Gulf Coast Writers Association
Executive Committee Meeting
September 16, 2025 by Zoom
Minutes

Meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. EST by President Mary Charles.

Attending: Mary Charles, Sheryl Stillman, Jeanne Meeks, Ginger Wakem, Christie Zarria, Claudia Volkman, Laura Fuller, Claudia Geagan, Mike Cole, Mary Beth Leopold
Absent: Ed Donlin, Charley Valera

Corporate Board: Andrew Conlyn - attending; Irene Smith, Bob McCarthy, Susan Grunin – absent.

Reports from Officers:
Treasurer – Mike Cole presented the August treasurer's report, which includes a cash balance of $18,227.17, including $100 petty cash. Ongoing Stripe payment allocation issues will be resolved when incoming treasurer Mary Beth Leopold assumes office and can access detailed payment reports. Mike reported that we have made our last payment to WhatsUp Southwest Florida for Mary Ann Cipressy's support of our website, and she has let Mike know that our business agreement with her has ended. Jeanne moved and Claudia G seconded that we accept the treasurer's report. Motion passed.

Mary requested $300 to update officer name tags, printed materials and supplies for name badges for members at the monthly meetings. After some discussion, Mike moved, and Jeanne seconded that the committee approve Mary's use of those funds for the items mentioned. Motion passed. Everyone especially liked the idea of doing printed name tags for members and agreed it would be an improvement over the sticky tags and magic markers we currently use to help visitors and new members identify other members more easily.

Secretary - Christie Zarria – August minutes were approved by motion from Jeanne with second from Ginger. Motion passed.

Communications - Sheryl reiterated earlier email communications about the fact that Florida Weekly will not published contest winners' entries due to editorial changes, despite outreach efforts. Claudia G confirmed that contest winners have been notified of this change. Sheryl also submitted her resignation from her current

position of VP of Communications, for personal reasons. Mary asked everyone to be thinking about replacements for Sheryl, who will be missed. Regarding MeetUp, Brian Devitt has been managing postings but is currently traveling. Given rising costs and platform changes, Sheryl moved, and Jeanne seconded that we drop the subscription and focus on Facebook and other social media.

Programs –Claudia V gave us a run down of programs for the next few months, including our September writing contest awards program; then in October, FGCU professor Joanna Galatzga will be doing a presentation on AI. Our November meeting will an open forum for membership to finish out the year. Lori Swick will be joining the committee in January and will be bringing information on next year's line up at that time.

Special Programs - Claudia G reported that all nine contest winners have agreed to read their winning entries at the upcoming awards meeting, several in person and the reamainder on Zoom and there will be a light lunch afterwards. She would like to open the 2026 writing contest earlier in order to ensure that winning entries will be printed in the Fort Myers magazine, and we discussed several other possible changes to the contest for the coming year, including structuring the awards ceremony so that no one knows which place they have won until the actual ceremony.

Membership – Jeanne reported that we sold 10 Storm Stories and earned about $39 in royalties. We currently have 132 viable members. We added two new members in August and three in September. Jeanne asked if as a group, we could focus on visitors and new members so that they feel welcome. Discussion ensued about ideas that could facilitate this, especially making sure new folks get greeted and welcomed appropriately.

Web Manager – Laura aksed everyone to help her keep the website as up to date as possible by sending all news to her as soon as possible so that the website stays current and relevant. Mary welcomed Laura to the committee and thanked her for her work successfully launching the new website.

Officer at Large- Ginger reported that we spent just over $1000 on swag for the 30th anniversary event, including notebooks, pens, and coasters. Additionally, we have also invited members to donate bookmarks to add to the bag. Christie reported that as of today, we have 41 reservations, and we discussed ways to generate more interest to try and reach our 100-capacity goal. We discussed how we might use the leftover swag if we do not reach that goal. Christie also said that

we will be offering to sign folks up at the meeting this Saturday on site, and are hopeful that will bring us closer to our goal.

There being no further business, Jeanne moved meeting to be adjourned, and Claudia G seconded. Motion passed and meeting adjourned at 6:05pm.

Next Executive Meeting: October 14, 2025

Respectfully submitted by Christie Zarria