Gulf Coast Writers Association
Executive Committee Meeting
October 14, 2025 by Zoom
Minutes

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

Attending: Mary Charles, Ginger Wakem, Claudia Volkman, Mary Beth Leopold, Charley Valera, Laura Fuller

Absent: Christie Zarria, Sheryl Stillman, Mike Cole, Claudia Geagan, Jeanne Meeks
Corporate Board (all absent): Andrew Conlyn, Irene Smith, Bob McCarthy, Susan Grunin

Reports from Officers:
Office at Large: - Ginger reported that she, Mary, Christie, and Patti Walsh met at the Hilton yesterday to go over event details with the hotel event manager. At this point, we have 63 confirmed reservations. We will offer online registration at this week's meeting. Cutoff for registration is set for one week prior to the event on October 24th. Also, Nancy Koucky has the swag bags ready to go, and Mary Beth reported the invoice has been paid.

Treasurer – New treasurer, Mary Beth Leopold, reported that she and Mike Cole met for six hours last Saturday and are planning to get together again to complete the transition in the treasurer position. She commented that Mike said he needs to correct the August reports because he did not have any of the checks in for the writing contest at the time he originally prepared the report. Also, there was a $25 deficit on the September report that has eluded both of them after a diligent search for the source. She is going to suggest that we adjust that amount off and start October with a clean slate. In addition, Mary Beth said she needs to go through all Stripe payments to date and allocate them to the correct budget lines. She is confident she can present clean report at the October meeting. Ginger moved and Laura seconded that we table the Treasuer's Report until next month so these changes can be made. Motion carried.

Secretary - Christie Zarria was not present, but minutes were sent via email to the committee.

Communications - Since we are still actively looking for a replacement for Sheryl Stillman who has moved away and resigned, Mary Charles discussed with the group the idea of breaking the Communications position into two or three separate

roles, one role to cover media contact/coverage and communication with the public; and a second role to cover our Facebook page and other social media; and possible a third to cover our internal communications such as the Gazette, etc. We discussed the Facebook page and ways to maximize our exposure not just to our members, but to draw in interested people as well. Ginger mentioned that Patti Walsh has hired a professional social media manager for her Facebook page with excellent results. Mary advised that according to our bylaws, a Communications officer is necessary, but we can recruit others to help in that function.

Programs –Charley reported that our speaker for this month is Dr. Joanna Salapske-Gellen, a professor at FGCU who will share her expertise on AI and the ways writers can leverage this tool in their craft. It promises to be an excellent program. With regard to our November meeting, Mary expressed her feeling that this will be an important meeting as we are asking our membership to take part in ideas for the coming year. Mary asked for ideas as to how to structure the meeting to maximize the time and contributions from those attending.

Special Programs – Claudia Geagan was not present. No report this month.

Membership – Jeanne Meeks was not present but sent her report via email to the committee.

Web Manager – No report this month.

New Business:
Laura asked if GCWA has ever had a Welcome Committee. We discussed ways to ensure that visitors and new members are being properly welcomed and assimilated into the group. We have great assets in Laura Scheuneman and Laura Fuller, who act as greeters at our front desk sign-in, but it would be good to add more greeters to help in making guests and new members feel welcomed, introducing them to more established members, inviting them to lunch, etc. Claudia V offered to be part of organizing a welcome committee since she is stepping down from her Program Chair responsibilities.

There being no further business, Ginger moved meeting to be adjourned, and Claudia V seconded. Motion passed and meeting adjourned at 5:50 pm.

Next Executive Meeting: November 11, 2025

Respectfully submitted by Christie Zarria