

公益社団法人 _日本外国特派員協会

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, April 11, 2025

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Quorum: Five Voting

Attend In Person (Voting):

Dan Sloan, President

Randy Schmidt, 2nd Vice President

Anthony Rowley, Treasurer

David Umeda, Secretary

Dave McCombs

Taeko Nagayama

Suvendrini Kakuchi

Attend Virtual (Voting):

Khaldon Azhari, 1st Vice President (12 min. into meeting)

Attend In Person (Non-Voting):

Simon Farrell, Kanji

Attend Virtual (Non-Voting):

Martin Fackler, Kanji

Absent:

Shuri Fukunaga

Attend Virtual (Guest):

Larry Cisar, Parliamentarian

Attend In Person (Club Staff):

Wayne Hunter, General Manager

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1) Call to Order, Prioritized Agenda (10:00 am)

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

—We are seeing substantial initiation fee increases, which is absolutely a sign of renewed interest and a tribute to activities of the organization, clubs, events, etc.

I want to explain the background to reducing the initiation fee for Regulars to zero in the GM Report. We continue to struggle in keeping our Regular membership at a level that will replenish even Boards and Committees. We are considering some kind of outreach program, not just for foreign press, but also Japanese Bureau press. This is something within our powers to do, but we want to discuss it, and I'll let the GM speak to this today.

—D. Sloan referred to the pretty astounding amount of money lost by ANAC and explaining that the price increases are not surprising when you also include the inflation that Japan is experiencing, commodities' prices, food prices, and other things going up. The proposed relaunch of the PAC lunches will show you're getting value for a better value lunch.

—Over the next few months, we hope to see more high-value target guests, people who would really want to spend money and sit for an hour and a half or so. It's going to be kind of a cross-committee function to make this happen.

—D. Sloan talked about the more defined Club privacy policy to be discussed later in this meeting. He feels that if we had these in place, we would have hit-checked these lawsuits from the start.

—Finally, he commented that the Hanif collection box, according to the GM, is going along quite nicely.

b. Treasurer's Report (*A. Rowley*)

—There was a sharp reduction in the Club's cash-flow deficit in the year to the end of February 2025. The deficit to end of February 2025 was actually significantly less since February was a short month and so "accounts receivable" was carried over into March. The Finance Committee is providing inputs to the Task Force which is looking at future revenue and expenditure streams and how these can be improved. We do need to build up a cash cushion, he added. In this regard, he talked about a conversation he had with Paul Sheard, former vice chairman of S&P Global, and one of the panelists in an upcoming Deep Dive. Sheard suggested that we may be made to call these "donations" to continue freedom of the press via the FCCJ. S. Kakuchi said that to get a donation, we need an audited financial. D. Sloan said it is in the works. D. McCombs said that virtually any organization that's going to donate money requires audited financial results, and S. Kakuchi added before they can give anything like that. W. Hunter said now he is trying to find a firm that will do it for a reasonable amount of money. S. Kakuchi said so we're changing the firm that did the audit before. W. Hunter said we hadn't done it since the Club moved in here in 2018; as part of the move, they did a full audit and then also the following year, 2019, but not since then. L. Cisar clarified that it was three years since the last audit. D. McCombs said not since 2021. T. Nagayama said she was told that the 1 million yen or so the audit firm would accept. D. Sloan concurred on the amount available. T. Nagayama said so we should do it. D. McCombs wanted to know what kind of estimates the GM has been getting. W. Hunter said in the past we have done it for around half the one-million-yen mark but added that was not a full-blown audit into everything. S. Kakuchi said the budget should be for covering whatever the legal minimum audit is. W. Hunter said the Club didn't continue doing it probably because of COVID. D. Sloan said so there's been 3-4 Boards since the last audit. He added that this is good feedback and instructed A. Rowley, working with the GM—just in the committee—to secure an audit client.

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

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—K. Azhari said we have to do everything in one comprehensive plan (e.g., not just putting in carpet to cut the noise and leaving the rest the same). He added that we should show results within two months.

—K. Azhari found the old bar countertop in the closet, kept there after our move from the Denki Building. He is looking into how to repair and restore it. He mentioned that W. Hunter is working with the Unions to keep them up to date on what we are required to maintain, and W. Hunter feels that the Unions are starting to realize the actual situation the Club has been in.

K. Azhari said that the dead corner under the stairs is being improved. Possibly the aforementioned bar under the stairs is a possibility. Despite no response yet from possible architects contacted one by one, K. Azhari believes a meeting is imminent.

D. Sloan is happy to join in on any such meeting and added that he also meeting with the president of ANAC, so we can do it all at one fell swoop or meet individually.

—A. Rowley felt that even small improvements to make the main Bar more welcoming would meet with widespread approval.

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

No issues, everything is going smoothly regarding contracts and Unions.

Also see Freedom of the Press (New Business "a.").

e **Secretary's Report** (*D. Umeda*)

D. Umeda reported that the Associate Members Liaison Committee will complete its Survey on the Professional Associates/Associates this month and the AMLC will be sharing the results initially with the President before or shortly after Golden Week. The GM is handling the Survey distribution and receiving the responses, as well as tallying by a computer program.

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

M. Fackler wants to create a forum for those minority views or dissenting views, which can serve the Board of Directors instead of the practice now where people get frustrated, and the Board of Directors start receiving a kind of blanket e-mailings. A forum where we can put the defensive views, which would be fair and transparent. And, at the same time, we would ban, blanket emails to all members (of the Board of Directors).

D. Sloan asks the Kanji to circle back on this and solicit any ideas from those who may want to contribute.

A. Rowley says that we could get into a very mishmash of dissenting views, which is going to be hard to sort.

D. Sloan suggests that rather than e-mail, just create a space on the Website where people can put whatever they think there, and then members choosing to click and look at.

M. Fackler concluded by saying that please proceed with great caution on this. We have a lot of serious business to do, to get on with the job of running the Club.

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

–W. Hunter met with **Nihon Monitor**. The GM seeks the Board of Directors' guidance on two options under consideration: Retain Nihon Monitor to provide an estimate on the value of the advertising of Marunouchi Tokyo on the FCCJ banner and our table-skirt. Or, at no cost, issue a joint press release with Nihon Monitor on openly seeking advertisers, which could be limited to the FCCJ banner and our table-skirt, but could be expanded to include options such as advertising on our website or in the Club's email, etc. Sponsors would be able to publicly state they support freedom of the press and the FCCJ through donations to the FCCJ.

–GM had one meeting so far with Mitsubishi about reinstating the banner, which is not currently being used but is in the skirt on the Press Conference tables.

–**Proposal:** Maintain current policy* regarding **children** at the Club, which is posted on our Website.
6 Yes, 2 No (allow all children).
PASSED.

*Children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult when in the Club. The FCCJ welcomes families to use the Main Dining room (Pen & Quill), as well as the special programs provided for families. However, members' children aged 12 or above will be allowed access to the Main Bar until 5 pm on weekdays and also children under 18 are permitted in the Main Bar on Saturdays and on Sundays when the Main Dining room is closed, provided that they are under the supervision of the Member parent or grandparents.

R. Schmidt compared what it meant years ago to have children at the FCCJ (kids running around and playing) versus what it means now (kids are playing with their devices and they're quiet). W. Hunter clarified that this is just a Board-approved guideline (not to be in an Article).

–The Staff lunch will be held on April 13 with 19 attendees.

–W. Hunter said they are planning to hold monthly new-member orientations.

–Management proposes for discussion making the initiation fee zero yen, or a nominal 1,000 yen. Currently the initiation fee is 37,500 yen for Regular members, and 2,000 yen for Young Regular (under 40) and Outside Kanto Regular (defined as living and working predominantly outside of Tokyo-to, and Saitama, Chiba, Kanagawa, and Yamanashi prefectures). Approval to change the initiation fee requires a vote at a General Meeting.

D. McCombs suggested that vouchers would avoid the GMM and move approval a lot faster too. D. Sloan pointed out that this would be a Bylaw, not an Article, so we got a stronger chance of getting it through in June at the GMM. R. Schmidt asked about whether there would be a deposit; D. Sloan said that you have to do a deposit on top of Membership. W. Hunter added that it should be refundable when you resign.

–W. Hunter brought up about the Articles and Bylaws that define a **Guest Member** as a person on a brief visit to Japan who is recognized by the Board of Directors as otherwise basically qualified as a Regular, Professional Associate or Associate Member. Any Regular Member may also sponsor a Guest Membership. However, the Bylaws limits Guest membership to a period of 30 days and may be

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extended twice for 30 days each time upon Board approval (which the GM says has never happened so far). In the event a Guest membership is extended beyond the initial 30 days, the Guest Member shall be required to pay retroactively one month's dues for the first 30-day period of Guest membership and shall also pay monthly dues in advance for each subsequent thirty-day period (or part thereof) during which the Guest membership continues. Longstanding club practice is for Guest membership to be for a period of one month, and not 30 days as stipulated in the Bylaws, and any extension also for one month. The extension also does not require Board approval as stipulated in the Bylaws.

Management recommends revising the length to be "one month" (not "30 days") for reciprocal press clubs, for ease of date setting when extending, and enabling the sponsoring party or management to approve the extension. Management also recommends limiting the number of times a Guest membership may be utilized annually; there is currently no limit. W. Hunter said it would be two extensions earned then L. Cisar said it would be actually three extensions. D. Sloan concluded that the maximum would now be 90 days or three months to replace "no limits".

D. Sloan then requested that the GM **prepare a Proposal** for the May 12, Monday, Board of Directors' Meeting.

–W. Hunter met with **Kyodo News Digital** to discuss possible reduction in cost.

D. McCombs wondered what the Club pays for Reuters. A. Rowley explained about the cost for the big ones, then gave what we probably pay Reuters. D. McCombs also wanted to know what the Library costs are; S. Kakuchi suggested he send request to the committee.

–W. Hunter is reviewing **printer and copy machine** system used by the Members.

–Reminder about **Hanif Farewell** on May 21.

2) Approval of Consent Agenda

Proposed Resolution: Approve the consent agenda as follows:

a. **March 10** Board Meeting Minutes

Proposed Resolution: Approve the March 10, 2025 Board meeting minutes as presented.

ADOPTED

b. **March 27** General Meeting Minutes

Proposed Resolution: Approve the March 27 General Meeting minutes as presented.

T. Nakayama moved that her question preceding her statement "It is very effective to visit big companies around here" be included. 2 Yes, 6 No. NOT PASSED.

Minutes were ADOPTED.

c. **April** Membership Applications

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

ADOPTED.

d. **Honorary Membership** for Junichi Yasuda and Makiya Yamaguchi

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Proposed Resolution: *Approve to grant one-year honorary memberships to Film Committee guests Junichi Yasuda and Makiya Yamaguchi, as presented.*

ADOPTED.

e. **Honorary Membership** for Park Soonam and Park Maeu

Proposed Resolution: *Approve to grant one-year honorary memberships to Film Committee guests Park Soonam and Park Maeu, as presented.*

ADOPTED.

f. Board Dinner Cost at General Meeting

Proposed Resolution: *Approve to waive the cost of dinner at the March 27, 2025 General Meeting for the Board of Directors.*

ADOPTED.

3) Old Business

a. **Honorary Membership** for Paul Snowden (S. Farrell)

Proposed Resolution: *Approve to grant a one-year honorary membership to Shakespeare event lecturer Paul Snowden as presented.*

ADOPTED.

D. Sloan said—and S. Farrell concurred—that the next Board of Directors must then decide whether attendance (a concern raised by S. Kakuchi) improves to warrant another one-year extension.

b. **Honorary Membership** for Stuart Varnam Atkin (S. Farrell)

Proposed Resolution: *Approve to grant a one-year honorary membership to Shakespeare event lecturer Stuart Varnam Atkin as presented.*

ADOPTED.

See “a.” above.

c. **Delete FCCJ X Account** (D. Sloan)

Proposed Resolution: *Approve to delete the FCCJ X account as presented.*

NOT PASSED. Yes 2, 5 No, 1 Abstain.

d. **FPIJ Financial Support** (W. Hunter)

—D. Sloan’s proposal (wording from transcript): We enact paragraph 18. And that we are going to require individual FPIJ members who are not FCCJ members to pay 2,000 yen monthly, to defray the Club’s FPIJ-related expenses.

K. Azhari suggests we say just to join the Club and drop the fee option. D. Sloan agrees, since when they give him a call that will drop the fee. The fee disappears when they join the Club.

Proposal: *We enact paragraph 18. And that we are going to require individual FPIJ members who are not FCCJ members to join the Club.*

PASSED unanimously.

e. **Chambers of Commerce Reciprocal Memberships** (W. Hunter)

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–GM (W. Hunter) thinking about some type of Corporate Membership, rather than giving Honorary Memberships (D. Sloan idea).

D. Sloan said next step would be worked out by GM (W. Hunter) and to just let the Board of Directors know.

4) New Business

a. Freedom of the Press Awards (R. Schmidt)

Proposed Resolution: Approve the winners of the Japan Freedom of the Press Award, Freedom of the Press Asia Award, and the Lifetime Achievement Award, as presented by the Freedom of the Press Committee.

D. Sloan explained that we're going to let everyone vote on it rather than just by everyone's agreement. You have the names in front of you. As R. Schmidt just confirmed as a member of the Freedom of the Press Committee, these are the winners, not the nominees, but they're not the winners until we vote on them.

After the discussions, D. Sloan instructed that we'll go ahead and vote on the nominees from the Freedom of the Press Committee.

PASSED. 5 Approved, 1 Opposed, 2 Abstained.

b. June Annual General Membership Meeting Date (W. Hunter)

Proposed Resolution: Approve to set the date and time for the Annual General Meeting as 7pm on Wednesday, June 25, 2025.

Approved BY ACCLAMATION.

c. Create Privacy Policy and Revise Rules for the Handling of Personal Information (W. Hunter)

Proposed Resolution: Approve to retain Miyake & Partners to create a privacy policy and to revise the Rules for the Handling of Personal Information in line with legal requirements as presented.

PASSED. 6 Yes, 2 No.

d. Deposit Refund Request (W. Hunter)

Proposed Resolution: Approve to refund the deposit of 30,000 yen to former member Joel Brynte as presented.

4 Yes, 3 No, 1 Abstained.

BTW: GM No. A. Rowley said there is no time limit to return deposit.

e. Donated Piano Transport and Current Piano Disposal Cost (S. Farrell)

Proposed Resolution: Approve the expense of 100,000 yen to transport a donated piano to the club and an additional 100,000 yen to dispose of the current piano as presented.

D. Sloan says Board of Directors now aware of the costs, and S. Farrell can proceed to determine a donor. S. Farrell added about possible sign by company (potentially Yamaha) that will have donated the piano. D. Sloan also responded that the donator of the current piano is deceased and that his spouse probably would not be interested in getting it back.

f. Any Other Business – Issues Inventory

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5) Committee Reports

Committees / Liaison

a. **Associate Members Liaison** – S. Farrell

AMLC Osaka Expo visit was a very successful event, which took six months to arrange. Our AMLC Survey and cover letter for Professional Associate/Associate members is approved, with W. Hunter ready to send out this month. The candidate criteria for AMLC members to be nominated for the Board is ready to be sent out later.

b. DeRoy Memorial Scholarship – S. Kakuchi

c. Election – S. Kakuchi

d. **Entertainment** – S. Farrell

Refer to “e.” Donated Piano under New Business.

e. **Film** – D. Sloan

Refer to “d” and “e” under Approval of Consent Agenda.

f. **Finance** – A. Rowley

See Treasurer’s Report.

g. **Food & Beverage** – S. Fukunaga

S. Fukunaga reported on changes in the Main Bar Menu item prices, starting on May 1. Mr. Sone is the new ANAC F&B GM. Under discussion is a breakfast serve for Deep Dive (ANAC currently works from 10:25 am-11:00 pm. ANAC has agreed to Luncheons for PAC events now under consideration for a relaunch. ANAC will come back with best recommendations for Exhibition Opening Receptions on Gallery Floor involving cocktails/Champagne. ANAC and FCCJ President Meeting with F&B Committee co-chairs being set up after Golden Week. First Around the Table was a success.

h. **Freedom of Press** – R. Schmidt

See “a.” Freedom of the Press Awards, under New Business.

i. House & Property – K. Azhari

j. **Human Resources** – R. Schmidt

R. Schmidt reports on updates on new or returning Staff. The Union has formally accepted without any disagreement the new work rules regarding childcare and family care leave and workplace harassment. A Staff lunch event is on April 13, with 19 in attendance.

k. Information Technology (Web) – K. Azhari

l. Library, Archives & Workroom – S. Kakuchi

m. **Membership** – R. Schmidt

R. Schmidt reported that the Membership Committee approved 11 applications on April 6. He also provided the Monthly Membership Tally for March 31, 2025.

n. **Membership Marketing** – D. Umeda

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Chairperson Gary Bremermann has shared the marketing recommendations that were prepared by Bob Peterson and the social marketing recommendations prepared by Campbell Hanley with Michiyo Nakamoto, chairperson of the Long-term Strategy Task Force, during his April 1 meeting to update the Task Force on marketing issues. Gary explained that the primary "to do" item for marketing is to work on improving the sales funnel from interest to application.

o. Professional Activities – D. Sloan

p. Publications (No.1 Shimbun) – D. Umeda

Ad hoc Committees

r. Compliance – R. Schmidt

s. Deep Dive – A. Rowley

t. Exhibition – S. Fukunaga

u. Sports – D. Sloan

There was a discussion about revealing or not staff salaries to the Board of Directors and on whether the GM or the Board of Directors should determine them.

–D. McCombs: The Board needs to know. We represent the members. We spend Members' dues. We have to know how much. And it's right there in the Bylaws. Why the secrecy? Why is secrecy necessary. A. Rowley: Can you clarify what code? Don't throw out accusations.

–W. Hunter: Staff are hired by the GM.

–L. Cisar: A simple motion would be that the contract be presented at the next Board meeting (May 12) and held in absolute confidence. S. Kakuchi: Yes, absolutely. A. Rowley: The next Board meeting. D. McCombs: I don't think that works at all. The contract has already been signed. That's the problem. This was signed without Board approval.

–D. Sloan: I don't think anyone really feels that an HR issue should go beyond the General Manager.

6) Adjournment (12:26)

Proposed by Anthony Rowley, seconded by K. Azhari. 6 Yes, 1 No.

MEETING ADJOURNED.