

**Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets Fall Conference General Meeting
October 22, 2022**

The meeting was called to order by Ronnie Hess at 9:10 AM. Members attending their first conference were acknowledged: James Burton, Cindy Forsberg, Nick Pedriana, Karen Powers, Susan Reetz, Christy Schwan, Kathrine Yets and Mark Zastrow

Old Business

1. Approval of Spring 2022 General Meeting Minutes: Motion by Kimberly Blanchette, seconded by Thomas Davis to approve the minutes. Motion carried.

2. Reports – Informational Only

- a) Treasurer’s Report
- b) Membership Report
- c) Social Media Report
- d) Poet Laureate Commission Report
- e) Webmaster Report
- f) Bramble Report
- g) 75th Anniversary Conference Report
- h) Contest Reports – Chapbook, Muse, Triad, Student
- i) Regional VP Reports

3. Approval of Constitution and Bylaws Revision, Second Reading: Motion by Kimberly Blanchette, seconded by Karen Powers to approve the Constitution and Bylaws Revision.

Michael Belongie, president of the WFOP from 1992-95, spoke in opposition to the change that eliminates a vote on the Board of Directors for all past presidents, limiting it to the immediate past president. Michael has participated and voted regularly at board meetings since his term as president expired. He said the bylaws were changed in the 1960s to allow past presidents to vote to ease the decision making process. He noted that past presidents were not consulted while the changes were drafted, and that only those attending the conference, a small portion of the total membership, were voting on the change.

Co-presidents Cathryn Cofell and Ronnie Hess outlined the process for making the revisions and the effort to share that process and the changes through communications with the full membership. Prior to the committee’s work, all members were invited to serve. The reason for eliminating voting for past presidents is the difficulty in reaching a quorum; there are 13 past presidents, and only a very few currently participate.

During ensuing discussion, several board members pointed that board decisions are almost always by consensus, with few if any contested votes. All members, including past presidents, are welcome to attend and actively participate in those meetings.

The constitution and bylaws, both before and after the current revisions, require approval of any changes by the board, a first reading at a general meeting and a vote at the subsequent general meeting. The board approved the changes at its meeting and there was a first reading at the general meeting at the Spring 2022 conference. Members not attending the Fall Conference were invited to vote on the changes via email (also on the Mission in Action and Lifetime Membership Awards– see New Business).

The motion to approve the Constitution and Bylaws Revision was carried by a vote of 36 in favor, 4 opposed and 5 abstaining. The results of the email vote were 51 in favor, none opposed, 3 abstaining.

4. Calendar Business Manager Report, Volunteer Need: Ronnie Hess reported that a business manager for the calendar is needed, and that dividing the responsibilities between two persons, one to coordinate with the printer and vendors, the other to distribute the calendars, is under consideration. The 2024 calendar will be published, but without a new business manager, publication of this long-time WFOP tradition may end.

5. Additional Old Business: None

New Business

1. Approve Mission in Action: Motion by Michael Belongie, seconded by Jan Chronister, to approve the Mission in Action. Cathryn Cofell explained that the statement deals with how members treat each other and mirrors the code of ethics for the Board of Directors adopted earlier this year. Motion carried with one opposed, a member who did not feel the statement was necessary. The email vote was 52 in favor, none opposed, 2 abstaining.

2. New Chapbook Project in Partnership with Brain Mill Press: Cathryn Cofell reported that the project was approved by the board, which saw it as a way to reach out to more diverse communities.

3. Woodland Pattern Marathon Sponsorship for 2023: The board approved sponsorship and Ed Werstein said that reading spots allotted to the WFOP had been filled. However, persons interested in participating in another time slot can contact Woodland Pattern in Milwaukee through its website.

4. Open Positions: Ronnie Hess reported that volunteers are being sought to help or replace West Central regional vice president Sandra Lindow and to become poetry editor for the *Museletter*. The latter position provides experience in judging and editing poetry. The board will consider how increasing volunteer involvement and other matters at strategic planning session in the near future.

5. Spring 2023 Conference: Mike Gadzik, who is planning the conference with his Central-Fox Valley regional co-vice president Thom Singleton, said the conference will be held April 28-29, 2023, at the Oshkosh Best Western Premier. The theme will be: the work of poetry from creation to editing to publishing. He invited suggestions on speakers and workshops.

6. Lifetime Membership Awards: Motion by Joan Wiese Johannes, seconded by Thomas Davis to approve the Lifetime Membership Awards for Jan Chronister and Peter Sherrill. Motion carried. The email vote was 52 in favor, 1 opposed, 2 abstaining. In addition, Sandra Lindow was recognized for being awarded a Lifetime Membership in 2021, when no conference was held due to the pandemic.

7. Acknowledgement of Deceased Members, Family & Friends: Ronnie Hess reported the deaths of Patricia Smith in 2021, and Francha Barnard and Lenore McComas Coberly in 2022. Ronnie read a poem from Lenore's book, *For I am Mountain Born* (Fireweed, 2014), in memory of these deceased members:

Appalachian Sunday

She thought there would never be
a day so bright as this as she
followed the grandfathers
across the school ground
and up the hill. She
could smell the lilacs around
front porches where people
sat and waved.

Grandpa McComas walked briskly
after sleeping with his chin trembling
through Preacher Priestly's sermon
and The Lord blessed him. "Howdy,
Pearl," he called as he climbed
the steps to the white porch swing.

Grandpa Hager had watched every move
the preacher made and listened to
every word and it was his opinion
that the man had misread the Bible.
Sitting in the rocker and fanning
with a Koontz Funeral Home fan
he talked at length about this
alarming truth.

The day's entertainment had begun
for the child perched on the steps,
all ears inside Sunday department

"Seek ye first the Kingdom —"
"Be still and know —"
"God gave you your mind."
"You have to let God speak."

8. Additional New Business: Treasurer Colleen Frentzel announced that WFOP member Richard Swanson, a former vice president, and his wife Fanny, are donating \$16,000 to the WFOP, \$4,000 per year over 4 years. Colleen and others will work with the Swansons on ways the fellowship uses this gift.

Adjournment – Motion by Kimberly Blanchette, seconded by Sheryl Slocum to adjourn. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 10:27 AM.

Triad Contest Winners: Joan Wiese Johannes and Jeffrey Johannes announced the winners of the Triad Contest, and winners attending shared their winning poems. The contest had 66 total entries, 59 for Poets' Choice, 53 for Theme, and 20 for the Kay Saunders Memorial Emerging Poet category. Barbara Crooker judged Poets' Choice, Marjorie Maddox judged Theme, and Julie Moore judged the Kay Saunders Memorial Emerging Poet category. Winners and their poems are:

Kay Saunders's Memorial Emerging Poet

1st Place: Heather Hanlon for Dreams

2nd Place: Sara Sarna for Mid-Country Love Story

3rd Place: Angela Hoffman for Grackles in Ukraine

Honorable Mentions: Meredith Mason for According to Her Lights and Ed Block for Rondeau

Poets' Choice

1st Place: Joan Wiese Johannes for On Your 95th Birthday, You Tell Me

2nd Place: Scott Lowery for To Sleeplessness

3rd Place: David Southward for Pilgrimage

Honorable Mentions: Gail Sosinsky for How to Leave Your Husband, Jeanie Tomasko for All the Tiny Sounds and Sandy Stark for Praise All Unnoticed Things

Theme: Primary Colors

1st Place: Jenna Rindo for Covid Colors

2nd Place: Annette Grunseth for Ekphrastic Blue

3rd Place: Angela M. Williamson Emmert for Ode to My Feet: A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Honorable Mentions: Scott Lowery for Until Further Notice, James P. Roberts for Golden Fields and Kathleen Serley for Shadows