

Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, Minutes of October 25, 2023, Board Meeting

The Zoom meeting was called to order at 6:32 PM by Co-President Cathryn Cofell.

Attending: Nancy Austin, James Burton, Naomi Cochran, Co-President Cathryn Cofell, Secretary Dennis Collier, Treasurer Colleen Frentzel, Mike Gadzik, Co-President Ronnie Hess, Joan Johannes, Vice President Christina Kubasta, Sandra Lindow, James Roberts, Kathleen Serley, Lucy Tyrell, Tori Grant Welhouse, Ed Werstein

Old Business

1. Approval of Consent Agenda: Motion by Nancy Austin, seconded by Tori Grant Welhouse to approve the following items in the Consent Agenda:

- a) April 27, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes*
- b) Treasurer's Report*
- c) Regional VP Reports*
- d) Webmaster Report*
- e) Bramble Report*
- f) Muse Report*
- g) Triad Report*
- h) Poet Laureate Commission Report*
- i) Calendar Business Report*
- j) Swag Report*
- k) Museletter Poetry Pages*

* Asterisk here and below indicates written report available.

2. Student Contest Report & Discussion*: Jeff Anderson, in his written report, suggested an ekphrastic poetry contest for adults, like the one for students this year in partnership with the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau. Board members agreed, and discussed ways to bring it about: –partnering with other museums and the Woodson to sponsor and promote the contest, and possibly serve as venues for readings of poems that have been selected. –making ekphrastic poetry the theme for the 2024 Triad Contest to gauge members' interest: contest chair Joan Johannes noted this fits with the WFOP's two-part program, *The Art of Writing about Art*, which Barbara Crooker will lead in November and December. –publication of selected poems in an anthology or special *Bramble* issue, perhaps the only one that year, though some were concerned that *Bramble* readers may miss the other two issues; a QR code in the publication linking each poem to the art online would eliminate having to include the art in the publication.

Board members agreed not to rush this project, but plan it for the WFOP's 75th anniversary in 2025 or the next year. Regional vice presidents were asked to contact museums in their areas. Discussion will continue at the next board meeting.

3. Swanson Donation Task Force & Process*: Ronnie Hess reported that the task force has met twice and is considering three criteria for eligibility, with applicants needing to satisfy two of three: age, not in a Master of Fine Arts program since they already have mentorship, contest, and publication opportunities, and not having published a full-length book. Colleen Frentzel believes this fits Richard Swanson's desires; he initially proposed a contest but understood that the WFOP might not be able to support that, and he trusted the board to make good use of his donation. Several ideas were shared: –Christina Kubasta favored a Swanson Emerging Poet Fellowship that the recipient could use for travel, research, or any other desired use, and said that The Shake Rag Alley in Mineral Point would also

provide a free week-long residency, where the emerging poet could provide outreach to schools, readings and other offerings.

–Cathryn Cofell suggested a portion of the funds should supplement existing efforts, such as a poets in prisons program where membership could encourage incarcerated poets.

–James Burton said a workshop for students and new poets at the annual conference, where established poets already gather and could be available to mentor, with a prize for the best poem from workshop. Because planning is already well underway for the 2024 conference, the workshop could not be offered until 2025. Joan Johannes suggested that members be offered financial support for ongoing mentorship, noting that this can take time away from their own writing. The donation could also be used to waive the conference registration fee for new poets.

–Ronnie Hess suggested funding a book contract with Bent Paddle Press or another publisher.

Ronnie said that the initiative should be ongoing, not started then dropped after a few years, and added it is a program around which the WFOP could raise funds. Ronnie will pull the task group together to hone the ideas of a residency with Shake Rag, the workshop/mentoring format suggested by James B and support of existing efforts. Colleen plans to place Swanson's donation in a money market account (currently drawing 5.2%) to draw interest, earmarked for the donor's program, until funds are needed.

4. 2024 Conference Plans*: The written report apparently did not get to all members, so Ed Werstein will send out the update after the planning committee meets on November 5.

5. Web Calendar – Usage and Next Steps: Tori Grant Welhouse said the online calendar is not getting as many visits as expected and encouraged board members to promote it use.

6. New Member Orientation Plans: An orientation session will be held in early 2024, with as many as 50 new members. Ronnie Hess encouraged regional vice presidents and others to promote it once the date has been set.

New Business

1. 2023-24 Budget Review & Approval*: Cathryn Cofell said the budget was intended to serve as a guide for future spending but is a work in progress and means to have flexibility. Colleen Frentzel said it should make WFOP finances more transparent to the board and to membership. She noted that budgeted numbers, shown along actual income and expenditure amounts from 2022-23, were based on 10-year averages. Motion by Ronnie Hess, seconded by Michael Gadzik to approve the 2023-24 budget. Motion carried.

2. Recommendations for Lifetime Membership: Motion by Christina Kubasta, seconded by Sandra Lindow to approve Lifetime Memberships for Jackie Langetieg and Joan Johannes. Motion carried.

3. Triad Contest: How to Increase Entries to the Kay Saunders Contest: Motion by Ronnie Hess, seconded by Tori Grant Welhouse, to open the Kay Saunders Emerging Poet Contest to residents of Wisconsin who are not members of the WFOP. Motion carried. Making this contest part of the Muse Prize, which is open to non-members, instead of the Triad, which is limited to members, will also be considered at a future Board meeting.

4. WFOP Calendar Editors – Need for 2026 and 2027: Cathryn Cofell asked board members to invite members to serve in these positions, especially younger members who could learn from current editors.

5. James Burton is resigning as the Board's Under 40 representative due to family, school and work demands. Suggestions for his replacement are welcome.

6. Museletter Editor F.J. Bergman is ready to give up the weekly emailed events calendar that she also compiles, so transition to the online calendar and Mailchimp email is underway.

The Board's next meeting will be scheduled in late January or early February.

Motion by Christina Kubasta, seconded by Ronnie Hess to adjourn. Motion carried at 8:10 PM.