

Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets Board Meeting, Fall 2019

Friday, October 26, 2019

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Michael Kriesel at 3:10 PM

Attending: Jeannie Bergmann, Lewis Bosworth, Dennis Collier, Colleen Frentzel, Annette Grunseth, Carol Pemrich Hauser, Jeffrey Johannes, Joan Wiese Johannes, Fred Kreutz, Michael Kriesel, Christina Kubasta, James P. Roberts, Kathleen Serley, Tori Grant Welhausen, Ed Werstein

Approval of Minutes of Spring 2019 Board Meeting: Motion by Colleen Frentzel, seconded by Lewis Bosworth to approve the minutes. Minutes approved.

Additions to Agenda: None

Old Business:

1. Update on zoo project: Fred Kreutz reported that despite great enthusiasm on part of school districts, the project is stalled and probably won't happen in 2020. This item will be removed from future agendas until Fred feels it is ready to go back on.

2. New chapbook contest chair Annette Grunseth has flyers available listing contest criteria, rules and deadlines.

New Business (all reports available in the conference folder):

1. Treasurer's report: Colleen Frentzel distributed an updated quarterly report. She said that calendar printing expenses should be reduced in future years.

2. Membership chair report: Naomi Cochran (absent)

3. Webmaster report/Fall conference report: Tori Grant Welhouse: the webmaster report in the folder lists the top visited sections on the site. Tori said a discussion of automated renewal cannot be held without Naomi being present.

4. *Bramble* Report: Christina Kubasta indicated the literary journal is going to three issues per year. She appreciates suggestions on themes and guest editors. The fall issue is not yet available, but a printed broadside was available at the conference.

5. Poet Laureate Commission Report: Ed Werstein said the commission met once since spring and plans to undertake more extensive fundraising efforts to better support the poet laureate. Ed serves on a subcommittee that will produce a broadside for each laureate. The commission's next meeting was the day after the conference, Sunday, October 27, in Madison.

Ed also reported that the WFOP would again sponsor an hour at Woodland Pattern Marathon poetry reading on Saturday, January 25, for \$350. Interested readers should contact Ed; about ten would fill the time.

6. Calendar Business Report: Carol Pemrich Hauser reported that 1,250 copies were printed, including 350 perfect-bound copies, which were not selling as well as the spiral-bound. Nonetheless, she suggested considering doing perfect bound again for the 2021 calendar.

Ed Werstein wondered if spine-bound copies could be printed without calendar pages, perhaps called “showcase” rather than “calendar,” but Jeannie Bergmann pointed out that would require separate print runs. Jeannie also noted that booksellers might find it difficult to store spiral-bound and thus be discouraged from carrying them. Calendar events and sales throughout the state are doing well.

Carol plans to step down at end of year. She feels that position requires more than one person.

7. 2021 Calendar editors: Keesia Hyser, Nancy Jesse, Gillian Nevers

8. Archivist Report/Student contest: Lewis Bosworth: the contest is underway with a January deadline. Lewis has a poster available for distribution at schools.

9. Conference survey results and discussion: Cathryn Cofell. The report was distributed and reviewed. A highlight for Michael Kriesel was moving the fall conference to mid-October at latest and the spring conference to early May, toward better weather. Jeannie Bergmann noted that later spring time could conflict with the May 1 deadline for the quarterly *Museletter*. The survey showed no clear results on:

a) the number of conferences per year (the current two a year in spring and fall, one in the summer, or one conference in some years and two in the others) and

b) the length of the conferences (the current Friday night and all day Saturday, a full weekend or alternating those options).

The majority favored a single, weekend-long conference for the Fellowship’s 7th anniversary in 2025, with Green Lake the favored location for half of respondents.

With about 60 members attending the fall conference; Jeannie Bergmann noted that a disproportionate amount of the dues paid by all members were funding the conference for a minority. Kathleen Serley said that regional conferences might be one way to address this, but a statewide event provides the opportunity for whole fellowship to get together. The problem, Jeannie said, was that the whole membership wasn’t present for fellowship and asked what changes might increase turnout. Kathleen felt that the activities offered at the conference, rather than the location, were the main barrier to attendance.

Kathleen also urged the board focus more on main issues facing the WFOP, such as the conference program including opportunities for attendees to gain new skills, and encouraging younger poets to join the WFOP and attend conferences, and spend less time on reports.

10. 2020 Spring Conference: Ed Werstein: May 1-2 at the Blue Harbor in Sheboygan, featuring Melissa Tuckey, a poet and activist in water ecology and eco-justice.

11. Special grant requests: There are no new requests. A \$285 grant was provided to the Chippewa Valley Writers for a visit to Menomonie by poet laureate Margaret Rozga on October 11-12. Michael Kriesel noted that these small grants are a big part of WFOP’s charter/mission, one of the best things we do, and that the board can process the requests very quickly.

12. Humor contest: Fred Kreutz proposed a humor contest for funny poems, suggesting it be called the Amuse prize, a play on the WFOP Muse prize. The winner could receive a rubber chicken with a check inside. Joan Wiese Johannes agreed to use humor as the theme for the 2020 Triad contest to test the kind of response this theme would get.

Jeannie Bergmann proposed online submissions for Fellowship contests to attract younger poets, which is a critical need for our organization, and to be more environmentally conscious.

Contest coordinators, Fred Kreutz for Muse and Jeffrey Johannes and Joan Wiese Johannes for Triad said that current procedures were working and that judges preferred paper copies. All indicated they would consider stepping down as contest chairs if procedures were changed. Jeannie suggested recruiting judges more amenable to electronic submissions and finding people willing to help them.

Bramble accepts both paper and electronic submissions, according to Christina Kubasta and Tori Grant Welhouse, as does the Calendar, according to Ed Werstein. Christina noted that she packages all *Bramble* submissions and sends them to guest editors, and similar procedures could be explored for contests. Tori said the technology was not an obstacle.

Several board members said offering both options, instead of switching entirely to electronic, could be considered. Christina suggested that an online option would not be fixing a broken system but an upgrade that might attract more submissions and younger entrants. Colleen Frentzel noted that the board also needed to think of current members who may not like to submit their poems online. She also suggested having a person to manage an online portal that accepts submissions and to distribute them to contest coordinators.

The matter was tabled and placed on the agenda for the spring meeting.

13. 70th and 75th anniversary observances: Michael Belongie was not present.

Adjournment: Motion by Ed Werstein, seconded by Christina Kubasta to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 3:59 PM.