

The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan

100-0005 Japan, Tokyo-to, Chiyoda-ku, Marunouchi, 3-2-3, Marunouchi Nijubashi Building 5F
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Minutes (9 pages)

Board of Directors Meeting

Friday, January 17, 2025

du3 draft

Quorum: Five Voting

Attend In Person (Voting):

Dan Sloan, President

Randy Schmidt, 2nd Vice President

Anthony Rowley, Treasurer

David Umeda, Secretary

Suvendrini Kakuchi

Dave McCombs

Taeko Nagayama

Attend Virtual (Voting):

Shuri Fukunaga

Attend In Person (Non-Voting):

Martin Fackler

Simon Farrell, Kanji

Attend Virtual (Non-Voting):

Larry Cisar, Parliamentarian

Absent:

Khaldon Azhari, 1st Vice President

Attend In Person (Club Staff):

Wayne Hunter, General Manager

1) Call to Order, Prioritized Agenda (10:03)

a. President's Report (*D. Sloan*)

Thursday night, January 16, D. Sloan, M. Fackler, S. Farrell, and R. Schmidt attended the Foreign Press Center event.

In his letter to the BoD, Dan underscored the positives of the first half of his term, including more new members and increased number of bookings.

D. Sloan also encouraged BoD to attend next Thursday's (Jan 23) Hacks & Flacks. BoD approved waving attendance fee since directors would be busy as hosts and have no time to dine. VIP attendance (Dan), entertainment by the Yokohama Sisters, sake barrel ceremony, and door prizes (D. Umeda) will be some of the attractions. W. Hunter said attendance is around 180: approximately 40 Regulars, 40 Associates, 20 or so their guests, and some 80 professional communications people. W. Hunter pointed out that this year's H&F will incur a much lower loss than last time (half-a-million-yen loss vs. 1-million-yen loss last time).

There was confidential health updates related to a key person who means a lot to the Club. S. Fukunaga, D. Kakuchi, A. Rowley, D. McCombs, W. Hunter, and D. Sloan contributed.

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b. Treasurer's Report (A. Rowley)

Proposed Resolution: *That a Task Force be formed to examine and report on the three-to five-year financial prospects for the FCCJ.*

6 approved; 1 not approve; 1 abstained. PASSED. Next step is to appoint a chairperson, who, in turn, will appoint others to serve on the Task Force.

M. Fackler said that the broader the wording is best for any issue. Felt there was a middle ground that we could strike here. Make this not about a person but about the Club and the goals of the Club. Maybe then we can put this behind us and move forward with figuring out what those goals are.

Based on the January 17, 2024, HR report (chair: K. Azhari)—#2: ANA fee and display of plane; #4: Mitsubishi rent. S. Kakuchi suggested appointing GM W. Hunter to initiate approaching ANA and also Mitsubishi. T. Nagayama recalled plane was approved by previous BoD.

c. First Vice President's Report (K. Azhari)

Note: not read by BoD before or during meeting. Explanations by W. Hunter and A. Rowley who received K. Azhari's email. D. Sloan pointed out that BoD cannot vote on anything since K. Azhari not present (in person or online).

Some of the points raised:

- Need to form a Task Force, which should include architects from Associates and FNB committee. D. Sloan said it would be multiple committees involved.
- Areas to be reviewed included stairwell wall, including removal of plane model.
- Wall for prominent members from any category, besides current former presidents' photos in front entrance.

d. Second Vice President's Report (R. Schmidt)

See Freedom of the Press and Membership Committee Reports.

e. Secretary's Report (D. Umeda)

No.1 Shimbun editor, J. McCurry, sent out appeal for contributors, as there have been complaints about the use of a core of journalists. W. Hunter set up dedicated email address. Editor informed D. Umeda that mainly spam responses so far.

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f. Kanjis' Report (*M. Fackler, S. Farrell*)

g. General Manager's Report (*W. Hunter*)

Proposed Resolution: Approve a 25% rent discount for Masukomi Sushi Bar from January to June 2025, with the option to negotiate to 40%, as presented.
ALL APPROVED.

GM W. Hunter also explained that company trying to hire Japanese-speaking staff. Also, hard to find another vendor should the sushi bar close at end of March. D. Sloan wants sushi bar to go back to usual rental fee if back to profitability. T. Nakayama felt pricing is high. S. Fukunaga stressed how convenience is an important draw. A. Rowley pointed out how their staff make you feel welcomed.

Membership—minus 2 last month; 18 new members this month; 15 new applications next month, which includes new Regular members.

November-December—Banquet business very good (125 million yen a year ago to 140 million yen in 2024).

2) Approval of Consent Agenda

Proposed Resolution: Approve the consent agenda as follows:

a. December 9 Board Meeting Minutes

Proposed Resolution: Approve the December 9, 2024, Board meeting minutes as presented.

APPROVED with corrections from D. McCombs and S. Fukunaga.

b. January Membership Applications

Proposed Resolution: Approve the January membership applications as recommended by the Membership Committee.

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REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE.

3) Old Business

a. Life Membership Gregory Clark (2-page read-ahead)

Proposed Resolution: Approve to grant a life membership to Gregory Clark as presented

This was postponed until February (10th) BoD when all board members are present to vote. A virtual meeting in the interim was also being considered.

4) New Business

a. Web & IT Contracts and Online Store (K. Azhari)

Proposed Resolution: Approve the IT Committee to be involved in and review Web and IT contracts executed by the board and work on an online store such as Shopify.

W. Hunter said not need resolution. Can't afford such staff presently.

b. March General Membership Meeting Date (W. Hunter)

Proposed Resolution: Approve to set the date for the March General Membership Meeting as Thursday, March 27, 2025.

APPROVED.

D. Sloan said list of those who hadn't voted will be followed-up.

c. Previous Scholarship Winners Memberships (M. Fackler)

Proposed Resolution: Approve to provide the following Scholarship winners retroactively with a student membership, or one-year honorary membership if no longer a student, as presented.

M. Fackler sent list (since 2020). APPROVED.

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d. Exhibitions New Initiative & Policy (S. Fukunaga)

Proposed Resolution: Create three categories of exhibitions (Committee Hosted, Individual Rental, Corporate Rental) overseen by the Exhibitions Committee under the guidelines as set forth below and which may be revised as determined necessary by the Exhibitions Committee in conjunction with Management.

6 APPROVED. PASSED.

Proposed Resolution: Authorize Management to MARKET an “opening evening champagne reception on the gallery floor” as an Option to include in the Exhibition Rental Space Package offering.

6 APPROVED. PASSED.

Proposed Resolution: Seek Finance Committee expertise in the possibility of establishing a Renovation Fund or an alternative Fund for another prioritized purpose to benefit FCCJ overall, to which the Exhibition’s rental fees, repositioned and renamed as “donations,” can contribute.

Need to set up Special Task Force. T. Nagayama wanted clarity on what the fund would be used for. A. Rowley suggested looking into case studies to determine what kind of funding for renovations. D. Sloan reiterated the need to make our premises more enticing, inviting, whatever we can do to realize this. He offered as an example an auction, involving the Exhibition Committee.

e. Saturday Night Live (S. Farrell)

Proposed Resolution: Approve to increase the fee paid to SNL performers from 20,000 yen (for one or two performers) and 40,000 yen for three or more performers to 20,000 yen for one performer, 30,000 yen for two performers and 40,000 yen for three or more performers.

APPROVED.

公益社団法人 日本外国特派員協会

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Proposed Resolution: Approve to offer 2,000 yen in credits to each performer to be redeemed for food and drinks at the Main Bar and Restaurant on the date of their performance.

APPROVED.

Proposed Resolution: Approved to pay authentic Irish band 80,000 yen for performing in extended venue on March 15.

APPROVED.

Proposed Resolution: Approve to increase the number of SNLs in each calendar month from the current two to three during the months with five Saturdays, if the Committee and staff choose to.

APPROVED. D. Sloan suggests reviving Trivia Nights and other different activities.

Proposed Resolution: Approve to charge an entrance fee for access to the Main Bar and Restaurant during SNL to non-members and members' guests (1,000 yen). Members (STILL NO FEE).

APPROVED. Starts in May and entails initial advance notice. W. Hunter: non-members can use Suica or credit cards.

f. Dave McCombs Resolutions (D. McCombs)

Proposed Resolution: Moved that an ad hoc committee (under Entertainment committee) is formed immediately to plan and execute an 80th Anniversary party at the club in November or December 2025. The ad hoc committee should include Simon, Taeko and Dave and will deliver a complete plan for the event to the board before the February meeting.

D. Sloan—should not designate members yet. Needs Task Force, with next elected BoD (and president) designating chairperson. Prepare for presentation at next BoD meeting in February.

Proposed Resolution: Moved that an ad hoc committee under Membership Marketing be formed to produce an annual Next Generation News Content Creator Award which

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will be given for outstanding achievements as an independent news creator, ie YouTube vlogger, podcaster, blogger, Substack, etc. Three 2025 categories to start with: Japan, Asia, Under 30 years old. The goal is to draw in this new category of journalist and journalism – and the business eco-system that's growing around them -- to the club in a way that promotes the club's prestige to stakeholders and beyond. Dave has volunteered to lead this initiative.

D. Umeda has let MMC chairperson G. Bremermann know. D. Sloan asks D. McCombs to work up proposal with G. Bremerman.

Proposed Resolution: *Moved that an ad hoc committee under the LAW committee be formed to produce an annual FCCJ Book of the Year Award which will be given for outstanding titles published in the 2024 calendar year, to start with. Three categories to start with: Japan, Asia and accessible academic. The goal is to promote the club's prestige to stakeholders and beyond. Dave has offered to lead this effort as well.*

2 APPROVE. 4 AGAINST. NOT PASSED.

Proposed Resolution: *Moved that all changes in pay for staff -- outside of staff-wide cost-of-living adjustments – require formal performance reviews as part of the board approval process.*

D. Sloan said this is already in place. W. Hunter said this is up to the GM, not the BoD.

Proposed Resolution: *Moved that the HR Committee produce a plan for succession in the club's five highest paid positions, including chief accountant, for board approval at next month's meeting. The plan should be prepared in consultation with an established HR professional, either a member who's willing to volunteer for that, or a paid outside expert.*

2 APPROVE. 3 AGAINST. 1 ABSTAIN. NOT PASSED. W. Hunter said he would not at this time outsource payroll.

g. Any Other Business

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D. Sloan instructed D. Umeda to include the following from T. Nagayama in the Minutes:

I'm asking the question as to whether or not the job was done and if he (W. Hunter) did, whom he visited, which company he visited. We didn't receive an answer, so the original contract with him is that he would authorize membership recruitment and by visiting companies. But there's no recruitment in a tangible way. He doesn't have to do any job that he promised to do when he was hired.

5) Committee Reports (5 minutes)

Committees / Liaison

Associate Members Liaison – S. Farrell

AMLC's role is not to hold events since it lacks the needed resources. AMLC will compose a survey for Members.

DeRoy Memorial Scholarship – S. Kakuchi

Per M. Fackler, chairperson: Banquet held on December 6. Makoto Rich of the NYT was guest speaker. List of Award Recipients in Pen, Photos, Video. List of this year's Scholarship Committee members.

Election – S. Kakuchi

Entertainment – S. Farrell

Film – D. Sloan

Screening Report; Upcoming Screenings; Official FC Meeting. Submitted by Karen Severns, chair; Ilgin Yorulmaz, co-chair; Joan Anderson, Thomas Ash, Koichi Mori, and Shinichi Nakajima (staff liaison).

Finance – A. Rowley

Food & Beverage – S. Fukunaga

Freedom of Press – R. Schmidt

Discussion on committee's request for more autonomy and avoiding delays in releases, as well as streamlining awards' processing.

House & Property – K. Azhari

Human Resources – R. Schmidt

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Information Technology (Web) – K. Azhari

See New Business – Web & IT Contracts and Online Store

Library, Archives & Workroom – S. Kakuchi

Canceled subscription to Amazon Prime because no one uses. Monkey magazine donated. Book Break schedule.

Membership – R. Schmidt

January membership applications reviewed for approval. Discussion on GM renewed contract.

Membership Marketing – D. Umeda

G. Bremermann, chair, raised key issues and challenges.

Professional Activities – D. Sloan

December 2024 Attendance Figures for 5 PAC events: total attendance of 53; 398 Livestream views; and 3,924 YouTube views.

Publications (No.1 Shimbun) – D. Umeda

Ad hoc Committees / Liaison

Compliance – R. Schmidt

Deep Dive – A. Rowley

Last week, had probably our most successful Deep Dive in terms of numbers, who pay to attend. Discussion about FCCJ showing on YouTube and other videotaping of this event.

Exhibition – S. Fukunaga

Sports – D. Sloan

6) Adjournment (12:45)