

Romance Writers of America
Board Meeting Minutes
November 7, 2024
7:0 p.m. CST
Virtual Meeting

Thursday, November 7, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: President Jacki Renée called the meeting to order at 7:02p.m. Central Time on Thursday, November 7, 2024

ROLL CALL: Secretary Anita Learned called the roll 10 members were present. Officers Jacki Renée, Anita Learned and Brook Wills. Directors-at-Large Tracee Garner, Monica Jorgensen, Mary Karlik, Alexis Morgan-Roark, and Ursula Renee. PAN Advisor Danica Winters and AMC Source RWA Executive Director Jordan Stokesberry. With a majority of the Board members needed to establish a quorum, there were 8 voting members present, the Chair declared a quorum.

The following RWA member guests were in attendance: Anna Taylor Swearingen, Helen Aitken, Kimberly Wesley, Lara Zelinski, Nancy Weeks, Lynn Blanton, Shayne Huxtable, and Irene Vartanoff.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – J. RENÉE

In the first quarter of the fiscal year, the RWA board has accomplished many tasks including filling three key vacant positions. We are happy to welcome Tracee Garner as a Director-at-Large, Robin Hillyer-Miles as the PRO Advisor, and Erin Novotny as the Chapter Advisor.

The board approved the formation of the Chapter Leader Task Force. The charge of the task force is to help the national organization streamline the chapter membership dues collection process. Members of the task force are leaders from five chapters. With their input, RWA will establish trainings to assist chapters with collecting their own dues and other financial transactions as well as maintaining their membership rosters. Since the transition from iMIS to MemberClicks, this has been a challenge for our chapters.

To improve communications with members and nonmembers, we have created a Contact Us form. The Executive Committee is notified when a form is submitted and can assist the national office with responding to inquiries.

In September, we held an orientation meeting for our new members. We were happy to see that many of our long-time members also attended and help to answer questions. There were many questions about the chapters which sparked the idea for a chapter open house meeting where new and seasoned members could learn more about the chapters we have, and also ask questions about starting a chapter. The Chapter Open house is happening on Saturday, November 16. Everyone is welcome.

The board also approved the establishment of the Volunteer Service Award. This award recognizes members who lend their knowledge and expertise to the organization by volunteering to serve on committees and participate in programs at the national level. Recipients of the inaugural Volunteer Service Award were recognized at an awards ceremony luncheon during the RWA 2024 annual conference.

During the filing period in the last quarter of the 2023/2024 fiscal year, RWA made a promise to its members to hold an in-person conference in Austin, TX. The 2024 annual conference was held October 11th – 13th at the Embassy Suites Austin Central Hotel. Brenda Jackson, our keynote speaker for the welcome reception, left us inspired and encouraged. Everyone felt the shift that is happening in RWA. The vibe was, and continues to be, community. In addition to recognizing our Volunteer Service Award recipients, we also recognized two past RWA presidents who were instrumental in steering our organization through critical times. Although the 2023/2024 Board of Directors voted to award LaQuette with Honorary Membership and Clair Brett with General Honorary Membership, the 2024/2025 Board of Directors were excited to announce their membership status at the awards

luncheon.

At the close of the RWA 2024 annual conference, I was happy to announce the results of the memberships' vote on the location of the 2025 annual conference. The choices were Charlotte, North Carolina; Niagara Falls, Canada; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Niagara Falls, Canada received the majority vote. Each week in eNotes, we are including tips to help everyone to prepare for RWA 2025 conference. I want to encourage everyone to read eNotes. It is RWA's weekly newsletter that lands in your inbox every Wednesday. The weekly eNotes contains news and events happening at the national and chapter level.

I look forward to the board completing its first quarter tasks and starting on its second quarter tasks.

PRESIDENT EMERITUS REPORT Q1 - CLAIR BRETT

Since I stepped into the new President Emeritus role Jacki, and I have been trying to create a position that supports the current President and the board in the best way.

We decided that the President Emeritus would not attend Board work sessions, to give the president space to run the board without the presence of the last president in the room. I am available at any time, Jacki would like me to attend the meetings.

It was decided that as an advisor to the board, I would submit a report and attend the quarterly board meetings as part of the board, however.

Since Sept. 1 I have been in regular contact with Jacki to see how she is doing and if she needs any assistance with anything or needs a sounding board.

I agreed to take RAMP off her plate and take the lead with the mentorship program for the time being. That is now off the ground and running (see RAMP report for q1).

At conference, I checked in every morning to see what Jacki needed and jumped in where there was a need. I made myself available to chat with members whenever they asked and I had the knowledge, and in general tried to ease the burden of work at conference for Jacki and board members so they could concentrate on making conference great, which they did effortlessly.

Jacki and I intend to have regular check-in calls to see where she is at and to give her the space to be vulnerable where she can't be in other spaces.

I look forward to giving any historical context I can in whatever situation I am called upon to discuss.

I can see this position as a wealth of support and information for the present board.

SECRETARY'S REPORT – A LEARNED

MOTION TO APPROVE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP/HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

Renée moves to approve Clair Brett for a General Membership/Honorary Membership in RWA.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on August 20, 2024, with 7 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE HONORARY MEMBERSHIP

Brett moves to approve LaQuette for an Honorary Membership in RWA.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on August 30, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE ROBIN HILLYER-MILES AS PRO ADVISOR

Renée moved to approve Robin Hillyer-Miles as Pro Advisor

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 16, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE PEN TO PAPER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Renée moved to approve the \Pen to Paper committee members:

Sally Murphy, Chair
Paula Robinson, Co-Chair
Kate Aras
Leah Miles
Tracee Garner
Catherine Olteanu

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 16, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE FORMATION OF THE CHAPTER TASK FORCE AD HOC COMMITTEE

Renée moved to approve the formation of the Chapter Task Force Ad Hoc Committee

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 16, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE CHARGE OF THE CHAPTER TASK FORCE AD HOC COMMITTEE

Renée moved to approve the Charge of the Chapter Task Force Ad Hoc Committee.

The charge of the Chapter Task Force is to test the features available through MemberClicks and establish the new RWA national chapter portal. Create a comprehensive training program to assist all chapters in transitioning to self-managed dues collection. Create a comprehensive training program to assist all chapters in transitioning to self-managed collection of workshop, contests, and event funds.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 16, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMITTEE VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

Renée moved to approve the establishment of a Committee Volunteer Service Award.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 16, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE POLICY FOR THE COMMITTEE VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

Renée moved to approve the policy of the Committee Volunteer Service Award.

9.10. Volunteer Service Award Policy

9.10.1. This award may be presented annually to volunteers who have contributed significant service to the organization through committees or programs during the fiscal year. Eligible volunteers must be current General, Associate, or Honorary members.

9.10.2. This award is intended to recognize major commitments to the organization's mission through consistent volunteer service. It is presented for volunteer service through committees or programs during the fiscal year.

9.10.3. A member may receive this award once a year to honor their contribution to the organization.

9.10.4. Prior recipients of any national or organization-wide volunteer service awards, including the Emma Merritt Service Award, National Service Award, Golden Rose, or similar distinctions, are eligible to receive this award. Members who have been recognized for chapter-level contributions remain eligible if they meet the criteria.

9.10.5. Current members of the organization's Board of Directors are not eligible for this award during their tenure in office. Board members may be considered after they complete their service on the board.

9.10.6. The Board shall review all nominations for the Volunteer Service Award and vote to determine the recipients. Nominees must be listed on a committee's volunteer roster on file. The final decision rests with the Board.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 16, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE 2024 ELECTION RESULTS

Renée moved to approve certification of the 2024 Election Results

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 16, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO REESTABLISH THE LIBRARY OUTREACH AD HOC COMMITTEE

Renée moved to reestablish the Library Outreach Ad Hoc Committee

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 16, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO REESTABLISH THE ALTERNATIVE REVENUE IMPLEMENTATION AD HOC COMMITTEE

Renée moved to reestablish the Alternative Revenue Implementation Ad Hoc Committee

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 16, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE USE OF ACA FUNDS FOR PLATINUM SPONSORSHIP OF LOS ANGELES ROMANCE AUTHORS AT LA TIMES FESTIVAL OF BOOKS

Renée moved to approve the use of \$5,000 from the ACA fund to be the Platinum Sponsor for the Los Angeles Romance Authors' booth at the Los Angeles Times festival of Books April 2025. The event is attended by thousands of readers and writers. Platinum Sponsors will maintain one full table and half of another table in the booth for the two-day event for the purpose of speaking with the public about the romance genre, and to give romance authors an opportunity to sign books.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 19, 2024, with 7 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstention.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE CHAPTER LEADERSHIP AD HOC COMMITTEE

Renée moved to approve the Chapter Leadership Ad Hoc Committee Members

Donna McGoldrick
Jocelyn Keely Thrall
Greta Gunselman
Joel Izack
Denise Alicea
Toni Jackson
Anna Taylor Swearingen
Joan Koster

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 19, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE USE OF OPERATING FUNDS FOR ATTORNEY FEES

Wills moves to use \$42,116 from the operating budget for the cost of attorney fees for the filing.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 23, 2024, with 7 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstention.

MOTION TO APPROVE ADDING MARGARET BAUPIM TO THE MEMBERSHIP OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Renée moves to approve Margaret Baupim to serve on the Membership Outreach Committee

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 23, 2024, with 7 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstention.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF TRACEE GARNER TO DIRECTOR AT LARGE

Renée moves to approve the appointment of Tracee Garner to RWA Board of Director as a Director-At-Large.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 26, 2024, with 7 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstention.

MOTION TO APPROVE ADDING JENNIFER BOKAL TO THE CHAPTER LEADERSHIP AD HOC COMMITTEE

Renée moves to approve Jennifer Bokal to the Chapter Leadership Ad Hoc Committee:

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on September 27, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstention.

MOTION TO APPOINTMENT BOARD CHAPTER ADVISOR

Renée moves to approve the appointment of Erin Novotny as the Board Chapter Advisor.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on October 23, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstention.

MOTION TO APPROVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Renée moves to approve the following members to serve on committees:

Audit & Finance Committee
William Cowie

Diversity Advisory Committee
Paula McGhee
Kimberly Wesley

Conference Committee
Elizabeth Illig
Shelly Kassi
Jane Porter

Membership Outreach Committee
Kimberly Wesley

RWR Content Committee
Rachel Osborne

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on October 23, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstention.

Romance Writers of America, Inc.
Executive Summary
November 7, 2024

This report covers the period of September 1, 2023, the beginning of RWA's fiscal year, through August 31, 2024

CASH POSITION

Total cash as of August 31, 2024 was \$310K, down from \$499K on September 1st, 2023. Unrestricted cash (funds used for operating expenses) was \$140K, and restricted funds (funds held for specific purposes) was \$170K.

NET INCOME (LOSS)

The net loss through August 31, 2024 was at \$163K. The net loss this time last year was \$395K, so RWA is seeing a significant improvement. This is due to expense cutting rather than an increase in revenue.

Going forward, this gives RWA the opportunity to increase its revenue streams. On the expense side, the organization should see a noticeable reduction in legal and consulting expenses and a small reduction in IT expenses.

OTHER UPDATES

RWA emerged from bankruptcy on schedule in early August 2024. The amount owing three debtors is less than \$33K payable over the next three years. Additionally, the court did not find it necessary to appoint a trustee to oversee the payment process. This saves the organization the cost of administrative fees since it is able to make the quarterly payments directly to each debtor.

Overall, the financial future of RWA is feeling much brighter in the coming year.

Romance Writers of America Statement of Financial Position

As of August 31, 2024

ASSETS

Current Assets

Cash

Unrestricted Cash 139,799

Restricted Cash 170,468

Total Cash 310,267

Other Current Assets

Other Current Assets 1,621

Prepaid Expenses 14,548

Inventory 2,916

Total Other Current Assets 19,086

TOTAL ASSETS **329,353**

LIABILITIES AND EQUITY

Liabilities

Current Liabilities 7,173

Deferred Revenues 103,562

Long Term Liabilities 172,249

Total Liabilities 282,984

Equity

Designated Funds 231,413

Opening Balance Equity 1,190,602

Retained Earnings (1,212,883)

Net Revenue (162,763)

Total Equity 46,369

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY **329,353**

Unaudited

Romance Writers of America
Statement of Activity
September 1, 2023 - August 31, 2024

Revenue	
Dues	193,303
Conferences / Meetings / Events	55,480
Contests	4,337
Other Regular Revenues	40,348
UBI Revenues	3,459
Donations	1,406
Total Revenue	298,333
Gross Profit	298,333
Expenditures	
Salary Expenses	15,440
Depreciation & Amortization	14,011
Insurance Expenses	8,731
Property Expenses	466
Information Technology	31,041
Office Expenses & Supplies	42,241
Advertising & Marketing PR	14,949
Awards	(1,059)
Bank & Credit Cards Fees	13,436
Professional Fees	152,836
Shipping	5,405
Management Fees	131,000
Total Expenditures	428,497
Net Operating Revenue/Loss	(130,164)
Other Miscellaneous Expense	32,599
Net Revenue/Loss	(162,763)

Unaudited

OFFICE REPORT – J. STOKESBERRY

AMC Source Staff:

Jordan Stokesberry- Executive Director & Membership Services
Greg Foreman- IT
Rachel Sheffer- Marketing
Bailey Nolting & Ruth- Communications
Samuel Saint Julien- Virtual Events
Pierrot- Finance

Membership Report:

As of October 22, 2024: Total 1.754 members
New Members in the last 90 days: 72

Member type	Active	Graced	Lapsed
Affiliate	14		8
Associate	501	24	296
Charter	15		3
Charter Honorary	2		
General	1081	28	479
General Honorary	4		2
Honorary	72		
Student	10		1

General Updates:

Membership Committee Updates and Efforts:

The membership committee and I are committed to enhancing the overall member experience with RWA. We're excited to announce several new initiatives aimed at increasing member engagement and providing more value.

- Saturday, November 16- Chapter Open House: everyone is invited to join us and who learn about chapters of their interest or hear about the amazing things our chapters are doing for members
- Membership Drive Planning
- Website Updates
- And more!

ALTERNATIVE REVENUE IMPLEMENTATION AD HOC COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: A. ROARK

Committee Charge: This task force will be charged with reviewing the Alternate Revenue Stream Report and working with staff to create revenue streams. Special attention should be paid to the revenue streams cited as priorities by the board in the task force discussion thread.

Committee Report: On October 31, 2024, Erin Novotny and Alexis Roark met to discuss a proposal to sell RWA's recordings via Spotify until such time as they can be sold from our website.

The task force recommends two phases that we would like to roll out by the end of the year.

Phase One: Create a Findaway Voices account. They are no-cost to us and distributed to 38 different vendors, similar to Draft2Digital. Erin Novotny researched best audiobook distributors last year and found that Findaway Voices was the best, seeing as it's no cost to us, and offers competitive royalties, especially with the ease of use. The benefit of using Findaway Voices is that we would only have to upload in one location, create one account, and any changes would only have to occur in one location. Furthermore, when someone adds a writing craft workshop to their playlist, the audio services recommend similar titles, which is free to us.

If we are unable to update the RWA site to include sale of digital recordings in the future, we can add links to the workshop recordings on Spotify or other distributors.

Royalty payments will be made every 30 days into the RWA account provided to Findaway Voices. Also, we are able to set our sale price and change it easily, unlike set pricing at Audible.

The royalties can vary by distributor, but Findaway Voices states:

The royalties Findaway Voices receives from its partners are within the following ranges:

- *A la carte: 40% to 50% of list price*
- *Subscription: 30% to 40% of list price*
- *Revenue Share: 25% to 45% of revenue receipts*

We share a full list of partners, channels, and royalty rates inside your Findaway Voices account, and you'll review this list prior to publishing with us.

The vendors it distributes to are currently:

24 symbols, Anyplay, apple, audible, audiobooks.com, audiobooks now, Beek, Bokus play, bookmate, books-a-million, chirp, cliq, downpour, everand (scribd), Google Play, instaread, Kobo, Walmart, libro. FM, milkbox, my audiobook library, next story, nook audiobooks, radish, Spotify, storyteller, tunein, Ubook, axiell, baker and taylor, bibliotheca, follett, hoopla, MLOL, odilo, overdrive, Ulverscroft, wheelers, 3leaf group

Phase Two: After more research, consider setting up an account at CDBaby, or similar distributor to music and podcast streams. We would create a podcast, including free material, that would then encourage people to purchase the bundles on the topics or individual workshops. Again, in the event we can't sell the individual workshops on the RWA site, we could have links directing them to Apple Music, etc. This will also get our digital content available at more and different sites.

Projected costs are time related if we use Findaway Voices and a similar album/podcast distributor.

- We require full access to the digital recordings and handouts from RWA.
- We require full access to the Findaway Voices account in order to upload the recordings.
- We require a Google Folder set up for the handouts, which we will separate into individual lectures and give purchasers access to the handouts.
- We will need to organize the recordings, including offering special "bundles" on specific topics.
- We plan to offer some free workshops to entice listeners to purchase more related to those topics.
- Phase 1 and 2 require recording equipment and software which Erin Novotny already owns as she does professional audiobook narration. Alexis Roark's husband is a musician/ producer and has the equipment and software as well.
- Phase 2: more research into which distributors offer the best royalties. We are looking into selling individual workshops, like an album.
- Phase 2 podcast will require time creating opening material that then leads into the workshop and plug for further paid resources.

Success/Action/Items Completed: Erin drafted a project proposal for review by the Board.

Name and Title of Person Filing the Report: Alexis Roark, Board Liaison for the Alternative Revenue Task Force

Board Action Required: Approval of creation of Findaway Voices account with access as described in the project plan.

Time Covered: Q-1

AUDIT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: B. WILLS

Committee Charge: The Audit & Finance Committee, chaired by the Treasurer, shall be responsible for selecting an independent CPA firm to conduct the annual audit, for reviewing the annual audited financial statements and any associated management letter detailing deficiencies, and for reviewing the related tax returns before all materials are presented to the Board, and shall assist the Treasurer as requested on financial and budgetary matters.

Committee Report: The committee is very happy to have committee members William Cowie and Claudia Severin returning for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Their expertise and input is invaluable.

Successes/Action items Completed: The committee was quiet during the last quarter mainly because the filing put a hold on items it had been reviewing.

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending: The committee will now be able to continue reviewing the 2022-2023 audit report, the 2024-2025 fiscal year budget and discuss details for the 2023-2024 annual audit or review.

Current Challenges: N/A

Recognition: As treasurer, I very much appreciate how responsive the committee always is.

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Brooke Wills, RWA Board Treasurer

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?: Q1 (September - November)

Does This Report Require Board Action?: No

CHAPTER TASK FORCE AD HOC COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: J. RENÉE

Committee Charge: The charge of the Chapter Task Force is to test the features available through MemberClicks and establish the new RWA national chapter portal. Create a comprehensive training program to assist all chapters in transitioning to self-managed dues collection. Create a comprehensive training program to assist all chapters in transitioning to self-managed collection of workshop, contests, and event funds.

Committee Report: After posting the project task and timeline on the forum, the committee members requested a zoom meeting to discuss each task. The committee met on October 21st and Jacki Renée explained each task on the project timeline. We have begun Phase I of the project timeline. Phase I consists of the chapters represented on the task force providing feedback on their collective needs as they relate to financial management and membership management. This phase also includes the member testing different features on three platforms to assist the national organization with establishing the RWA portal as identified in the chapter affiliation agreement.

What quarter does this report cover? Q1 (September – November)

Does this report require Board action: No

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: J. RENÉE

Committee Charge: The Conference Workshop Committee shall coordinate, plan, and oversee the selection and scheduling for workshops for the RWA Annual Conference, Indie Author Weekend (2-day virtual mini conference), and Traditional Author Weekend (2-day virtual mini conference). The Conference Workshop Committee shall ensure that the conferences' programs reflect RWA's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access—including, but not limited to, the speakers chosen, and the topics covered in the workshops.

Committee Report: The Conference Committee is encouraged by the feedback received regarding the workshops at RWA2024. While at the conference, the committee chair recruited more members to serve on the committee to help with Indie Author Weekend, Traditional Author Weekend, and the 2025 annual conference in July.

Successes/Action items Completed: During the 2024 conference, the committee met and came up with the theme for the 2025 conference. We also have three new members to our committee: Jane, Elizabeth, and Shelley.

Summary of Action Items in-Progress/Pending: The committee is now accepting workshop proposals for Indie Author Weekend and Traditional Author Weekend. Workshop proposals for the 2025 annual will open some time this month.

Recognition: Thank you to everyone who had a hand in planning the annual conference in Austin, TX.

Name and title of committee member completing the report: Dawn Reed, Committee Chair

What Quarter does this report cover? Q1 (September – November)

Does this report require Board action: No

CONTEST COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: J. RENÉE

Committee Charge: The Contest Committee shall assist the Executive Director with the establishment and overall planning and operation of all RWA national contests; and under the direction of the Executive Director, shall handle any contest result challenges pursuant to the Contest Policy outlined in Section 17. Each Contest's period, the Contest Committee shall establish actionable goals that measure the progress of RWA national contests in accordance with the intended benefit of the Contest. A Board liaison shall be assigned to this committee.

Committee Report: The committee will begin contacting finalists on November 12 before the announcement is made publicly. Judges who meet the requirements for Round 3 are being contacted to confirm availability and entries in the final round are being assigned.

Success/Action items Completed: The review of Round 1 scores was completed successfully and entries moving on to Round 2 were identified and assigned to judges. The committee is pleased with the training of judges on potentially objectionable content and that judges notified the committee as requested. The committee followed its policy and made the appropriate decisions.

Summary of Action Items in-Progress/Pending: The committee will begin contacting finalists on November 12 before the announcement is made publicly. Judges who meet the requirements for Round 3 are being contacted to confirm availability and entries in the final round are being assigned.

Current Challenges: Our current challenge is getting judges to notify the committee when they must withdraw to ensure we give emergency judges adequate time to review and score entries without pushing the deadline.

Recognition: The committee wishes to extend its gratitude to the emergency.

Name and title of committee member completing the report: Jason Wrench, Committee Chair

What quarter does this report cover? Q1 (September – November)

Does this report require Board action? No

For the next iteration, the committee is building is building more leeway between each round, they found that the current two weeks isn't enough time to reach out to emergency judges.

DIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON:

Committee Charge: The Diversity Advisory Committee shall make recommendations and provide information and materials to the Board on diversity, inclusion, and access issues that impact RWA and its members.

Committee Report: No meetings have been held for this quarter.

Successes/Action items Completed: None

Summary of Action Items in-Progress/Pending: No pending items

Current Challenges: Replacement Committee members

Recognition: None

Name and title of committee member completing the report: Toni Jackson-Goins, Chair

What quarter does this report cover? Q1 (September – November)

Does this report require Board action? No

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: M. GRIFFIN

Committee Charge: The Leadership Development Committee shall create a process to identify potential future RWA leaders within membership, get those people involved at the chapter level and at the national committee level, and help them to grow in their leadership skills. In addition, the committee shall solicit the general membership for at least two candidates for each open board position, assist the President-Elect in making choices for assistant chairs per section.

Committee Report: On 9/23 the LDC met to discuss the Leadership retreat at RWA's National Conference. It was decided that the LDC would give notebooks and pens to those who attended. Jen Bokal presented a design, and it was approved by the committee.

Retreat agenda was discussed.

9:30 Welcome/Share agenda
9:35-9:45 Icebreaker
9:45-10:15 Groups/brainstorming
10:15-10:30 Review what's available on
the website 10:30-11:00 Board Q&A

Dates for elections were discussed. They will be as follows:

May 3, 2025 Call for candidates
June 2, 2025 Open for candidates to
declare June 23, 2025 Deadline to
declare
July 7, 2025 Post candidates
August 4, 2025 Open Voting
August 18, 2025 Close voting
August 20, 2025 Announce new board, along with posting in enotes

Success/Action/Items Completed: Jennifer ordered 20 pens and notebooks for the retreat. The receipt was sent to Brooke Wills. At Nationals, 18 chapter leaders attended the leadership retreat on Friday 10/11.

Name and Title of Person Filing the Report: Jennifer D. Bokal. Chairperson. Leadership Development Committee

Board Action Required: None

Time Covered: Q-1 (September - November)

**LIBRARY OUTREACH AD HOC COMMITTEE
BOARD LIAISON: M. GRIFFIN**

Committee Charge: The Librarian and Bookseller Outreach Committee will work with RWA staff to establish dialogue with librarians and booksellers in order to form stronger alliances for the betterment of RWA members and the romance genre. In addition, the committee will work with staff to create virtual and in-person events, such as Meet the Author panels, involving librarians and booksellers that will promote members and the romance genre as well as make recommendations about events, programs or action RWA could take to make it easier for booksellers, librarians and RWA members to connect.

Committee Report: No report was submitted, and Marian isn't present to give her report.

MEMBERSHIP OUTREACH COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: U. RENEE

Committee Charge: Membership Outreach Committee. The Membership Outreach Committee shall be tasked with membership outreach and member support by creating initiatives and materials to help retain current membership and to increase membership.

- Plan, bring to the Board for approval, and execute a bi-yearly membership drive.
- Create a yearly membership survey based on current topics and industry norms, to gauge the direction the membership would like to see the organization and what member benefits are most desired.
- Maintain and update the onboarding and off boarding email sequences to make sure they are the most effective in either helping members feel welcome and give them the most important information or to help make members choose to remain members.
- Study and research current membership retention and acquisition practices within the non-profit sector and similar groups to RWA and report back to the Board on any information that may prove helpful.
- Assist with creation of promotional materials/ads/copy/images/Social media posts/ etc. and work with staff and any RWA consultants in charge of marketing to regularly post about becoming a member or RWA points of interest for our current members.
- Assist staff with emails and marketing to go out to all non-member attendees of all events no more than 7 days after any given event to attempt to convert them to membership.
- Work with staff to create an easy path to national conference non-member attendees to register for membership on site at the conference.

Committee Report: The Membership Outreach Committee hosted a New Member Orientation on September 18th. Though the event was intended to introduce new members to RWA, we invited everyone in the organization to attend to ask questions and refamiliarize themselves with what we have to offer. Our Executive Director Jordan Stokesberry, President Jacki Renée, Secretary Anita Learned, and Director-at-Large Marian H. Griffin, and Alexis Roark, and Ursula Renée participated. As a result of the event, the Membership Outreach Committee gained a new member, Margaret Baupim. For the RWA National Conference, Jordan Stokesberry created flyers and brochures promoting the organization. Also, after a discussion with Jackie Renée, we have decided to host a Membership Drive on the weekend of February 1, 2025.

Successes/Action items Completed: We hosted a New Member Orientation in September and created materials to promote RWA at the conference.

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending: We will start working on the Membership Drive and planning the next New Member Orientation.

Current Challenges: N/A

Recognition: Thank you to Jordan Stokesberry for all the work she has done for the Membership Outreach Committee

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Ursula Renee, Director-at-Large

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?: Q1 (September - November)

Does this report require Board action? No

PAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: D. WINTERS

Committee Charge: The PAN Advisory Committee shall make recommendations and provide information to the Board regarding ways to protect the interests of published romance writers, enhance the channels of communication between romance authors and publishing industry professionals, and coordinate activities by and for PAN members.

Committee Report: The PAN Advisor and the committee are working on a variety of new ventures. This quarter, we are trying to access our full list of PAN members. Once we have access, we will reach out to these members to ask for new releases, contracts, and awards etc. From the information we receive, we hope to highlight these PAN members and celebrate their successes on the PAN forum, ENotes and Facebook. In doing so, we hope to elevate the status of PAN and thereby create a greater ROI for current and future members.

In addition, we are working on creating a Press Pass option for PAN members. We are in talks with Jordan for an option for these badges to be ordered when members are in renewal each year. The cost is estimated to be \$15 per badge, to be paid by the member at time of renewal. This should not incur a cost to RWA.

The forum is up and running, but under-utilized. Again, this goes back to the need to create more outreach to our current PAN members.

We will be working on doing a PAN vs. PRO newsletter as during Nationals, there was a great deal of questions as to what each program entailed and the benefits of corresponding levels.

PAN PowerUps have been struggling after the conversion to the new email system. After talks with Jordan, we believe we have found the problem. As a result of our conversation, we have decided to cast a wider net for our members by creating PopUp Class free for PRO and PAN members (and general/associate, at cost). These will take the place of PAN PowerUps on the first Tuesday of each month, however the premises will remain the same.

The committee is requesting a budget of \$300 per speaker for PopUp Speakers (per month—twelve in total, for the year) and for four PAN PowerUp speakers (for the year). In total, PAN is requesting \$1200 for PowerUp speakers and \$3600 for PopUp Speakers. Please note: Some of the PopUp costs may be covered by General and Associate Members who would pay to participate so this could be a cost-saving measure.

That being said, PAN PowerUps will continue as a higher-level educational resource available to PAN only. These will be hosted TBD and will focus on critiques.

Danica Winters has agreed to host a retreat for PAN Members in Montana next summer as another opportunity to create ROI for PAN members and to showcase the opportunities created by this program in hopes of garnering more interest in membership. Dates TBD

Jane Porter and Danica Winters are currently in talks with Jordan about creating a platform on the RWA website where speakers can apply for the variety of speaking opportunities with our different programs, including: PAN PowerUps, PRO PowerUps, PopUps, and RWA University.

Through this list, we can all access the wonderful array of talents available inside RWA and our collective knowledge while also showcasing our members and celebrating their support of our organization.

From Committee Chair Nancy Weeks:

What are The Published Author Power Ups/New Name Pop Ups?

The Published Author Power-Up sessions meet on the first Tuesday of every month at 7:00 CST. They are designed to promote personal career growth for our published authors through networking, authors-helping-authors, and education. In the coming months, our sessions will continue to address the challenges that authors face in this constantly changing world. While the Power UP Zoom sessions are geared toward published authors, everyone is welcome and encouraged to participate. Your suggestions for topics and speakers are welcomed and greatly appreciated.

Recognition: Thank you to committee members M. R. Rutter, Paula Hunter, Erin Vollick, and Betty Bolte

PEN TO PAPER COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: M. GRIFFIN

Committee Charge: The Pen to Paper Committee shall coordinate, plan, and along with the Executive Director and Board of Directors, oversee the annual program. The Pen to Paper Committee shall ensure that the program reflects RWA's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.

Committee Report: In Q4, the Pen to Paper Committee began meeting to plan the upcoming programs for the year. Timelines were moved to accommodate the RAMP program, and the need to develop new Paper to Polished materials surfaced with the departure of one of the committee members, who claimed ownership of all materials developed by her. (Please note all committee members should be asked to sign over their rights to any material developed for the program.) Further difficulties included the fact that most of the committee members met their time limits over the summer and "aged off", so the remaining committee members with the exception of Tracee Garner were all new (as of 2024) to the program. Only one new committee member has been added so all committee members are now filling at least two roles.

The Pen to Paper Program ended and graduation was held. We continued to handle any participant questions and concerns with the programs.

Successes/Action Items Completed: Pen to Paper graduated.

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending: Weekly meetings held for all programs. Program continues to move forward with some delays due to lack of resources/removal of materials. (Please note the committee member noted above also moved all other materials to different locations, making it difficult to find them.) We also need more committee members.

Current Challenges: See above - recruiting Committee members; creating curriculum for Paper to Polished; creating workshops.

Name and title of Committee member completed the report: Sally Murphy, Chair

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?: Q1 (September - November)

Does this report require Board action?: No

Danica volunteered to help create content. Clair suggests our recordings and webinars we have online would be a good resource for their workshops. Alexis has access to a matrix that has recordings, webinars and articles and wants to work with the committee to gather things to assist them. Tracee can send outline of all the topics only 4 lessons left to create. Getting more guides to get the information updated so they can open the application and promote them on the website. Jacki went over the proposed schedule the Pen to Paper Committee created. The dates will be reviewed and revised as needed.

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: M. KARLIK

Committee Charge: The Policy Advisory Committee shall monitor public policy and legislation as well as public events that have the potential to impact RWA members, the romance writing industry, and writers, in general. The committee shall make recommendations to the Board regarding actions the Board may undertake regarding policy and legislation.

Committee Report: The committee continues to stay up to date on AI developments and will be giving a verbal report to the executive committee on this issue. Pursuant to this the committee continues to discuss the importance of all writers copyrighting their work and has already sent recommendations to the board to advise all members repeatedly about this. Licensing agreements are in the works for future compensation for writers who allow their works for AI training. And a watermark logo is being created to guarantee to readers that books they purchase are human created.

Successes/Action items Complete: The committee sent an AI training statement link to the board requesting that it be sent to all members for their possible signatures. The committee also recommended to the board that RWA formulate and publish an AI ethics statement, sent a possible statement drafted by the Author's Guild, with legal permission to reprint.

Summary of Action Items in-Progress/Pending: We continue to monitor all of the various AI lawsuits and to discuss how they directly affect RWA and romance writers.

Name and title of committee member completing the report: Tara Taylor Quinn

What quarter does this report cover: Q1 (September – November)

Does this report require Board action: Yes

PRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: R. HILLYER-MILES

Committee Charge: The PRO Advisory Committee shall make recommendations and provide information to the Board regarding ways to support and promote unpublished writers in the areas between manuscript completion and publication, enhance the channels of communication between those romance writers and publishing industry professionals, and coordinate activities by and for PRO members.

Committee Report: Robin Hillyer Miles presented on Writers Conference Tips in September. There was no meeting in October. We will meet in November. Skipping December.

Success/Action items Completed: We held a PRO Retreat at our conference with 14 guests attending where we discussed the various ways to move past PRO and into PAN and handed out a coffee cup that says "I'M A WRITER I DREAM WHILE AWAKE."

Current Challenges: Need PRO members to help create the PRO committee.

Name and title of committee member completing the report: Robin Hillyer Miles, PRO Liaison

What quarter does this report cover? Q1 (September - November)

Does this report require Board action? No

Clair suggested we put out a call in eNotes and sending a note to the Chapter Presidents to encourage PRO members to help. Jacki suggested a direct email to every PRO member. Ursula suggested we add a spot to the PRO membership application inviting them to join the PRO committee.

ROMANCE AUTHOR MENTORSHIP PROGRAM (RAMP) COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: C. BRETT

BOARD LIAISON: J. RENÉE

Committee Charge: The Romance Author Mentorship Program (RAMP) Committee shall coordinate, plan, and along with the Executive Director and Staff, oversee the annual program. The Romance Author Mentorship (RAMP) Committee shall ensure that the program reflects RWA's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.

Committee Report: RAMP 2024 is underway. We currently have 13 RAMP mentors and 20 mentee applications that were vetted and available for mentors to choose from. We had 7 applications that did not pass the vetting process. Those applications will be/have been sent emails explaining why they did not meet the criteria and encouraged to re-apply next year. Our schedule got off course as conference and the mentees applications getting moved to the next level collided, but we are back on track and I only have a few mentors that have not chosen a mentee yet, but this will be completed in the next few days. Jacki has been working on getting agents and editors signed onto the pitch session during the traditional author weekend. We all look forward to working with our mentees, and have another successful year, culminating in a reception at the national conference in Niagara Falls in July.

Successes/Action items Completed: Getting RAMP off the ground and active with very few committee members and a limited timetable.

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending: getting mentors signed up with mentees, have a mentee/mentor welcome zoom the end of Oct., Plan the pitch schedule, plan the RAMP reception for conference, plan next year's schedule.

Current Challenges: We need more committee members and someone to chair the upcoming year, as Clair will be stepping back. We also need to get more mentors to volunteer so that we can expand the program and take on more mentees. The committee encourages all PAN members to consider giving back in this fashion.

Recognition: Thank you to Lara Zelinsky and Jacki Renee for working hard and answering my questions and thank you to Jordan for doing last minute fixes or emails on the fly.

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Clair Brett (President Emeritus) acting chair

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?: Q4 Q1 (September - November)

Does This Report Require Board Action? No

Jacki got to attend the mentor/mentee meeting, and everyone was very enthusiastic about the program, and I hope we can get more of our authors to mentor our unpublished members. Alexis said she would like to help this committee and send a request out to Chapter Leaders and eNotes. Mary suggested we email all PAN members asking for help.

RWA UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: M. JORGENSEN

Committee Charge: The RWA University Committee provides classes and other online educational resources to members and help to ensure that the RWA University reflects RWA’s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access—including, but not limited to, the speakers whose work is featured and the topics covered in the educational resources.

Committee Report: The team met to discuss upcoming webinars. Webinars will be set up for 6 months, starting in Feb 2025, and then the team will re-meet to see how attendance is for each. In addition, we will be re-booting the Podcast under RWA U, as well as the YouTube channel. The people scheduled for the Webinar will offer 2-minutes tips for Writers to be aired on YouTube. YouTube will also have the videos of the Podcasts. A search for the “voice of RWA” for the podcast will be conducted in the next two months. In addition, a committee for the Podcast will need to be created.

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending: Populating the Podcast committee, creating a calendar for classes and creating a calendar for online education resources. A meeting with Alexis to discuss access to previous webinars and conferences is in the works.

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Monica Jorgensen, Director-at-Large, Board Liaison.

What Quarter Does this Report cover? Q1 (September – November)

Does This Report Require Board Action? No

Alexis would like to help with the committee with the podcasts and any other digital assets.

RWR CONTENT COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: A. LEARNED

Committee Charge: The *RWR* Content Committee will work with RWA staff to develop content for the *RWR*, solicit authors for article, review articles upon submission and prior to publication, and help to ensure the *RWR* reflects RWA's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access—including, but not limited to, the authors whose work is featured and the sources who are quoted within the articles.

Committee Report: The RWR Content Committee continues to meet on a monthly basis to discuss the acquisition of articles for the magazine. The committee has identified monthly themes and are having great success with this. The committee remains open to feedback from its membership, as well as the members of RWA and the board, for directions on the future of the magazine. We are still pursuing the ability to create a steady influx of articles to support the monthly publication as we feel this provides the greatest support to RWA members.

Successes/Action items Completed: We have updated from Pitchbox to MemberClicks. The themes and a deadlines for submissions has given the committee more time to review the articles. And we are happy to report that submissions have increased a lot. Keep those articles coming!

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending: We are working to get advertising back into the RWR.

Current Challenges: None

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Anita Learned, Secretary, RWR Committee Board Liaison, Acting Chair

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?: Q1 (September - November)

Does This Report Require Board Action?: No

Alexis wants to have a place within the RWR to promote the ARI initiatives and content. Jacki advised to work with the liaison, Anita.

MOTION #1:

Wills moves to add Claudia Severen to the Audit and Finance Committee.

The motion was adopted by general consent.

NEW BUSINESS

ADJOURN: President Renée adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m. CST