

**Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets Spring Board Meeting
April 27, 2023**

The meeting was called to order by Cathryn Cofell at 6:35 PM.

In attendance: Jeff Anderson, Nancy Austin, James Burton, Naomi Cochran, Cathryn Cofell, Dennis Collier, Anneliese Finke, Colleen Frentzel, Ronnie Hess, Joan Johannes, Christina Kubasta, James Roberts, Kathleen Serley, Shoshauna Shy, Thom Singleton, Tori Grant Welhouse, Ed Werstein, Kathrine Yets

Old Business

1. Approval of Consent Agenda
 - a) December 6 Board Meeting and Electronic Vote Minutes
 - b) Fiscal Fourth Quarter Financial Report
 - c) Membership Report
 - d) Archives Report
 - e) 2023 Calendar Business Manager Report
 - f) 2024 Calendar Editors' Report
 - g) 2024 Calendar Business Managers' Report
 - h) Contest Reports - Chapbook, Muse, Triad
 - i) Webmaster Report
 - j) Bramble Report
 - k) Social Media Report
 - l) Regional VP Reports
 - m) 75th Anniversary Conference Report
 - n) Poet Laureate Commission Report
 - o) Mother Tongue Partnership

Motion by Tori Grant Welhouse, seconded by Ronnie Hess, to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried.

2. Student Contest Report: Contest chair Jeff Anderson suggested changing the language about the contest to indicate that submitted poems (including good poems that did not necessarily win a prize) may be published on the WFOP website to celebrate poetry, inspire other student poets to submit in future years and get more traffic to the website. The board's consensus was that it was a good idea, and discussion focused on getting the young poets' and their parents' permission. That could be done at the time of entry or later, prior to publication, which might entail less work though volunteers will be needed to help. A fillable pdf form might ease the process of getting the needed permissions. Other ways to promote these young poets were inviting them to the annual conference and creating an online magazine.

3. Spring Conference: Thom Singleton, reporting for himself and Mike Gadzik, said that over 90 people have registered for the conference, including 19 who attend for the first time—actually 20, since this will be Thom's first conference.

4. Grant Guidelines Review: James Roberts, reporting for himself and Colleen Frentzel, provided an update. The current process for obtaining grants, he said, is simple, but needs work to ensure that members who are eligible know about it. The two will also work on grant guidelines for the WFOP.

5. Scholarship Fund: Ronnie Hess said the WFOP has a structure for accepting donations, but needs to permit contributors to target their gifts, whether for general purposes or for specific activities like a scholarship fund for conference attendance, travel expenses, classes or books. We also need to invite contributions. Treasurer Colleen Frentzel agreed more clear and concise procedures were desirable. Tori

Grant Welhouse noted that adjusting the donation form to toggle between categories for gifts on the website would be relatively easy, but allowing sustaining monthly contributions would be costly.

Discussion moved to a planned gift from member Richard Swanson, \$4,000 a year for 4 years, which he has suggested be used to encourage emerging poets. The WFOP already has the Kay Saunders Emerging Poet Award, so members wondered if it could be used in some other way, for instance, a different kind of contest, or scholarships for college English majors or for student attendance at WFOP conferences, or free WFOP memberships for students, or an online journal for emerging poets. Colleen said she would take these ideas back to Richard to see if he wanted his gift to provide another way to encourage younger poets. When a purpose is determined, the WFOP may want to seek additional gifts to sustain it.

Kathrine Yets offered to help Ronnie on the scholarship fund and Cathryn will ask for volunteers at the general meeting.

6. Treasurer's Report - Fiscal Year End: Colleen Frentzel showed average annual income and expenditures over the past 10 years. With income approaching \$27,000 on average annually, and expenses of about \$24,000, the fellowship is in good financial shape.

New Business

1. Fiscal Year 2024 Budget - Cathryn Cofell and Colleen Frentzel will put together a draft budget for board to review and vote on via email.

2. Finance Policy Review and Approval: Motion by Colleen Frentzel, seconded by Ronnie Hess, to approve the WFOP Financial and Control Policies. The budget included an increase to \$500 on the regional vice president's spending authority. Kathleen Serley supported that increase since it provided more opportunities for local activities, and James Roberts noted he was exploring a one-day mini-conference in Platteville as a use for his budget. Ronnie Hess lauded them and other regional vice presidents for their work in organizing those activities, and Cathryn encouraged regional vice presidents to get help in organizing events in their regions. In addition, she and Christina Kubasta have grant writing experience that might also be helpful to regional vice presidents in finding money. Motion carried.

3. Communications Task Force Recommendation: Motion by Christina Kubasta, seconded by Ed Werstein, to approve an annual expenditure of \$239.88 to purchase Google calendar to create an online events calendar on the WFOP website. Task Force chair Christina Kubasta noted that the current weekly events email could be improved but is limited by its platform as well as the preferences of the editor. Tori Grant Welhouse has experimented with an online Google calendar that permits anyone to list events, rather than going through a regional vice president, though it will be curated. In addition, she sends twice monthly emails via Mailchimp, which is more visually attractive and more appealing than the current weekly events email. Tori noted that Google calendar requires persons to enter information in a standardized way. Entries would not be segmented by region, which could be a disadvantage, but Tori said that a naming convention, for instance, "Name of Location Reading" instead of "Poetry Reading" could address this. Christina noted that both an online events calendar and Mailchimp with embedded links could encourage more people to visit the website. The weekly events will continue in tandem with the online calendar at least for the near-term as the latter is evaluated. Motion carried.

4. Brainstorming on Member Connections: The survey of members conducted after the fall conference showed members were looking for more fellowship opportunities and more ways to connect. Christina Kubasta noted that mini meet-and-greets, both statewide and regional, and regional gatherings now that there will be only one statewide conference a year have been suggested. The discussion turned to engaging new members, and Ronnie Hess noted that the Wisconsin Writers Association offered a Zoom session for new members who were put into different chat groups to speak with one another. Also

suggested were targeted invitations to local or regional events, a welcome packet, mentors at conferences or regionally, ridesharing to and room-sharing at conferences, and critique groups. Colleen Frentzel noted that copies of the *Wisconsin Poets Calendar* and *Bramble* had been included in past welcome packets, but such mailings were quite costly. A free broadside was another suggestion. Membership chair Naomi Cochran detailed what she currently sends out, including a pamphlet that needs updating, and Ed Werstein and James Roberts noted their outreach at regional vice presidents to new members.

5. 2024 Conference: Ed Werstein proposed that Blue Harbor Resort in Sheboygan, which had been scheduled to host a conference in 2020 that was canceled by the pandemic, be the site of WFOP's 2024 conference on May 3-4. Nickole Brown is a potential headline poet. The resort would serve hors d'oeuvres on Friday, buffet breakfast and lunch on Saturday, and continental breakfast on Sunday for those who stay over a second night. One concern is the cost for lodging room rate: \$175 though up to 4 occupants are allowed in the suites. Lisa Vihos, Anneliese Finke, Jim Landwehr and Kathrine Yets are helping Ed with the planning.

Conference Planner Updates: Nancy Austin has taken the lead on updating the existing conference planner. She will now share it with other regional VPs to get their feedback.

6. Timeline for Contests and Lifetime Members: Awards to winners of WFOP contests, and the reading of their winning entries, have been part of conferences, but going from two conferences to one will require reconsideration of this practice, Cathryn Cofell said. Suggestions were readings at central locations or via Zoom, with readers sharing several poems, not just their winning entries, and a Friday night awards event at the conference. More publicity about the winners, and directing persons to their poems on the website, were also suggested.

The next board meeting will be held this summer, on a date and time to be determined.

Motion by Nancy Austin, seconded by Ronnie Hess, to adjourn. Motion carried at the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 PM.