

National Press Club
General Membership Meeting
January 14, 2022

2021 National Press Club President Lisa Matthews opened the general membership meeting at noon.

She told members that the meeting would not have separate portions dedicated to the membership and treasury reports and details typically provided during those portions would be incorporated during other sections of the meeting.

Matthews said it was an honor and the opportunity of a lifetime to serve as the 114th National Press Club President.

Motion to approve minutes: Secretary Mike Balsamo noted that with a tally of 27 years, the minutes from October's general membership meeting were approved.

2021 President Report: Matthews said she expected a very different 2021 and although the Club's leadership had anticipated challenges because of the pandemic, it was expected that there would be improvements as the year went on. She detailed steep financial losses, staff downsizing and safety protocols. The Club will have a loss in 2021, but it will be under \$1 million. The Club had budgeted for a loss of \$2.4 million.

Matthews said the Club is budgeting to \$1.5 million in 2022. She said that in general, the Club has assets of about \$18 million and a total debt of about \$1.9 million. She noted no money from the Rockwell Fund has been spent during the pandemic.

Matthews highlighted a number of COVID-19-related safety protocols, including the Club's vaccine requirement, mask policies and developed a reputation as a place that is safe to do business. She noted the Club worked to keep the Club open and available with a staff of about one-third the pre-pandemic size.

She recognized Mesfin Mekonen for 50 years of service to the Club. He began working at NPC in 1972.

Matthews also recognized the work of the Headliners team for major news-making interviews, including with Dr. Anthony Fauci, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and others. Matthews also highlighted a number of events related to Press Freedom, scholarships and awards the Club put on during the year.

Handing over the gavel: Matthews introduced 2022 National Press Club President Jen Judson and remarked about Judson's long service to the Club as Vice President, Club Secretary and Chair of the Board of Governors.

At 12:16 p.m., Matthews banged the gavel to officially turn over the presidency to Judson and passed the gavel to Judson.

Matthews and other members of the Board of Governors applauded as Judson took the gavel and reigns as Club President.

2022 President's Report: Judson thanked Matthews for her leadership and her work leading the club through the pandemic. She also thanked her husband, editors and colleagues, as well as the National Press Club staff.

Judson announced she was postponing her inauguration until the Spring. Judson noted she will prioritize the Club's work on press freedom and would use all available resources to push for the safe return of Austin Tice, a journalist who was kidnapped while reporting in Syria nearly a decade ago.

Judson also said she plans to double down on efforts to increase trust in the media and improve media literacy.

Judson also thanked Angela Greiling Keane for her work as president of the National Press Club Journalism Institute. She announced that with new leadership at the Club, there would also be new leadership at the NPCJI and that she had informed the NPCJI Board that she had asked former Club President Gil Klein to take over as NPCJI President. Judson noted that in keeping with Club policy, she expected Klein would serve no longer than two years.

Q&A: Judson opened the floor to questions from Club members.

Q: How is the staff doing and will they be able to return after furlough?

A: Judson referred to Matthews, who said the staff is doing great and were very appreciative of the contributions that were made during the holidays. Executive Director Bill McCarren said the Club has been able to bring back some staff members who were furloughed but the Club would need to be producing revenue with a continuous margin in order to bring the staffing back to pre-pandemic levels.

Q: How is the Reliable Source and when will membership breakfast return?

A: McCarren said there is no immediate plan to return to the member breakfast very soon and noted there were only a handful of people who showed up for the breakfast daily when it was offered in the earlier days of the pandemic. He said the Reliable Source has been seeing an uptick in members for lunch on some days, though most days less than 10 people show up for lunch.

Q: Can Emily talk about membership trends, overall journalist versus communicator members and what are we doing to retain our members?

A: Treasurer Emily Wilkins noted that overall, the membership numbers have somewhat decreased, given the challenges of the pandemic. She noted the Club has made significant efforts to retain members and the Club is seeing a lot of new applications. She also noted there are slightly more journalist members compared to communicator members. She noted there was only a slight decrease in membership.

Q: We have millions in the bank. Why would we consider selling art? Aren't reserve funds just for this type of situation with COVID?

A: Judson noted the Rockwell Fund is for the deep future of the Club and noted the Club's leadership has done everything it can to avoid touching that during the pandemic. Judson remarked that the Club looked at the art that the Club has and what could potentially be sold to help shore up the pandemic debt. She said the art that the Club is considering selling is not related to journalism or the Club's history.

Judson and Matthews thanked all the members for attending the meeting. Judson banged the gavel to adjourn the meeting at 12:35 p.m.

(Minutes prepared by NPC Secretary Mike Balsamo)