

Romance Writers of America
Board Meeting Minutes
October 23, 2021
Virtual Meeting

Saturday, October 23, 2021

CALL TO ORDER: President LaQuette called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m. CT on Saturday, October, 23, 2021.

ROLL CALL/CERTIFICATION OF QUORUM: President LaQuette called the roll. Ten board members were present: Officers LaQuette, Gail Chianese, and Laura Alford; Directors-at-Large Louisa Cornell, Marian H. Griffin, Mary Karlik, Jacki Renée, and Elizabeth Schechter; PAN Advisor Nancy C. Weeks and PRO Advisor Catherine Stuart; Secretary C. Chilove and Director-at-Large Siera London were absent. RWA Staff members Executive Director Leslie Scantlebury, Erin Fry and Jackie Padilla were present. 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: Julia Barr, Angeline Bishop, Beth Gregory, Robin Lee Hatcher, Anita Learned, Sabrina Lemieux, Molly Maka, Patricia Mayfield, Todd McGee, Roh Morgon, Anne Nobld, Lena Pinto, Shayne Sawyer, Romy Sommer, Cate Tayler, Chistiana Tegethoff, Donna Tunney, Anne Turner and Irene Vartanoff.

The RWA Mission Statement and the Anti-Trust Statement were read into the record.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – LaQuette

Welcome to the first board meeting of our 2021-22 term. Although the term began on September 1st, the board has been hard at work. First, we've welcomed four new board members, Gail Chianese as president-elect, and Marian Griffin, Mary Karlik, and Louisa Cornell as directors-at-large. We've scheduled Pan & Pro Power-up sessions for the fall. We've commissioned our workshop committee. They have done an excellent job creating relevant and interesting programming for our November virtual conference which features NYT Best-Selling author, Kimberla Lawson Roby as our keynote speaker for Librarians Day. We have empaneled the Vivian Taskforce to analyze our 2021 contest. With Jacki Renee leading the taskforce, they have begun this important work. Lastly, our Pen2Paper program has launched and participants have completed the first eight weeks of the initial course.

Thank you,

LaQuette, President of RWA

PRESIDENT ELECT'S REPORT – G. Chianese

Since the beginning of the 2021-2022 term:

I have been working with the conference workshop committee as they continue to plan for the 2021 Virtual Conference. I have met with President LaQuette to populate the committees with chairs and assistant chairs. I have also been familiarizing myself with the issues currently faces RWA along with the various programs RWA is working on (such as P2P).

SECRETARY'S REPORT – C. Chilove

Motion to Rescind the 2021 Vivian Award in the Romance with Religious or Spiritual Elements Category

LaQuette moved to rescind the 2021 Vivian Award in the Romance with Religious or Spiritual Elements Category

The motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on August 3 with 9 votes in the affirmative, 1 against, and 1 abstention.

Motion to Cancel 2021-2022 VIVIAN Awards

Glass moved to cancel the 2021-2022 VIVIAN Awards.

The motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on August 12 with 8 votes in the affirmative, 1 against, and 2 abstentions.

Motion to Approve Members of the PRO Advisory Committee

LaQuette moved to Approve the following members for the PRO Advisory Committee.

The motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on August 20 with 10 votes in the affirmative, 0 against, and 1 abstention.

Motion to Approve Member of the Conference Workshop Committee

Brett moved to approve the following member for the Conference Workshop Committee: Olivia Gaines

The motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on August 20 with 10 votes in the affirmative, 0 against, and 1 abstention.

Motion to Approve Budget for September – October 2021

Alford moved that the budget for September 1, 2021 – October 31, 2021 be approved as presented.

The motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on August 27 with 8 votes in the affirmative, 0 against, and 0 abstentions

Motion to Approve the Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting

LaQuette moved to approve the minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting.

The motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on August 27 with 7 votes in the affirmative, 0 against, and 1 abstention.

Motion to Approve the August 2021 Board Meeting Minutes

LaQuette moved to approve the minutes of the August 2021 Board Meeting Minutes.

The motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on August 27 with 8 votes in the affirmative, 0 against, and 0 abstentions.

Motion to Approve Committee Members

LaQuette moved to approve the following committee members:

Librarian and Bookseller Outreach Committee

- *Sylvia Hubbard*
- *Stacy Wells*

Unpublished Member Benefits Committee

- *Sayre Ambrosio*

The motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on August 27 with 8 votes in the affirmative, 0 against, and 0 abstentions.

Motion to Approve Director-at-Large Nomination

LaQuette moved to nominate the following member to a vacant director-at-large position:

Louisa Cornell

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

TREASURER'S REPORT – L. Alford

CASH POSITION

August	July	Difference
\$765,170.20	\$738,636.06	\$26,534.14

NET INCOME (LOSS)

Monthly Net income for July is **\$50,163.57**.

Fiscal Year-to-Date Net Income is **\$(69,476.00)**

MEMBERSHIP

Total General and Associate members as of 9-1-21 was 4,424, a decrease of 4.76% from August to September.

August Membership Data			
New	Reinstated	Lapsed	Renewed
44	22	229	202

Last year, at this time, our membership attrition rate was 3.71%.

NOTES

- The annual audit is scheduled for the first week in November.
- The IRS sent a letter dated 6-30-21. It states that RWA has an overpayment in the amount of \$7,596.40 in regard to form 941 for tax period ending 6-30-20, and that a check should be in the mail soon.
 - I believe this has to do with the \$30k from the Employee Tax Retention Credit that RWA was granted and then billed for due to an error in payroll processing. I am going to confirm this is the case as well as determine if/when RWA should expect the remaining money from the Employee Tax Retention Credit that RWA was originally granted.

BUDGET VS ACTUALS for Month of July

Revenue

- Dues income brought in more than budgeted (GL 3020). However, this amount continues to decline.
- Conference revenue did not meet budgeted amount.
- The amount of \$147,226.51 in GL 3340 (Misc.) is the gain on PPP loan forgiveness.
- Rent is N/A since RWA sold the building.
- Advertising income is down with no options to advertise in the RWR.

Expenses

- The RWA2021 Summer Retreat had a net income of **\$(54,439.65)** before salaries are allocated.
 - The overall expenses for the retreat came in well under budget. The expense budget was \$153,151.45, and the. Actual expenses are \$94,984.65. However, this number will be adjusted once staff salaries are allocated during the audit process.
 - The overall revenue is where we did not hit the mark. The revenue budget for registrations was \$150,510 and the actual revenue is \$21,050.
- The overage in GL 5550 (Membership Platform) is a result of requiring more support from Association Technologies.

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Budget vs. Actuals

September 2020 - August 2021

	TOTAL	
	ACTUAL	BUDGET
Income		
3000 Dues	511,965.88	504,016.00
3100 Conferences / Meetings / Events	70,660.00	204,765.00
3200 Contest Revenues	50,100.00	35,000.00
3300 Other Regular Revenues	431,916.05	69,550.66
3400 UBI Revenues	17,303.50	10,400.00
3500 Donations	14,869.38	1,920.00
Total Income	\$1,096,814.81	\$825,651.66
GROSS PROFIT	\$1,096,814.81	\$825,651.66
Expenses		
5000 Salary Expenses	430,565.31	514,776.82
5100 Payroll Tax & Benefits	113,112.35	97,786.88
5200 Depreciation & Amortization	49,816.45	55,930.00
5300 Insurance Expenses	19,023.81	22,530.78
5400 Property Expenses	23,926.44	27,986.08
5500 Information Technology	152,589.94	132,252.12
5600 Office Expenses & Supplies	68,681.36	69,563.00
5700 Telephone & Internet	6,518.06	16,080.00
6000 Advertising & Marketing PR	70.00	1,000.00
6100 Audio Visual	24,301.13	50,000.00
6200 Awards	66,091.18	22,161.40
6300 Bank & Credit Cards Fees	18,998.22	21,935.00
6400 Catering	19,839.87	20,500.00
6500 Other Exhibit & Meeting Costs	22,174.46	23,260.00
6600 Professional Fees	137,006.51	195,505.00
6700 Shipping	202.74	3,000.00
6800 Travel	13,353.93	18,029.00
6900 Federal Income Tax	19.05	
Total Expenses	\$1,166,290.81	\$1,292,296.08
NET OPERATING INCOME	\$ (69,476.00)	\$ (466,644.42)
NET INCOME	\$ (69,476.00)	\$ (466,644.42)

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Balance Sheet As of August 31, 2021

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
1000 Cash	463,035.86
1100 Investment Accounts	302,134.34
Total Bank Accounts	\$765,170.20
Other Current Assets	
1300 Other Current Assets	1,261.00
1400 Prepaid Expenses	92,877.08
1500 Inventory Asset	2,916.00
Total Other Current Assets	\$97,054.08
Total Current Assets	\$862,224.28
Fixed Assets	
1600 Land	0.00
1610 Building	0.00
1620 Building Improvements	0.00
1630 Furniture & Fixtures	0.00
1640 Computer Equipment	1,095.29
1650 Office Machines	0.00
1660 Software	91,139.35
Total Fixed Assets	\$92,234.64
Other Assets	
1700 Long-term Assets	480,622.47
Total Other Assets	\$480,622.47
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,435,081.39
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
2200 Other Current Liabilities	154,371.39
2700 Deferred Revenues	239,007.72
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$393,379.11
Total Current Liabilities	\$393,379.11
Long-Term Liabilities	
2300 Long Term Liabilities	149,900.00
Total Long-Term Liabilities	\$149,900.00
Total Liabilities	\$543,279.11
Equity	
2800 Designated Funds	431,295.39
Opening Balance Equity	1,190,601.56
Retained Earnings	(660,618.67)
Net Income	(69,476.00)
Total Equity	\$891,802.28
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$1,435,081.39

OFFICE REPORT - L. Scantlebury

Staff

Leslie Scantlebury, Executive Director

Erin Fry, Senior Project Manager

Jackie Padilla, Accountant

Membership Report

Member Type	07/29/21	10/7/21	Change
Affiliate	40	36	-4
Associate	1232	1165	-67
Charter	24	24	0
Charter Honorary	2	2	0
General	3577	3196	-381
General Honorary	12	8	-4
Honorary	62	63	+1
	4949	4494	-455

RWA2021 Virtual Conference

As of October 13, there are 238 registrants for the virtual conference. 27 scholarships were awarded for the conference.

Chapter Report

The following chapters have sent in notice of intent to vote on disaffiliation:

- Capital Region
- Central Florida Romance Writers
- Colorado Romance Writers
- Contemporary Romance Writers
- Northeast Ohio Romance Writers
- Northwest Houston Romance Writers
- New Jersey Romance Writers
- Sacramento Valley Rose
- Silicon Valley
- Wisconsin Romance Writers
- Valley Forge Romance Writers
- San Diego
- Long Island Romance Writers
- Evergreen Chapter
- Orange County
- Three River Romance Writers
- Greater Seattle
- Greater Detroit

PRO ADVISOR REPORT - C. Stuart

Beginning in October, the PRO Power Up sessions will be extended by 15 min in length to allow time for networking and discussion after each Power Up workshop.

October and November PRO Power Ups will focus on indie publishing, with how-to guides for publishing ebooks (October) and print (November).

The December PRO Power Up Session will focus on acquiring an agent. If budget allows, we will have paid guest speakers for this month.

PRO Book Club continues to be a regularly attend PRO event.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Stuart
RWA PRO Advisor

PAN ADVISOR REPORT - N. Weeks

PAN Power Up Zoom Sessions continue to go well and registration will remain open. Recordings of the sessions are emailed to all registered members. PAN and PRO Power Up schedules are posted in RWA e-Notes.

Future PAN Power UP Zoom Session Schedule

October 23, 2021 Saturday 11:00am CST

Our fellow PAN author, Kathy L Wheeler presents her successful marketing plan she implemented April 2021 with Facebook and Amazon ads as well as other promotional avenues that have worked well for her this year.

November 2, 2021 Tuesday 7:00pm CST

Optimizing your Amazon's landing page – Is A+ Content a good idea?

December 7, 2021 Tuesday 7:00pm CST

Holiday Bar Night with Cyber Security Analysis/Mega Bartender Martin. AMA - Ask him anything about cybercrime/cyber security. Holiday romance trivia.

January 4, 2022 Tuesday 7:00pm CST

Topic TBA

February 1 2022 Tuesday 7:00 CST

Topic TBA

March 1 2022 Tuesday 7:00pm CST

Topic TBA

April 5 2022 Tuesday 7:00pm CST

Topic TBA

May 3 2022 Tuesday 7:00pm CST

Topic TBA

June 7 2022 Tuesday 7:00pm CST

Topic TBA

July 5 2022 Tuesday 7:00pm CST

Topic TBA

August 2 2022 Tuesday 7:00pm CST

Topic TBA

Future Discussion Topics/Break-out Sessions

Please post future topic ideas (with presenters) to the PAN Power Up Zoom Google form or email me at nancycweeksauthor@gmail.com – PAN Power Up in Subject Line

<https://forms.gle/X7Qc9SWHbNwGEYqK7>

Nancy C. Weeks
RWA PAN Advisor

WORKSHOP COMMITTEE REPORT – G. Chianese

Regarding the conference, here's how the lineup for workshops is going:

21 Craft
16 Career
9 Industry
4 Writer's Life
3 Research
1 Business
1 Ask Me Anything
= 55 workshops

Librarian's Day is going to be stellar.

We have one 4-hour "Master Class" with Martha Alderson (The Plot Whisperer) that we were hoping to have on Zoom the day before the conference starts. Erin believes we should put that on a Saturday - either way, it should be something we can charge, say, \$25 for if you also sign up for the conference; if you're just wanting the Master Class and not the conference, then we could charge \$75 (with no conference access).

We are working to get Jason Mott for our keynote speaker; his normal "virtual" conference fee is \$2500, and we could only offer him \$1,000. One of our committee members is close friends with his sister, however, so we're hoping we are able to retain him.

We are still having people back out of presenting, for various reasons; at this point, most of the reasons are family-oriented.

We are out of our speaker budget.

\$1k to Kimberla Lawson Roby, our Librarian's Day Keynote Speaker
\$k hopefully to Jason Mott, or if not him, another Keynote Speaker
\$500 to Martha Alderson

I'd love some more Ask Me Anything workshops...and more Writer's Life workshops. But finding people at this point has become difficult.

Submitted by: Christine Ashworth

VIVIAN TASK FORCE REPORT – J. Renee

The Vivian Task Force has an action plan for analyzing the 2021 contest. In the first phase, the task force volunteers are working in small groups to analyze each part of the contest process with specific objectives in mind. A survey will be sent to 2021 contest entrants, judges, and RWA members. The data collected from the survey will be used in both phases of the action plan.

Phase I Analysis of 2021 Vivian Contest (October 2021-December 2021)

1. From Planning of Vivian Contest to Close of Contest Submissions
 1. Contest Policy & Procedures and Rules
 2. Categories
 3. Judging/Rubrics
 4. Judges: Recruitment, Application, Selection, and Training
 5. Entrants/Entries: Published and Unpublished, Promotion
2. From Distribution of Entries to Announcement of Finalists
 1. Categories
 2. Round 1
 1. Judges
 2. Entry/Judge Matching
 3. Round 2
 1. Judges
 2. Entry/Judge Matching
 4. Judging Timelines
 5. Returned and Reassigned Entries (Published and Unpublished)
 6. Round 1 Scores (including criteria for moving to Round 2)
 7. Round 2 Scores (including criteria to move to the Final Round)
 8. Breakdown of Finalist/Entries
 9. Breakdown of Non-Finalists/Entries
3. From Announcement of Winners to Distribution of Scoresheets
 1. Final Round Judges
 2. Final Round Scores
 3. Winners
 4. Release of scoresheets
4. Review
 1. Results from surveys
 2. Findings from analysis of main topics (subtopics)

Phase II Improvement/Testing/Recommendations (January 2022-July 2022)

1. Discuss areas in need of improvement
2. Conduct a controlled testing of the improvements
3. Write recommendations that include measurable activities and submit to the Board

UNPUBLISHED MEMBER BENEFITS COMMITTEE REPORT (PEN TO PAPER PROGRAM) – E. Schechter

Accomplishments to Date

- Pen to Paper participants have completed the first eight-week session (Units 1-4).
- Participants have all met with their designated guide for one-on-one coaching.
- Level 2, Units 5-8 begins October 18.
- Level 2 materials (Units 5-8) are in final review, formatting and proofreading. Units will be posted at least one week prior to conduct. Level 3 materials (Unit 9-12) are drafted and the content and videos are being added over the next eight weeks. (In future offerings, all the revised content will be available from the beginning of the program)
- After our editor/proofreader resigned due to a work promotion, we engaged a professional editor/proofreader who is also a new Guide in the program. Professional proofreading will enhance the quality of Pen to Paper materials.

Technology Issues and Resolution

We instituted tech support open office hours and an on-call tech support volunteer, and created tutorial cheat-sheets to help with the most common issues that our participants faced. Due to that support, we have progressed to the point that we've suspended the tech support open office hours, and there have been no tech support calls in the two weeks prior to this report being written.

Guide Staffing

As of this writing, Level 1 of Pen to Paper is about to end, and three Guides will be leaving the program in a planned transition to Guides who were not available during Level 1. There has been some Guide attrition, and we have reopened applications to add additional potential Guides in case of future need.

Participant Reactions and Resulting Improvements to Date

Overall, participant reactions to the program have been positive, especially about the self-study materials, including the syllabus, worksheets, examples, and new RWA short videos.

Most of the opportunities to improve have been regarding program logistics, technology, and processes. These issues are addressed as they arise with a philosophy of continuous improvement and enhanced learner experience.

Summary

This first offering of Pen to Paper: Guide to Writing Romance has been a successful pilot to date. Our biggest opportunity for future offerings is to enhance the processes and support for implementation. Where and when possible RWA will benefit from enhancing the technology and staffing related to implementing learning programs. The development testing conducted with eight RWA unpublished members prior to launch greatly enhanced the quality of the Syllabus as we learned what participants needed and expected from the self-study materials. For the remainder of the program, we are implementing Guide reviews of the materials as part of the content finalization process.

MOTION #1: TO ACCEPT ELECTION RESULTS

LaQuette moves that the Board certify the election results prepared by Survey and Ballot Systems.

Race	Candidate		Votes
President-Elect			
	Gail Chianese	Decision	632
Secretary			
	C. Chilove	Decision	635
Directors-at-Large			
	Jackie Renee	Decision	612 (two-year term)
	Veronica Forand	Decision	591 (two-year term)
	Mary Karlik	Decision	575 (two-year term)
	Elizabeth Schechter	Decision	555 (two-year term)
	Marian H. Griffin	Decision	541 (one-year term)
PAN Advisor			
	Nancy C. Weeks	Decision	246

Motion adopted by general consent.

MOTION #2: ESTABLISH THE ROMANCE EDUCATION INITIATIVE COMMITTEE

Schechter moves that the RWA establish and empower the Romance Education Initiative, a committee that will oversee, revise and maintain all RWA educational offerings now in existence or still to be developed.

Charge: The Romance Education Initiative shall be charged to develop and administer programs to advance and enhance the education of romance writers at all stages of their writing careers.

Motion adopted by general consent.

MOTION #3: POLICY FOR THE ROMANCE EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Schechter moves to add the following policy:

10.2.10 The Romance Education Initiative. The REI committee will oversee, revise and maintain all RWA educational offerings now existent or still to be developed

10.2.10.1 The structure of this committee will be as a single committee staffed by subcommittee heads, each overseeing one of the educational programs. Volunteers shall be assigned to tasks as needed, and as appropriate to their skill set. The REI Committee chair will be included on all subcommittees.

Motion adopted by general consent.

MOTION #4: APPROVE ROMANCE EDUCATION INITIATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Schechter moves to add the following to the REI committee:

Elle Keen
Jillian Liota

Motion adopted by general consent.

ADJOURN: President LaQuette adjourned the meeting at 12:21 p.m. CT.