

## Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets, Minutes of February 1, 2024, Board Meeting

The Zoom meeting was called to order at 6:36 PM by Co-President Cathryn Cofell.

Attending: Jeff Anderson, Nancy Austin, Sophie Bebeau, Cathryn Cofell, Dennis Collier, Colleen Frentzel, Michael Gadzik, Ronnie Hess, Jeffrey Johannes, Joan Wiese Johannes, Christina Kubasta, James Roberts, Kathleen Serley, Lucy Tyrrell, Tori Grant Welhouse, Ed Werstein

### Old Business

1. Approval of Consent Agenda\* – Cathryn Cofell at 6:36 PM
  - a. Secretary's Report/Minutes
  - b. Treasurer's Report
  - c. Archivist's Report
  - d. Poet Laureate Commission Report
  - e. Chapbook and Muse Reports
  - f. Student Contest Reports
  - g. VP Reports

Motion by Ronnie Hess, seconded by Nancy Austin to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion carried.

\* Indicates, here and below, report available

2. WASAL Partnership - Ada Limon Watch Parties: Cathryn Cofell reported that the WFOP is working with the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters to organize watch parties for US Poet Laureate Ada Limón's visit to Wisconsin on May 23. We will also share our April Poetry Month events with the Academy.
3. Brain Mill Book Award – Christina Kubasta reported that this chapbook contest is still on schedule. She expects the submission portal will go online soon, and the winning chapbook to be chosen in the fall.
4. New Communications Rollout – Sophie Bebeau is posting a lot of material on social media about the WFOP and is attracting new Instagram followers. She plans to prepare a Google form or similar vehicle for collecting information. She is also working on a newsletter to replace the weekly email that went out for the last time on January 29, which could feature member news, submission opportunities and a member of the month story. Sophie, who has a marketing background, says consistent branding is important for our social media channels. She also would like to purchase a third-party scheduler to help with her work, and Co-Presidents Cathryn Cofell and Ronnie Hess will work with her on this.
5. Approval of Emerging Poet Definition\* – Cathryn Cofell: Motion by Colleen Frentzel, seconded by Ronnie Hess to approve the Emerging Poet Definition for the Kay Saunders Emerging Poet Contest and the Richard Swanson Emerging Poet Fellowship. To qualify, a poet must be a Wisconsin resident age 18 or older, plus satisfy two of the following: not having won a contest; having minimal publications including no full-length collection or poems in national journals; and no MFA or PhD in poetry or creative writing. The board decided to require two rather than all three of these criteria because some felt that satisfying all three would be too restrictive. Applicants for the Swanson Fellowship will be asked to

submit a brief essay on why they consider themselves an emerging poet. Joan Wiese Johannes pointed out the Saunders Emerging Poets Contest is only one of the WFOP contests, so poets have other opportunities. Motion carried.

6. Approval of Richard Swanson Fellowship\*: The fellowship, offered in partnership with the Shake Rag Alley Center for the Arts in Mineral Point, will provide a \$500 honorarium and a week-long stay at Shake Rag Alley, where the emerging poet will be mentored by an established poet selected by the WFOP. Richard Swanson provided a \$16,000 gift to the WFOP, part of which will be used to fund this fellowship. Ronnie Hess said a June 1-August 1 submission period is planned with announcement of the winner by the end of year. A fellowship will be offered each of the next four years. Approval was tabled until the board's April meeting to finalize a budget, which could include administration, a fee for the judge, a food allowance for the winner while at Shake Rag Alley and other costs, in addition to the honorarium. Ronnie does not think the budget will exceed \$1,000 per year. Shake Rag's board also has to approve this before we can proceed.

7. 2023-24 budget: Board members were asked to review the financials through January 31 compared to budget and share any comments with Treasurer Colleen Frentzel.

### **New Business**

#### 1. Co-Presidents' Update

- a. New Member Orientation will be held Sunday, February 4, at 4 pm via Zoom.
- b. Editors for 2026 Wisconsin Poets Calendar will be Jenna Rindo and Katrina Serwe.

2. Open Positions / Fall Election – Vice President Christina Kubasta will be nominated as president and is seeking persons to be vice president. She also noted that the co-president model worked well and she may try to find someone to serve with her. Dennis Collier will step down as secretary, and Colleen Frentzel will stay on as treasurer. Elections of officers for three-year terms are held in the fall, and since we no longer have a fall meeting the vote will be held by email.

3. Celebrating Contest Winners - Potential Process Changes – Joan and Jeffrey Johannes reported that the Zoom reading for Triad contest winners went well and it allowed for persons not attending a conference to hear the winning poems. Joan also said that the Saunders Emerging Poet Contest will be held as part of the Triad Contest next fall but will be moved to the spring since non-members may enter it while other Triad categories are only open to members. The Muse or Chapbook contest coordinator may be asked to handle the Saunders contest as well.

4. Future of Student Contests: Jeff Anderson is willing to continue as coordinator of the ekphrastic contests, but needs administrative help for processing the annual contest entries when they come in. He also noted low participation in the Middle School category and said including ninth graders in that rather than the high school contest might be a way to address it. Board members shared ideas on other ways to reach out to school-age poets, and this will be discussed again at the April board meeting. Jeff also provided an update on student contest entries: 584 submissions and 534 accepted in all contest, including 321 submissions in the annual high school contest, 60 in the middle school and 203 in the ekphrastic contest.

5. Cathryn Cofell noted that with one conference a year, most board meetings are held by Zoom, including the one with the annual conference. She said the board should consider having an in-person meeting or social gathering at least once a year.

6. Colleen Frentzel will renew an expiring CD for two years rather than one year. The two-year rate is slightly lower but preferred since interest rates are expected to decline. She will also promote donations to the WFOP of stock and of IRA and similar distributions.

Motion by Christina Kubasta, seconded by Mike Gadzik to adjourn. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 PM.