a "writer" is and does. If the Guild wishes to expand the current definition and embrace a broader concept of who is eligible for membership, there are options, some listed in the memo, which could include—for example—opening up membership to publishers, editors, librarians, bookstore owners, creative writing teachers, etc.

A second way to expand membership in the Guild would be to offer what other groups refer to as "affiliate," "associate," or even "household" memberships at a reduced rate. However, Donna expressed concern that the Guild already offers free to the general public a number of resources, such as access to HWG's YouTube channel and public readings, and was unsure what the Guild could offer non-writer members so as to solicit their interest.

5. PROPOSAL: POLLING MEMBERS REGARDING INTEREST IN ATTENDING GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS WITH READINGS:

Diane referenced comments made previously by a member, who is also affiliated with another writers group, concerning the possibility of holding general membership meetings at which members may read from their published work. The BOD had previously considered this proposal and had concluded that it would not be appropriate to invite members to read at regular monthly Board meetings. However, Diane would like to prepare an e-mail poll or survey using Google to inquire of the general membership as to their interest in attending and reading during a non-BOD “general membership” Zoom meeting. The readings would not be subject to critique, and members who read would be asked to provide a short biographical sketch. The poll would also solicit input as to when during the year such a meeting(s) would be appropriate, but in any event this type of meeting would not take place during January or February —when the Guild is busy with its Annual Meeting and preparations for its annual Special Planning Meeting.

Joy inquired as to what particular questions Diane might want to include in the poll. In addition to the basic query of whether members are interested in attending and/or reading at such a meeting, other questions suggested by Diane could include what time of day, and duration. She would like to send the poll out prior to April 1st, and asked that anyone who has ideas for questions to be included in the poll e-mail her. Diane will draft a questionnaire and provide the draft to the Board for review prior to finalizing and distributing the poll.

6. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE: Vice President Bruce Stern, previously having advised the Board that he would be traveling this date, was unavailable to provide a membership update at this time.

7. TREASURER’S REPORT:

Bob advised that fees paid as a result of two membership renewals and two new membership initiations leaves an ASB operating balance as of March 22, 2023 in the amount of \$10,044.67.

8. SECRETARY’S UPDATE:

Donna requested that the Board consider adding two questions to the membership application along the lines suggested in her memo of February 26th. She advised that, in surveying other writers groups re: possibly expanding membership categories, she noted that some groups inquire in their membership applications as to interest in volunteer opportunities. Donna proposed adding: *Are you interested in volunteer opportunities within HWG? And, If so, is there a particular skill set or area of expertise which you believe you could bring to HWG?*

Donna notes that, in this way, prospective members could be put on notice that HWG functions solely by the donated time and expertise of its members.

Duncan advised that it's not difficult to add questions to the on-line membership application. However, the current software license allows fields for only 12 questions and answers, and there are currently already 12 questions on the application. Duncan will look into what additional costs might be associated with increasing the number of questions allowed on the form; alternatively, the BOD may wish to delete (or combine) one or more of the questions on the form. Angela suggested that the volunteer-type questions might be appropriate for inclusion in the "welcome letter" sent to new members. In this regard, Joy advised that she and Cece send out a questionnaire to new members who have paid their dues, so that information about them may be included in the Guild's on-line newsletter, *Member News*. She noted that these questions could easily be added to the questionnaire. Diane suggested that Bruce may want to add a field on the membership logs which would capture volunteer-type information.

Additionally, Donna advised the Board that it may wish to consider in the future an amendment of the Bylaws. In particular, referring to §6.3.1.3, she believes the language appears to be contrary to HWG's non-profit status. In the event that the Board does find it appropriate to amend the Bylaws and delete reference to assisting with book sales, that might also be the time to work on other amendments, such as re-defining or expanding the definition of "member."

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATES:

a.) EVENTS COMMITTEE: Diane mentioned that she had sent out an e-mail to Hawaii County Parks and Recreation requesting that HWG be included on the list of vendors and informational tables present at the annual Cherry Blossom Festival in Waimea. This was an activity that the Guild attended every year, prior to the pandemic. This year (2023) saw a resumption of the Festival after a three year pandemic-related hiatus, but the Guild through oversight did not seek permission to attend. Diane has yet to receive a response to her e-mail.

Bryan sought clarification regarding the sale of books at HWG tables. Diane responded that the Guild's table at events such as the Cherry Blossom Festival is informative in nature and is not for the purpose of selling books. Rather, the intent of having an HWG presence at this type of event is to spread the word about the Guild and its activities, and to solicit writers in the community to consider joining the Guild. Diane noted that other writers groups (which are not organized under §501(c)(3)) do pay to maintain book-sales tables at local festivals and farmers market-type events.

Bryan mentioned that he has been giving some thought to what events might be appropriate venues for Guild participation, and wondered if HWG might want to look into maintaining a table at the annual week-long Merry Monarch Festival. He did note that it is likely too late to apply this year, but we may want to consider how to initiate this process for next

year's festival. He suggested that the Guild's table may serve as a means for the public to learn about the Guild, and also as a way to direct attention toward book-selling tables, such as those potentially staffed by the Volcano-area group and the Hawaii Writers Alliance. Bryan expressed some confusion over what the Guild has to offer to the general public at events if it is constrained from selling books by its non-profit status.

Joy mentioned in response that the Guild's tri-fold brochure, which she very recently updated and e-mailed to Board members, contains a list of the many benefits available. Bryan would like to explore with Board members how the Guild might best utilize available opportunities such as the very successful and universally popular Merry Monarch Festival. Several Board members made the point that a HWG informational table can and probably should feature copies of members' books. While those staffing the table cannot sell the books, it is permissible for the public to be told where they *can* obtain members' books. Duncan recalled that the Guild previously explored having a table at the Merry Monarch Festival, but was unable to find volunteers willing to staff the table. Duncan emphasized that it shouldn't be difficult to understand that, as a non-profit, we cannot actively sell books, but that we can "sell ourselves."

Further discussion was held concerning how HWG members might sell their books at bookstores. It was reiterated that members are free to contact bookstores in an effort to sell their books, and that this practice does not run afoul of the Guild's non-profit status. For example, *Kona Stories*, in Keauhou, offers monthly readings by local authors for a small fee to defer costs (\$25), and many Guild members have taken advantage of this opportunity. Authors are then free to leave their books with the bookstore owners for purposes of sale. Duncan also noted that the Guild's website includes not only screen shots of members' books, but links to where they can be purchased. Similarly, when Joy and Cece compile the Guild's on-line newsletter *Member News*, they include a section highlighting members who have recently published. In this section, there are photos of covers of the books, and, where possible, links to where the books can be purchased.

b.) PUBLIC RELATIONS: Joy indicated that she has not written any press releases this month. However, she and Cece have been working hard to put together the next issue of *Member News*. Joy advises that she is somewhat behind schedule, as she had anticipated being able to forward this issue of the newsletter to Duncan for posting to the website by the end of March, but at this point she is only about half-way finished.

Joy advised that, of the nine new members whose applications have been accepted since the last issue of the newsletter was posted, she believes that the dues status of three of them is unclear.¹ Of the remaining six new members, stories on four of them have been substantially completed. Additionally, eight members have published their work since the last issue of

¹ Duncan was later able to clarify which new members have paid their dues using their own PayPal accounts, and provided this information to Joy and the Board (see "Website Updates," infra.)

Member News was released, and Joy is working on stories highlighting these new publications. She also plans to include a feature story about members who donated their books which were then awarded as prizes at the Annual Meeting this past January, and another story about some of the ideas that were developed at the Special Planning Meeting in February, such as the creation of a writers group on Kauai, spearheaded by member Frank Reilly. Joy expects that this issue of *Member News* will be completed prior to the April BOD meeting.

c.) WEBSITE UPDATES: Duncan reported that he is working with a new member on developing his personal page for the website; of note, this member has published his original music *via* Amazon. Duncan advised Joy that this member has paid his dues and that Joy can now interview him for inclusion in the new-member section of *Member News*. Duncan also confirmed that another new member has paid her dues but has not yet submitted her biographical information. Duncan reminded the Board that, when dues are paid *via* PayPal, he will have that information; dues payments made by mail go directly to Bob however.

On the issue of PayPal and the website's link for payment of dues, Duncan continues to work with PayPal and believes he has resolved the problem. He queried as to whether to include a quarterly *pro rata* schedule for the payment of new member dues (applicable only to the first year, as thereafter all members will pay their dues in January.) Bob is in agreement with including such a schedule on the website, and advises that he sends new members this information as well, allowing them to pay a portion of the annual dues amount according to what quarter they've joined in. Duncan will proceed to include this information on the website and get the PayPal link working.

Duncan and Bob are working on laying the groundwork for the print version of *Latitudes I*. Bob advised that member Richard Bodien has volunteered to do the "hard labor" on the project, as he has experience in this regard. There is some question as to how easily the on-line version can be converted to a print product, Duncan noting that you cannot simply download the text on the website into print. Duncan does have all the files (including photos of the authors) for each edition of *Latitudes*. Bob believes that Richard has the software and expertise to accomplish the conversion from web to print.

Joy mentioned to Duncan that one of the issues of *Member News* contains the wrong version of the "Transitions" column, and she will make sure that he has the correct version to replace it.

Finally, Duncan mentioned that he has substantially completed the new "writers support group" webpage, but, despite several e-mails, he is still waiting for Bryan to provide him with information concerning the Volcano-area writers and their activities. Just prior to this time, Bryan had to leave the meeting; Duncan asked that anyone who is in touch with Bryan remind him of the need to provide this information.

d. LATITUDES 2024: Bob reported that, while there are indeed plans to publish an on-line *Latitudes V* in February of 2024, he doesn't ordinarily begin to review and revise guidelines, nor to solicit committee members, until mid-July. Bob did clarify that it is his intention to both oversee the print publication of *Latitudes I* and the creation of the on-line journal *Latitudes V* this year.

As to the print version of *Latitudes I*, Bob noted that he has not yet found a graphic artist to create a front and back cover. One member does have experience in this regard, but no longer possesses a subscription to the needed Adobe software, and Bob proposed to the Board that the Guild consider purchasing such software, as it would be useful as well for the additional upcoming print editions of *Latitudes*. He suggested that Adobe may offer a price break for non-profits. Duncan advised however that Kindle and Kindle Create provide a service by which authors can create their own covers at almost no charge. Angela also is aware that a number of on-line companies provide a free service for authors to design covers. Duncan clarified that these types of services offer a number of different templates, and will assist the author in adapting the template to his or her own work. Bob stated that he will mention this possibility to the member who has tentatively offered his/her assistance in this regard.

e. REGIONAL DIRECTOR REPORTS:

—**Volcano-area**: Bryan had to leave the meeting, and was unavailable to provide an update.

—**North Kohala-area**: Diane reported that, at the latest Zoom meeting of the North Kohala writers group held last week, no one attended; this was the first time that has happened, however. Diane stated that more typically, between four and six people do participate, and one long-time member who has not been attending recently has expressed a desire to join the group more frequently in the future. Diane indicated also that she had distributed to the North Kohala group *via* e-mail a brief questionnaire on the topic of the resumption of public readings. She received about five responses, which varied in terms of individual interest in public readings.

—**Tutu's House**: Joy reported that the Tutu's House group continues to meet *via* Zoom every Tuesday, with typical attendance ranging from four to six people.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Frank Reilly was not available this date to provide an update regarding his recent efforts to create a writers group on Kauai.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The next **Board of Directors meeting** is scheduled for April 27, 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 (dmbeumler@gmail.com) at least 10 days prior to the next meeting (no later than April 17, 2023). The final agenda will be emailed to the full membership five days prior to the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted this 2nd day of April, 2023

By: ___Donna Beumler_____

Donna Beumler

Secretary

Hawaii Writers Guild

ATTACHMENT “A”

Draft proposal -- feedback welcome

North Kohala Creative Writing Club for Kids

Participants: Students aged 12-17. Public, private and home schoolers are all welcome.

Facilitators: Michael Foley and Carol Prescott (& others, TBA)

Format: 75 min session. Discussion of a writing topic or genre, writing in response to prompts and sharing of writing. Journal writing between sessions will be encouraged, for which feedback will be available (if requested). Materials supplied at no cost.

Location: North Kohala Public Library community room

Timing: Initially we would meet every other week but could increase to weekly, depending on interest. Possibly starting in summer, but perhaps not until school is back in session in the fall.

Advertising: would be via library website, library circulars, North Kohala Mountain News, posters at community sites, personal contacts with school personnel and local parents.

About the facilitators

Michael Foley, is in his third career as poet and memoirist, having retired from a second career teaching high school English and creative writing, after 20 years working backstage at theaters in London and with the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Carol Prescott recently retired from her position as a professor at University of Southern California and is working on three writing projects: *Lena's Letters*, a creative nonfiction work inspired by her grandparents; *Living With Cognitive Impairment*, a guide for patients and families; and a technical book on analysis of longitudinal data.

Michael and Carol are both members of the Hawaii Writers Guild and enjoy helping students express themselves in writing, whether it be through fiction, nonfiction, poetry or other genres.