**Gulf Coast Writers Association**
**Executive Committee Meeting**
**August 12, 2025 by Zoom**
**Minutes**

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. EST by Charley Valera, serving in the absence of President Mary Charles.

Members Present: Sheryl Stillman, Jeanne Meeks, Ginger Wakem, Christie Zarria, Claudia Volkman, Claudia Geagan, Charley ValeraMembers Absent: Mary Charles, Mike Cole, Ed Donlin

Corporate Board: Andrew Conlyn (present); Irene Smith, Bob McCarthy, Susan Grunin (absent)

**Officer Reports**

**Secretary** - Christie Zarria reported that the July minutes had been distributed for review. Upon motion by Jeanne Meeks, seconded by Ginger Wakem, the July minutes were unanimously approved.

**Website Committee** - Jeanne Meeks provided an update on the website development project. The committee has made substantial progress in bringing the new website online. All Executive Committee members have received access to review the proposed site and provide feedback to Laura Fuller and the development team. Ms. Meeks noted that the project remains within budget parameters and is expected to result in reduced ongoing maintenance costs compared to previous years. Laura Fuller was present to address questions and provide technical updates. Following discussion, Ginger Wakem moved to approve the new website, with a second by Claudia Geagan. The motion passed unanimously.

**Communications** - Sheryl Stillman confirmed that the 2025 Writing Contest winners will be featured in Florida Weekly. She indicated that press releases announcing the contest winners are in preparation. Ginger Wakem requested that Communications develop a press release for the 30th Anniversary celebration to promote ticket sales. Jeanne Meeks inquired about the organization's MeetUp participation, noting the annual cost exceeds $300. Ms. Stillman requested that this discussion be deferred to next month pending further research into the platform's effectiveness for the organization.

**Treasurer** - In Mike Cole's absence, his written report was distributed to all committee members prior to the meeting. Discussion ensued regarding certain discrepancies in the allocation of Stripe payment processing income. Jeanne Meeks moved to accept the treasurer's report as presented, with a second by Claudia Volkman. The motion passed, with the understanding that allocation discrepancies will be resolved at a future date.

**Programs** - Charley Valera emphasized the importance of managing monthly meeting agendas to maximize speaker presentation time while ensuring adequate opportunity for member networking and socialization. Claudia Volkman reported that Dave Kratze is prepared for his upcoming Saturday presentation. The September meeting will feature the Contest Awards ceremony, followed by a presentation on artificial intelligence by FGCU Professor Joanna Galatzga in October.

**Special Programs** - Claudia Geagan reported that all writing contest winners have been notified and will be formally recognized at Saturday's meeting. The September meeting will serve as the Awards ceremony, with participating winners presenting their entries either in-person or via Zoom. The contest attracted entries from four out-of-area winners and five local winners. This year's contest achieved record participation with over 130 entries, representing the highest level of engagement in several years. Ms. Geagan indicated plans to survey contest participants regarding how they learned of the competition to inform future promotional strategies.

**Membership** - Jeanne Meeks reported sales of 14 copies of "Storm Stories," generating approximately $42 in royalties. Current membership includes 109 paid members, 8 lifetime members, and 32 individuals with renewal opportunities remaining this year. The organization welcomed five new members in July.

**Officer at Large** - Ginger Wakem reported meeting Nancy of NRK Designs at the FAPA awards. Ms. Nancy, a Bookelia resident specializing in promotional merchandise, has expressed interest in GCWA membership. Discussion included exploring online promotional merchandise vendors, with Charley Valera recommending Queensboro based on positive experience. This topic was tabled for future consideration. Ms. Wakem requested Executive Committee approval for purchasing luncheon tickets for the Macombers as organizational guests. Jeanne Meeks moved to approve, Charley Valera seconded, and the motion carried. Funding will be allocated from the anniversary celebration budget. Ms. Wakem proposed offering Robert Macomber a lifetime membership in recognition of his continued support of GCWA. Christie Zarria moved to approve, Jeanne Meeks seconded, and the motion carried.

**New Business**

Claudia Volkman announced that Mary Beth Leopold has accepted the position of Treasurer for the upcoming year, with duties commencing in October upon her return to the area. Ms. Leopold's qualifications have been shared with all committee members. Additionally, Lori Swick has agreed to chair the Program Committee for the coming year and is already developing programs for 2026. The committee expressed appreciation for these qualified members' willingness to serve in leadership positions.

Charley Valera reported that President Mary Charles has requested Executive Committee approval of the 2026 contract with St. Hilary's for meeting venue services. Discussion addressed concerns regarding the insurance clause within the contract. The committee agreed to review the current insurance policy, which is maintained by Mike Cole, to ensure GCWA's risk exposure remains appropriate.

**Adjournment**

With no further business to discuss, Jeanne Meeks moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Claudia Volkman. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Next Executive Committee Meeting: September 16, 2025

Respectfully submitted, Christie Zarria, Secretary