Gulf Coast Writers Association
Executive Committee Meeting
March 17, 2026 by Zoom
Minutes

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

Attending: Mary Charles, Rita Angelini, Ginger Wakem, Lori Swick, Laura Fuller, Jeanne Meeks, Claudia Geagan, Laura Schueneman, Mary Beth Leopold

Absent: Christie Zarria, Laura Schueneman

Corporate Board: Andrew Conlyn

Reports from Officers:

Treasurer: Mary Beth thanked everyone for their support over the past few months and introduced Rita Angelini, who has agreed to assume the role of treasurer for the new year. Mary Beth, Rita, and Christie will meet next week to review all financial information and ensure a smooth transition. Mary Beth presented the January and February financial reports and answered several questions regarding expense items, noting that she will also go over the Stripe account with Rita. As of the end of February, the bank balance is $17,969.88, plus $100 in petty cash. Additionally, she and Christie met regarding the final draft of the Constitution and Bylaws changes; she has drafted a summary of those changes to distribute at this week's meeting for membership review prior to the vote.

Secretary: Minutes were submitted via email prior to the meeting; however, since Christie is not present, approval will be postponed until the April EC meeting.

Programs: Lori reported that Marty Ambrose is ready and excited to present her program this Saturday. Regarding the Poetry Slam in April, only three people have signed up so far, and she will remind members at Saturday's meeting. In May, Anne and Robert Jacobs — president and past president of FAPA (Florida Authors and Publishers Association) and owners of Popin Edits — will speak about how they conduct their contests. On the topic of honorarium, Ginger reported they have agreed to $100 for gas, and she has offered her home as accommodations for the engagement. Lori is also seeking speaker and program ideas for July and August. Mary raised the possibility of workshops, and Lori expressed interest in conducting one. Laura mentioned that Joanie Iraci has also expressed interest, and Ginger will facilitate an introduction between Lori and Joanie at this week's meeting.

Communications: No report, as the chairperson position is currently vacant. Mary is covering press releases for publications. Ginger will assume this role in April, supported by several members handling various responsibilities.

Special Programs: Claudia reported a total of 74 entries in the writing contest, including submissions from Australia and the UK. Judging will begin shortly, with results expected by the end of April for submission to Fort Myers Magazine, where winners will be published in the summer issue. Regarding the Reading Festival earlier this month, Claudia felt it was a positive experience overall, with decent foot traffic at the booth throughout the day despite its location toward the back of the complex. She suggested the group consider whether to participate next year given the significantly changed pricing structure.

Membership: Jeanne reported 178 current members, including 23 new members in 2026 thus far. Mary credited both the new website and increased activity and presence on Facebook.

Web Manager: Laura Fuller reported that contest winners from 2022 through 2025 are now posted on the website. She is also researching how to feature critique groups on the site — something members could initiate and facilitate independently using established guidelines. Richard Drummer has agreed to review whatever is developed, and Lori will connect with Laura on the project. Laura also noted that Gravity Forms allows only one account holder, currently Mary, which will need to transition to Christie going forward.

Officer at Large: Ginger reported that the owner of Floral Artistry is happy to partner with the group, displaying members' books and copies of *Storm Stories*. She also suggested using leftover goodie bags from the 30th Anniversary for new members.

New Business: Mary confirmed with Andrew that he will be present at the membership meeting this Saturday to conduct the business meeting, present the new slate of officers, and oversee the vote on new officers and the bylaw changes.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:00pm.

Next Executive Committee Meeting: April 14, 2026

Respectfully submitted by Christie Zarria