**NWNW Board Meeting**

**Wednesday, October 13, 2021, 5:30 pm**

Virtual Meeting via Zoom  
**Minutes**

**In Attendance**

**NWNW Review Board:**

Kristi Wuttig, Arlington Heights

Darlene Urban Garrett, Downtown

Les Blaize, Forest Park (Secretary)

Scott Schaffer, Goose Hollow

Jim Olsson, Hillside

Richard Barker, Linnton (President)

Steve Pinger, NWDA (Treasurer)

Jessie Burke, OTCA

Stan Penkin, Pearl District (VP)

Joyce del Rosario, SWHRL

Michelle Shea-Han, Sylvan-Highlands

**NWNW Staff:**

Mark Sieber, Executive Director

Anastasia Zurcher, Program Manager

**Guests:**

Carol Chesarek, Forest Park

Allan Classen, NW Examiner

Eric Simon, Goose Hollow

John Maxwell, Linnton

Rick Kneuven, SHNA alternate

Benjamin, Sisters of the Road

**5:35 Welcome and Introductions—Barker**

**5:40 Approval of Minutes of June 9, 2021 and September 8, 2021—Barker**

***Motion 1: Blaize moved to approve June minutes. Pinger seconds. Burke abstained. Minutes approved.***

***Motion 2: Blaize moved to approve September minutes. Shea-Han seconds. Pinger opposed. Schaffer, Burke abstained. 7 in favor. Approved.***

**5:45 Report of Election Committee—Wuttig**

Elections committee requests additional time to complete the nominations. No candidate has been identified for vice-president. Slate will be announced in November. Election to be in December.

***Motion 3: Pinger moved to nominate Olsson for VP. Blaize seconds if accepted by Olsson. Olsson will consider the nomination but did not accept. No vote taken.***

Pinger objects to waiting for December election. All others in agreement to waiting for a full slate.

**5:55 NW Examiner Articles—Penkin**

Blaize reminded the board members of their responsibility as a corporation to its employees and to the management of the organization overall.

Penkin highlighted the need to support staff and the distinction between the NW Examiner issue as separate from the board member complaint. Penkin then read draft resolution regarding the NW Examiner articles about NWNW and its staff.

***Motion 4: Blaize moved, Burke seconded motion to adopt the resolution as read. Amendment added to include an option for mediation with the NW Examiner. Motion passed.***

***Roll-call vote: Shea-Han, yes; Wuttig, yes; Olsson, yes; Urban Garrett, yes; Burke, yes; del Rosario, yes; Schaffer, no; Penkin, yes; Pinger, no; Blaize, yes; Barker, yes.***

Discussion brought up concerns around:

* Liability, need for legal representation
* Employee protection, long-term and short-term (paid leave)
* Freedom of speech
* Defamation of character
* Having investigator look into the issue for a more thorough review
* Causing additional harm via proposed action
* Option for mediation

There was a lot of confusion and conflation between the NW Examiner issue and the complaint against board member Pinger.

There was also some confusion around Executive Sessions. The ONI Standards require coalitions to allow press during ES but they are not allowed to report on it.

*Burke and Urban Garrett left meeting after this vote.*

**7:15 Complaint Resolution process**

***Motion 5: Blaize moved to have Sieber search for new HR attorney. Penkin seconded. Pinger opposed. Approved.***

Budget amount will be defined next meeting with additional information provided.

**7:24 Public Comment**

Benjamin from Sisters of the Road attended to reach out in interest of building relationships with other groups.

John Maxwell assisted in the original drafting of the Code of Conduct and encourages NWNW to keep in mind that it can be revised when issues arise making it clear where the code is lacking.

**7:30 Adjourn**

**Next Meeting: November 10, 2021**

**Motion 4 text: NW Examiner Resolution**

The board of NWNW deeply appreciates the work of its staff on behalf of the organization and the neighborhoods we serve. NWNW staff serves at the direction of the board under the leadership of its most respected Executive Director of many years, Mark Sieber. Each member of the NWNW staff is conscientious, dependable, trustworthy and deeply committed to their jobs. We are lucky to have them.

We are saddened that staff members have had to file a formal complaint with regard to an unsafe environment created by board member Steve Pinger, and further exacerbated by Allan Classen of the Northwest Examiner wherein he has chosen to single out a minority and most junior staff member, Rhys Ornstein-Hawes, with unfounded assertions of a staff takeover to initiate a social equity mission – a mission that was endorsed by the board at its visioning session in January of 2020. The board of NWNW fully supports its staff through the difficulties it is currently enduring.

As a member of the press Mr. Classen is able to attend executive sessions of NWNW with the expected duty of maintaining the confidentiality of such sessions. Mr. Classen has violated that duty by publishing proceedings of an August 2021 executive session in the September edition of the Northwest Examiner.

Furthermore, in consideration of Allan Classen’s continuing one sided and unsubstantiated criticism of NWNW and, more importantly, the singling out of a transgender minority staff member who was diligently performing their duties, thus leading to an unsafe environment for Rhys, we herewith censure Mr. Classen for those actions.

NWNW has a fiduciary and ethical duty to protect its staff from an unsafe environment; therefore, be it resolved from this time forward, Allan Classen is not welcome to attend meetings of NWNW and will be barred from doing so, and further, NWNW will cease doing business with the Northwest Examiner, both actions pending potential mediation and resolution with Mr. Classen.