

**National Press Club
General Membership Meeting
May 31, 2024**

National Press Club President Emily Wilkins opened the meeting at 5:02 p.m. Approximately 50 members were present, including journalists and communicators, so there was not a quorum.

Approval of minutes: NPC Secretary Poonam Sharma moved to approve the minutes from the January 19, 2024 general membership meeting. NPC Treasurer Alisa Parenti seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Membership report: Membership Secretary Mark Schoeff Jr. reported that the club's total membership stands at 2,416, reflecting a 3% year-over-year decline and a 4% drop from the previous month. This includes 1,254 journalists, 1,013 communicators, and 280 young members, representing 11.5% of the total. Leadership has been working over the past six months to address membership decline, focusing on both retention and new member recruitment. Future initiatives will focus on streamlining the membership enrollment process and expanding the benefits portfolio.

Treasurer's report: Treasure Alisa Parenti said In March 2024, the club achieved its first profitable month of the year, following a typical slow start in January and February. March, April, and May are all on track for profitability. However, rising costs for goods and payroll have impacted profit margins, and the club finished below its budgeted targets for March and April. Despite this, the club's investments have performed well, with total assets now at \$27.5 million and over \$5 million in cash and reserves. The club remains debt-free with a \$1 million line of credit. Membership revenue year-to-date is lower than last year, although overall revenue for April 2024 has outpaced April 2023. However, costs have risen by \$255,000 compared to the same month last year. The club's restaurant, the Reliable Source, has expanded hours and increased revenue, though it has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels. Looking ahead, the club is monitoring trends in event bookings, which remain tentative as companies are hesitant to finalize plans far in advance. Ongoing improvements include kitchen renovations, new flooring, and system upgrades to the cloud. These investments are expected to enhance the member experience and yield positive returns.

House rules: Wilkins discussed proposed changes to the house rules, and opened up the floor for discussion. Members discussed and suggested the following changes:

- *The right to use the privileges and facilities of the Club and other property of the Club in accordance with the By-Laws and House Rules of the Club is extended to each member and their permitted guest(s) as well as accredited reporters and attendees at public events. The following House Rules are applicable and subject to change at any time upon approval of the Club's Board of Governors **with appropriate notice to membership.***
- *No one under 21 will be served alcohol and it is Club policy that the staff must confirm the age of any person attempting to purchase an alcoholic beverage. Club staff will not*

*serve alcoholic beverages to anyone who appears to be intoxicated. The judgment of Club staff concerning the state of intoxication is final. Members **shall** not reprimand, or abuse staff for refusal to serve alcohol to someone whom a staff member deems intoxicated.*

- *Subject to **subsequent mandatory** investigation and final action by the Board, any Club officer, board member, the Executive Director or their designee may immediately remove or suspend a member from access to the Club **for two weeks** because of language or behavior that is inappropriate, hostile, threatening, abusive, profane, discriminatory or otherwise offensive, including interference with the work of staff or members on Club premises or at Club-sponsored events.*
- *Taking pictures, video, audio or other electronic recordings of anyone present on the 14th Floor is prohibited unless the President or a Board member grants a temporary waiver for an event, a special promotion or a guest photo. Even then, care must be taken to not incorporate anyone in the background or reveal anyone not granting direct permission to be photographed, videotaped or recorded in any way.*
- *A member is responsible for their dues until they formally resign, in writing, and turn in their membership cards. A member who formally resigns and seeks to rejoin will have to bring their house account up to date.*
- *Our expectation is that people wear **appropriate** dress at all times in the Club, except for the gym where appropriate gym attire is allowed.*

Executive director's report: Saugy reported that the Club has introduced several new offerings, including a new menu and cocktail selection at the bar. A new wine list will soon be available, featuring wine and champagne by the glass, made possible by the purchase of special equipment. Breakfast service is now available at the Reliable Source from 7:30 AM, attracting about five to ten guests daily. Efforts to increase food and beverage visibility on social media have also been ramped up, with enhanced visuals to promote the offerings. Menu changes are expected for the summer season. Additionally, the club has been upgrading its membership and POS systems, with completion expected by the end of June. The new system will move membership data to the cloud and integrate Apple Pay and other payment methods, improving billing and membership applications. The club has also upgraded its Wi-Fi to Wi-Fi 6, supporting up to 5,000 devices, offering faster speeds, and ensuring seamless connection throughout the club. Major equipment upgrades are underway in the kitchen, including new grills and stoves to enhance banquet capabilities. Looking ahead, a New Year's party and family holiday event are planned, with the latter being a repeat of last year's successful gathering of over 250 members.

President's report: Wilkins said that one of her main initiatives has been advancing press freedom. Various club members have worked independently on efforts to support detained American journalists and journalists in exile, but the goal is to create a centralized entity to strengthen the club's leadership in this area, raise funds, and promote its brand more effectively. After careful planning with input from key members, and legal oversight from David Jones, the club is moving toward a fiscal sponsorship model for a Press Freedom Center. Under this model, the Institute will sponsor the new press freedom center, allowing it to raise money while ensuring coordination and avoiding conflicts with the Institute's own fundraising efforts. This approach enables the center to start operating and fundraising more quickly, with oversight from the Institute to ensure unity. A dedicated Director for the Press Freedom Center will be appointed, focusing solely on these initiatives. This role will be separate from the club's Executive Director, ensuring that both press freedom and club operations receive focused attention. The structure is still being finalized, but the aim is to ensure the club remains in control of its press freedom initiatives while the Institute benefits as well. Further updates on the center's development will be shared as plans progress.

The meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.